

# Little Chestnuts Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	402244
<b>Inspection date</b>	01 October 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Lynn Clements
<b>Setting Address</b>	The Village Hall, Toppesfield, Halstead, Essex, CO9 4NT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01440 785530
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Little Chestnuts Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Chestnuts Pre School opened in 1974. It operates from two rooms within The Village Hall. It is situated in the village of Toppesfield. A maximum of 25 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 13.00 during term time. All children share access to two secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 25 children from two to five years on roll. Of these 17 receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs five staff. Four of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

There are satisfactory routines in place to encourage children to wash their hands and develop their personal hygiene routines. However, opportunities for children to discuss the importance of hand washing or see visual clues to help them develop good washing practices are limited. Staff take time to discuss children's needs prior to placement to ensure their individual health and dietary requirements are met and parental wishes respected. All health related documentation is in place. Staff record accidents and incidents and these are shared with parents. All staff have completed first aid training which enables them to provide appropriate care for children in the event of an accident.

Staff are beginning to encourage children to think about healthy eating. They discuss the foods they eat as they sit together for snack and lunch. Further opportunities, such as cooking, enables the children to explore different ingredients and produce. Parents provide a range of fruit and healthy snack options for the children to taste. Drinking water is available for children throughout the session, which ensures that no child goes thirsty. Children sit together at snack and lunch times. They enjoy taking turns at being the snack helper, passing out the drinks and fruit to other children. However, opportunities for children to pour their own drinks and further develop their self-help skills are missed, as staff pour the drinks and do all the snack preparation, without involving the children. All children are able to rest or be active according to their individual needs.

Children enjoy engaging in physical play. Staff plan daily opportunities for them to use the enclosed outside play area. They develop their spatial awareness, as they negotiate space and objects while riding and using wheeled toys and equipment. Children learn to balance, run and move freely. They use trampolines and other apparatus safely. Children develop their fine coordination skills as they use small tools such as pencils or the computer mouse with increasing competence. Children make trips around the village, enjoying nature walks to collect leaves for their collages and creative pictures. Children are beginning to learn that exercise helps to keep you healthy.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff ensure the play environment remains safe for children. Their creations are displayed to provide a bright environment. Child height furniture enables them to play in safety and comfort. Furniture and equipment is suitable in design and condition, well maintained and conforms to safety standards.

Positive steps are taken to promote safety within the setting and on outings. A risk assessment is carried out and in addition to this, daily checks are made of all child-accessible areas. Staff ensure proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents. Children begin to learn about personal safety while out and about in the village, as they learn to cross the road and hold hands. A fire evacuation procedure is in place and fire drills are practised regularly to help keep children safe in the event of an emergency. Children are encouraged to help at tidy up time and to put their things away after playing to avoid tripping hazards.

Members of staff have up to date documentation and contact numbers with regard to safeguarding children. However, there is currently no designated member of staff at the setting responsible for liaising with the Local Safeguarding Children Board or with Ofsted. In addition, newly appointed staff are not confident about the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a child in their care. As a result children are not fully protected from harm.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are confident and secure in the setting. They arrive and greet each other showing a developing sense of belonging. Staff emphasis is on free flow play. However, the current organisation of snack and adult-led large group activities, which require children to stop their free flow play after less than an hour after arriving at the pre-school, impinges on their ability to engage in independent learning and investigation. Children receive praise and encouragement which helps to promote positive attitudes to learning. They are beginning to develop their thinking and listening skills as staff talk with them about what things feel like, such as cold jelly or sticky custard. Children sing rhymes and listen to stories. They are able to work on their own or in groups.

Staff plan and provide activities and play opportunities which develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. However, whilst staff observe and assess all children, the systems currently in place to appropriately support children under three years are limited. Children enjoy sharing their news from home or talking about what they are going to do that afternoon to celebrate Halloween. On the whole children have fun at their pre-school.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. Overall, staff have sufficient understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn through play. They organise activities which promote children's independence and decision making skills. However, time for free flow investigation is limited and a large part of the session is spent on adult-directed play. Staff are interested in what the children say and do, taking time to listen and respond positively to their suggestions and ideas. Children develop confidence in their relationships with each other and members of staff.

Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones. Systems for recording their progress are in place. The recently appointed manager and new staff team have begun planning as a whole team. This helps to provide children with a variety of different ideas and activities. However, clear learning intentions are not consistently identified and differentiation is limited. This impacts on the effectiveness of the activities and opportunities offered, as they are not sufficiently adapted to ensure that the older, more able children are appropriately challenged to make the next steps in their learning and development. Information about children's educational development within the pre-school is actively shared with parents and carers through daily verbal feedback and visits to the setting where parents and key workers share records together.

Children enjoy what they do and the majority are able to sustain interest in a range of activities. Overall, children concentrate well at activities. They complete puzzles or work together to organise and create train tracks. Children's self-esteem and confidence increase as they share

stories from home and seek out others to show them their finished creations. They form positive relationships with each other and members of staff, as they greet each other on arrival and make room at activities. Children are learning to share and care for each other.

Children become increasingly independent when dealing with their own physical needs. For example, they know where to put their belongings, such as coats and bags. However, everyday opportunities for them to develop personal independence such as helping themselves to snack or pouring drinks are limited. Children take the initiative to be self-sufficient in their learning because they have access to sufficient equipment and resources stored at their level. They are becoming confident communicators, seeking out adults to share their ideas.

Children are beginning to develop appropriate language and literacy skills. They explore letters and sounds as they make their marks in shaving foam and sand, or use the computer to type out their names. They join in large group story time using the pictures in the book as clues to the text or joining in repeated refrains. Children use name cards helping them to recognise their name in print and develop their understanding about writing for a purpose.

