

Ravenstone House-Redbourn

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY343980
Inspection date	07 September 2007
Inspector	Sheila Harrison
Setting Address	South Common, Redbourn, Hertfordshire, AL3 7NB
Telephone number	01582 792060
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Registered person	Magic Nurseries A Ltd.
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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.

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?

Ravenstone House Pre-Preparatory School and Nursery is one of six nurseries run by Magic Nurseries A Ltd. It opened in 1989 and registered under the current management in 2007. It operates from six rooms mainly on the ground floor in a converted building in the village of Redbourn close to St. Albans. Children come from a wide catchment area covering Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

A maximum of 94 children may attend the nursery and holiday playscheme at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 62 children aged from two months to under five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. The nursery is willing to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 16 members of staff. Over half the staff have appropriate early years qualifications including a qualified teacher. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are very well nourished. They enjoy a varied and healthy menu with freshly prepared ingredients including plentiful fruit and vegetables. Children have good appetites and eat sufficient amounts, try new tastes and use appropriate cutlery. Mealtimes are social occasions with children and staff eating together. Children are encouraged to independently serve themselves. Their dietary needs are well protected as the nursery has a secure system of table mats with space for the child's photograph, full name and text detailing the child's food allergies and preferences. Cards are colour-coded to ensure staff are immediately aware of the particular food children must avoid. Children have free access to drinking water. There are suitable jugs and cups in each room.

Children are learning simple hygiene routines as they wash their hands and are encouraged to wipe their own noses. Hand cleaning gel is freely available to staff to minimise the spread of infection. Children are well protected in an emergency as most staff have first aid training and suitable first aid equipment is available in the setting. Parents are informed of all accidents on the day of the incident. Staff set up systems in discussion with parents to help children succeed at toilet training. Children can rest and sleep in peaceful surroundings according to their individual needs and circumstances.

Children make adequate progress in their physical development. They develop self-confidence in their physical skills as they move with control and co-ordination within the premises. Children enjoy sufficient chances to play outside every day in the fresh air. They enjoy a range of sit-and-ride toys and the climbing frame. Children have some chances to exercise rigorously through the weekly exercise sessions. However, they are not fully encouraged to revisit this learning whilst using the garden during free-play times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-maintained and welcoming setting. They are developing a sense of belonging as they enjoy examining the displays of photographs of themselves at play. There is a wide range of comfortable furniture and flooring to give a bright and inviting atmosphere. The premises are well-ventilated as staff ensure the windows are open. Resources are safe, well made and of good quality, many in natural materials. Children are encouraged to choose, use and replace the toys which are appropriate for their stage of development and attractively displayed at their height. Their independence is encouraged as young children access the dustpan and brush to sweep up the sand from the floor. Equipment is clean, safe and regularly checked.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe as they are gently reminded of setting's rules and the consequences of their actions. For example, what will happen if they continue to run indoors. They are familiar with the fire evacuation procedures and staff ensure children are confident to participate.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are aware of the child protection policy and know who to contact if there are any concerns. Most staff have completed the in-house child protection training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well upon arrival and have a friendly relationship with the staff. They are helped to leave their main carer and individual comforters are respected. The children's sense of trust is increased and well supported through the key-worker scheme. Children are motivated and engrossed in a broad range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate indoor and outside activities. They are enthusiastic as they make choices about their play. Staff are confident to change the planned routine from their observations. They encourage the children to quickly tidy up and go out into the garden. Staff support children's care and learning as they are beginning to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to observe children's achievements and to plan activities in line with each child's individual development and interests.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make sound progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a thorough understanding of the Foundation Stage including the areas of learning and stepping stones. They give careful attention to planning a stimulating, well-organised and well-resourced learning environment to develop children's independence and positive attitudes to learning. Staff are currently changing the observation and recording systems to identify children's achievements and interests. This information is used to help children move to the next steps in their learning. Staff make effective use of the indoor and outdoor accommodation to enable children to attain the early learning goals. There is a broad range of construction, musical instruments and mark-making equipment easily available. They use the time to good effect as learning activities are developed throughout the nursery day. Children explore the properties of wet sand and follow the water through a range of pipes and siphons in the water tray as they use the studio at the end of the day.

