

# The Owl Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	257941
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Pauline Margaret Todd
<b>Setting Address</b>	Valley lane, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6SF
<b>Telephone number</b>	07867 757661
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Owl Playschool
<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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Owl Playschool registered in its current premises in 2000. They operate from a purpose built building in the grounds of the Primary School in Holt, Norfolk. Accommodation comprises of a main playroom, kitchen, lobby and toilet facilities with an enclosed outdoor play area and balcony. A maximum of 24 children aged between two and five years may attend at any one time. The playschool is open each weekday from 09.15 until 12.00 during school term time only.

There are currently 20 children on roll. Of these, eight children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The playschool employs five staff, three of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification. The group are committee run and have charitable status.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well because the setting takes positive steps to ensure the premises are clean and well maintained. Children are becoming increasingly responsible for their personal care. They use the toilet independently and wash their hands thoroughly to prevent the spread of infection.

Children's health details and medical requirements are clearly recorded to maintain their good health. Staff follow effective systems which enable children who are unwell to be cared for appropriately. Suitable steps are taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Posters are displayed to inform parents of the exclusion periods. Sufficient staff have current first aid knowledge to ensure children's well-being in the event of an accident. Written arrangements regarding the seeking of any necessary medical advice or treatment has not been obtained for all children attending. Therefore staff are not aware of the wishes of some parents.

Children are provided with nutritious snacks which they help to prepare. They learn about healthy foods by eating fruit such as apples and bananas. Children with allergies have their needs met appropriately because the parents have provided the setting with detailed information about any special dietary requirements and food allergies. Children have some access to water but it is difficult for young children to help themselves to a drink as they wish. Water is not readily available to children when they are playing outside to encourage them to drink sufficient amounts to keep them healthy.

Children have very good opportunities to experience physical activity indoors and outside in the garden. They show a positive attitude to exercise. They demonstrate good control, co-ordination and spatial awareness when using the climbing frames, rockers, kicking footballs and pedalling ride-on toys and bikes. They hop and jump well, run whilst avoiding obstacles and control their speed. Children are developing competent manipulative skills, for example, they use scissors well with their junk modelling and knives to spread butter onto their crackers at snack time. Children can fulfil their own needs with regard to rest and relaxation by using floor cushions by the book corner.

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

The provision is good.

Children benefit greatly from being cared for in premises that are very warm and welcoming. They feel secure and at ease in the setting, because a friendly environment has been created by using colourful displays of children's paintings and projects undertaken. Good use is made of the space available to provide children with free movement and well spread out activities to promote their development. For example, the spontaneous use of the garden enables children to move about easily, create realistic imaginative scenarios using the playhouse and experience sand and water on a larger scale.

Children have independent access to a range of developmentally appropriate resources. These are stored in low storage units and containers on the floor which encourage choice and self-selection, for example, puzzles, construction and 'small world' toys. The furniture, toys and play equipment are brightly coloured and look inviting to use. Children are able to sit comfortably to eat their snack and take part in a range of activities.

Children are kept safe because staff give them good supervision and are vigilant, for example, they encourage them to put down their toys and blankets before accessing the climbing frame. Frequent head counts are undertaken. They use appropriate risk assessments and daily checklists to reduce potential hazards, for example, they ensure sockets are fitted with covers. The staff have a suitable understanding of their roles to ensure children's safety in an emergency. Fire drills are practised regularly.

Children's welfare is adequately safeguarded because staff have a sound working knowledge of child protection procedures. They have attended recent training to improve their understanding. The group is in the process of developing their procedures to make sure they meet requirements. They have copies of the relevant documentation and details of the referral routes available.

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

The provision is good.

Children's welfare is promoted successfully because they undertake a very wide range of activities and play experiences. For example, puzzles, sand, water, drawing, painting, songs and stories, which develop their emotional, social and intellectual capabilities. Staff meet children's needs through sensitive and appropriate interactions. They talk and listen to the children, maintain good eye contact and position themselves at the child's level. They are attentive and cheerfully support children with their activities. For example, junk modelling and drawing pictures. They encourage them in their role play, for example, to take the dolls for a walk in the pushchair.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff help children to learn new skills, for example, spreading butter onto crackers, using the climbing frame safely and catching balls. They are enthusiastic about learning and try to make the activities interesting for the children. They use language well to further children's thinking. They ask them questions, for example, 'what do you think we might see in the woods?' and 'what do you think is the matter with the computer?'. Children reply, 'I think I turned it off'. Staff use detailed planning which clearly shows the purpose of the activities and how they can be extended to provide challenge for more able children. Children's assessments are used to guide planning so that they build on what children already know. The teaching helps children to focus and persist for some time, for example, with puzzles and water play. Staff make good use of resources and accommodation. They work directly with the children and provide an inviting, friendly environment. However, some children lose interest at large group times because they are not fully involved in the activity. This distracts staff and they are not able to make the best use of stories and discussion times to promote children's learning.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of the curriculum. They show a willingness to solve problems, for example, they turn puzzle pieces to make them fit. They have regular opportunities to talk about their home and community through discussions during activities and themes. Children select their own activities and make decisions for themselves, for example, whether to play indoors or outside and when to have their snack.

Children interact readily with others and are confident to take part in conversations with staff, for example, they say what they have had for breakfast and what they did at the weekend. They are becoming aware of sounds in words, for example, when spelling out their names using

foam letters. However, they do not always look at books independently, or show an interest in the illustrations and print. Staff do not discuss the main characters in stories with them, or encourage them to suggest how the story might end to further promote children's reading. Children are beginning to recognise some familiar words, for example, the days of the week and their own names. Children enjoy the movement of brushes as they paint and make patterns in the sand. More able children write letter shapes during their drawings and give meanings to their marks.