Children begin to make sense of the world around them as they explore and investigate information technology. They negotiate programmes on their new computer and use the mouse with increasing competence. Children learn about the changing seasons of the year and what the weather is doing. They observe change during cooking activities or while playing outside.

Children develop simple mathematical concepts as they use positional language while playing, talking about sitting opposite, or next to others. They have some opportunities to build on their calculation skills as they join in simple number rhymes and songs. Children explore repeating patterns as they create mosaics or thread coloured reels.

Children engage in a range of physical activities which help them to develop their confidence, skill and coordination. They move around safely demonstrating spatial awareness as they avoid obstacles or each other. Children develop their fine motor skills as they use single handed tools and utensils with increasing competence. They are beginning to learn about the importance of physical exercise and how it can help them to stay fit and healthy.

Children express their individual creativity through a satisfactory range of craft activities. For example, they freely paint and create pictures. They enjoy experimenting with different textures as they feel and smell jelly, custard or shaving foam. They join in role play games, becoming mummies and developing their pretend games based on real and imagined experiences. Staff work closely as a team, praising and encouraging children to develop their personal independence

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children settle well and are confident and independent; they are interested in the resources available and are eager to take part in activities. Staff interact well with all the children. They talk with parents prior to placement to ensure children's individual needs are met. Staff ensure there is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability. They provide opportunities for children to learn about the wider world through topics, discussion and the use of story and reference books. Children discover the world on their door step as they enjoy walking in their village, meeting local people, such as the vicar or man who brings the fish, and the farmer who drives past their pre-school each week.

Staff have strategies in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They work closely with the local authority special educational needs coordinator to ensure children are properly supported. Staff work closely with parents and carers, discussing needs and implementing systems such as individual development plans which enables children's progress to be monitored.

Staff are consistent in their approach to behaviour management. They work as a team focussing on positive strategies to support good behaviour. Children learn to share and take turns. They enquire about each other and greet each other warmly as they arrive. Children negotiate together as they create rail tracks, complete puzzles and extend their imaginary play. Children's behaviour is good.

Staff provide parents with clear information about the pre-school. Welcome packs are in place, newsletters and notice boards provide relevant information. Parents are also actively encouraged to share their skills and interests by helping in the pre-school and being involved in their child's formative years. Discussion prior to placement provides valuable opportunities to share information about children's individual needs. This enables staff to provide continuity of care as children move between their homes and the pre-school.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education funding is good. Newly appointed staff have developed opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's records of assessment. Open mornings are planned enabling parents and carers to discuss their child's progress with the relevant key worker. Time is taken to support integration into the feeder primary school and this provide smooth transitions for children and their parents as they make the next step into main steam school.

Children are learning to share and help each other. They encourage others to join in their games and make room for them at activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are clear systems in place for the employment of staff. Criminal Record Bureau checks are made to ensure children remain protected from harm. Registration systems are in place to ensure that all staff and children are accounted for on a daily basis and that ratios are met. Children are cared for by staff who hold relevant early years qualifications and experience. Space and resources are organised to meet the children's individual needs. Staff induction and appraisal systems are in place to ensure new and existing members of staff are working appropriately with the children.

There is an operational plan in place which is currently being reviewed and updated by the recently appointed manager. Policies and procedures are in place. However, the safeguarding children and complaints policy have not been updated to meet current legislative requirements. This impacts on the efficient and safe management of the provision and welfare of children. All records are stored securely and confidentiality is maintained. Overall children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. The recently appointed manager is working with the new staff team and the local authority, to develop the delivery and monitoring of the Foundation Stage. New observation systems have recently been introduced,

enabling key workers to monitor children's progress in all six areas of learning. Training budgets are in place to support members of staff professional development. The manager is developing a close working relationship with staff to draw on their skills and interests.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last care inspection the provider has improved outcomes for children. A new manager has recently been appointed who holds up to date, relevant training. This supports practice within the group and provides a sound environment for children to play and learn. Clear registration systems are now in place showing the hours of arrival and departure of both children and staff. This ensures that everyone can be properly accounted for and protected from harm. It also ensures that correct ratios are met, in the best interests of the children attending. Children now sit in small sociable groups for their snack. However, the overall organisation of snack time leaves children for extended periods of time without focus. This has been taken forward at this inspection. Toys and resources are now rotated on a three weekly rolling programme. This provides children with variety and promotes their interest and investigation in the wide range of activities and equipment available.

At the last nursery education inspection the provided agreed to address planning and opportunities for parental involvement. There is now a new staff team in place. Staff planning meetings have been introduced enabling them to share their skills and ideas. Planning systems now include some learning intentions. However, these are not consistently included in all six areas of learning. In addition, differentiation in planning enabling staff to adapt activities to challenge individual children effectively is not in place. Both these issues have been taken forward at this inspection. Staff have developed opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's achievements and records of assessment. Open days are now in place providing time for parents, carers and key workers to work together and share observations of what children know and can do. This ensures that children are supported by their parents, carers and key workers, during their formative years.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

## WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

### **The quality and standards of the care**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the current snack time system to encourage independence through choice and self service
- ensure a designated member of staff is responsible for the liaison with local safeguarding children boards and with Ofsted in any child protection situation; ensure all staff are aware of child protection issues and are able to implement the policies and procedures in the absence of the designated person
- develop systems in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure children under three years are supported appropriately; increase opportunities for children to engage in free flow play in order to extend independent learning (this also applies to nursery education)
- ensure records, policies and procedures which are required for efficient and safe management of the provision and welfare of children are maintained, this refers to the safeguarding children procedure and complaints policy.

### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the current planning systems to ensure it is based on observations of what children know and can do; ensure clear learning intentions are consistently identified and that adaptation is included to challenge all children effectively

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)