Children have valuable opportunities to extend their learning outside. They care for living things as they carefully place the ladybird in a bush after they count its spots. They are encouraged to learn on a larger, more active scale as the younger children begin to write the first letter of their name by using a large paint brush and water outside on the paving slabs. Staff inspire the children's creativity as they make up stories about the fairies living in the holes in a wall.

Children are excited and motivated to learn as staff intervene adequately to support their curiosity. On finding a large spider the children observe the parts of the body through a magnifying glass and staff display a photograph to record the event. Staff use carefully framed questions to encourage children to demonstrate what they know and understand. They ensure the children can remember what they have learnt from their observations of the spider. Children enjoy and fully participate in a music session. They move to the rhythms of the music and are given information on how to hold the musical instruments correctly to produce a clear sound. Children learn from each other as a child skilled in the use of scissors engages the other children's interest. Staff adapt a planned activity to include using scissors to expand this interest and develop their skills.

Children's imagination is supported through a favourite story of 'Handa's Surprise'. A stimulating range of props are displayed to allow them to retell the story. Staff have plans to extend the role play area but this is not currently fully available to the children to extend their play based on their own experiences.

Staff challenge the children and expect the most from them. An apple tasting activity includes the children using their sense of taste, making a graph of their favourite type of apple and it encourages them to see the different shades of colour as they compare the green of the apple peel to the green of the grass. Children competently count and show an interest in numbers as they enjoy games of bingo linked to the theme on autumn. They behave well and show consideration for others.

Children can link sounds and letters as they independently find the letters of their names within the text in books and on their table mats. The older more able children receive one-to-one support as they begin a recognised reading scheme.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and are developing secure relationships as staff are readily available to welcome children and parents on an individual basis. Their independence is suitably encouraged. For example, babies and toddlers can reach the toys stored at their level. Older children serve themselves at meal times.

Children are beginning to understand their own needs and to respect the needs of others. They have the opportunity to play alone or in small groups and are beginning to form friendships. Young children are given very useful strategies to stop the unwelcome attention of others. Older children take turns and start to negotiate when building a model in the construction area. They contribute to the list of rules. Staff provide consistent and useful role models for children. Praise is freely given to the children ensuring they understand when they have done well. Good manners are encouraged and children respond suitably with 'please' and 'thank you' without prompting. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. There is a satisfactory system to identify children's needs and to ensure they receive appropriate support strategies. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequately supported as staff attend suitable training and they seek advice from outside agencies when necessary.

Children are learning about the wider world as they discuss the seasons and observe the weather in the garden. They acknowledge important events in their lives and some festivals. Children are encouraged to feel valued and free from discrimination as the play materials reflect diversity and show positive images of boys and girls.

Parents are well informed of the children's development as they are invited to frequent parents evenings. Records kept on the children's progress are shared with the parents and they can contribute their views on the children's development. The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Parents are generally involved in their child's learning as the nursery produces activity sheets with ideas to extend the children's learning at home, linked to the current theme. Older children take their reading books home and staff give advice on how the reading scheme operates. However, some parents are not fully informed of the delivery of the curriculum to enable all to work together to support the children's well-being.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by the effective organisation. There is a robust recruitment procedure ensuring staff are suitable and well introduced to the setting. Staff understand and follow the

comprehensive policies and procedures to support children's comfort and security. They ensure agency staff are suitably briefed to protect the children's welfare. Records are maintained to a high standard. However, some documentation relating to the register does not fully support the children's safety.

Children benefit from the positive and proactive approach of the nursery staff who are conscientious and have a long term commitment to the setting. Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of childcare. They undertake professional childcare qualifications and attend a range of short courses.

Staff are well deployed to meet the child:adult ratios. They have good arrangements for exchange of information with parents. This helps children feel valued and nursery staff to understand the needs of individual children. Suitable daily routines are in place to support the needs of the children. However, after tea, occasionally staff are not always available to fully cope with children's personal needs.

Leadership and management are good. Staff are committed to improving the education of children. They have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage as they monitor teaching and learning by using the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage'. Valuable support and advice is available from the operational manager and quality assurance manager. This is discussed within the staff team and during team meetings to spread good practice and to identify strengths and weaknesses. This informs the self-evaluation procedure for the setting. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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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):

- ensure the daily record of children looked after on the premises and the names of the persons who looked after them are clear as to the children's and staff's movements and staff deployment.

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):

- enhance opportunities for role play and vigorous physical exercise
- communicate the curriculum to parents more 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