Children undertake a wide variety of practical activities which focus on mathematics, such as threading and construction. They show an interest in number and counting. They count the number of children present up to 13. They count the legs on the ant. Staff extend this by asking how many more do they have than us. They count the number of jumps they do on the trampoline. Staff use mathematical language during everyday routines, for example, they say the apple is half red and half green and use the words big and little.

Children are learning to make sense of their world and acquiring skills which will help them with later work in history, geography, science and technology. They learn about the natural world by playing outside in the garden and discuss changes in the weather. They have regular opportunities to discover how things work, for example, by using pumps and wheels with the water. They experience cutting and joining using junk materials. Children confidently use everyday technology, such as computers and tape recorders. They see photographs which remind them of past events, for example, trips and outings.

Children learn through using their senses. They experience different textures, including sand, collage materials and leaves. They listen to the different noises made when they shake the bottles filled with rice, sugar or stones. They explore colour during their painting activities. Music times are held regularly. Children have easy access to musical instruments. They enjoy singing familiar songs. Children use their imagination well. They pretend to go for a walk in the woods, play families in the playhouse and make cups of coffee out of sand.

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

The provision is good.

Children develop good self-esteem and confidence because the staff give them regular praise, for example, for catching the ball in the scoop. Children's needs are met appropriately because their key workers are getting to know them well. Their likes, dislikes, and specific needs are noted on their registration forms, for example, toileting arrangements. Children with additional needs are welcomed into the group. They are given appropriate encouragement and assistance to promote their welfare and development. A basic special needs statement is in place but limited information is available to parents about the support and help provided for the children.

Children are helped to develop a positive attitude to others by using play equipment which reflects positive images of race and culture and by celebrating festivals. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They have planned opportunities to learn about themselves and the local community, for example, they visit places in the town. Visitors come into the group to talk to the children about their work. Children behave well as they learn to consider others and right from wrong. They play together cooperatively, for example, when using the rockers and playing with the water. Friendships are being formed. They walk indoors holding each others hands. They are polite and well-mannered, for example, they say 'excuse me', 'yes please' and 'thank you'. They benefit from staff adopting a consistent and positive

approach to the management of their behaviour, for example, they remind children to walk indoors.

Children's well-being is promoted by the positive relationships which have developed between staff and their parents. There is a useful exchange of information at the beginning and end of each session. Parents feel at ease in the setting and spend time chatting to each other on collection. Some come early to help with the washing up. They are very pleased with the care provided for their children and find the staff very friendly and approachable. Young children settling in at the beginning of the new term are given reassurance. With encouragement from staff they quickly become interested in an activity. Parents receive details about the activities and childcare practices by reading posters displayed in the entrance lobby. They receive sufficient information about the procedures for making complaints and the process for resolving them.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents receive detailed information about the setting when they first join. They gain further information about the early learning goals through displays and reading the group's prospectus. They feel well informed about their child's progress and are aware they can look at their child's assessment record at any time. They contribute to this process by bringing in photographs for staff to include. They are equal partners in their children's learning and bring in items for projects. They are kept informed of activities undertaken, for example, the letter of the week, through newsletters.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the playschool promotes the welfare and development of children. Committee members and staff work together as a team. Regular meetings and fund raising events are held. The group follows appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures to ensure that staff are suitable to provide care for children. The staff team are qualified and take part in annual appraisal sessions to identify their training and development needs, for example, food hygiene courses. An effective key worker system helps children to settle in and aid communication with parents. Staff provide a stimulating and interesting environment for the children and make good use of their time.

Staff keep appropriate documentation. Information relating to staff and children is stored confidentially in the office. An accurate registration system ensures ratios are maintained and children are kept safe. A visitors' book is used to record others present on the premises. Policies and procedures are readily available to parents and staff. However, some require development, for example, special needs and child protection, to give further guidance and advice to staff and parents.

The leadership and management is good. The staff team are aware of their roles and responsibilities. They work well together and meet regularly to plan. There is a detailed system to monitor and develop the provision to ensure that all children make good progress towards the early learning goals. All children are supported appropriately to achieve their potential through key worker groups and individual planning. Staff are aware of their starting points and work with parents to support their child's progress. Overall children's needs are met.

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

At the last inspection, the group agreed to develop their operational plan, policies, and procedures to meet requirements and make sure documentation is accessible to parents. There

is now sufficient information regarding the non-collection of children to give guidance to staff and the complaints policy gives details of Ofsted as the regulator. The information available regarding the support for parents of children with specific needs still requires development. All documentation is easily accessible and shared with parents.

There were two key issues arising from the last nursery education inspection. These were to ensure there are clear links between activities and the areas of learning and to provide regular opportunities for children to use books, undertake physical play and explore creative materials. The group has made good progress in all areas of the curriculum since the last inspection. However, staff are not using books and stories sufficiently to promote children's early reading skills.

### **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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### **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):

- improve the availability of fresh drinking water to children at all times
- request parental permission to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment for all children attending
- develop policies and procedures to give further guidance to staff and parents particularly with regard to special needs and child protection.

#### **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):

- review adult role and groupings of children for activities in order to make the best use of stories and discussion times to promote children's learning
- improve the use of books to further promote children's reading.

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)