

Little Owls Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127336
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Inspector	Melissa Turner
Setting Address	Toc H Hall, 78 Cambrian Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9HW.
Telephone number	07884 015759
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Registered person	The Trustees of Little Owls Pre School Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 Owls Pre-School is committee run and opened in approximately 1970. It operates from the TOC H Hall in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 until 11.45 during term time only. During the last two terms children may stay until 1pm on a Thursday when they bring a packed lunch. Children do not have access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 19 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children understand the need to keep themselves healthy as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as after using the toilet and before snack time. They have use of a portable sink situated near the painting activity to ensure they can wash their hands with fresh running water at all times. Staff encourage good practices with children, such as reminding them to cough with their hands over their mouths and talk about why they need to do that. Staff wash tables with hot soapy water before they are used at snack time, and have sound procedures for nappy changing, such as wearing gloves and disposable aprons, and cleansing the mat after use. These aspects help to avoid the spread of infection. Suitable systems are in place to ensure that staff are aware of dietary requirements, are able to deal with emergencies and illness and have sufficient first aid qualified staff present on a daily basis. However, evidence is not available for two of the three first aid qualifications reported to have been completed.

Children enjoy healthy snacks on a daily basis, such as cereal, carrot sticks and apple pieces. They pour milk or water to drink and have access to fresh drinking water at all other times to ensure they remain hydrated. Although no outdoor play area is available, children enjoy daily opportunities for physical play. A physical activity is set up every day for children, such as balancing beams and a see-saw. Other activities are offered, such as the trampoline, ride on toys and a balancing step and balancing dance board. Other activities, such as music and movement, sports sessions and use of the parachute are offered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming hall which is organised to allow space for activities and resources within all areas of learning. Some of the children's work is displayed but restrictions mean only a limited number are allowed. Children have access to a suitable range of toys and equipment which are set up for them daily and rotated regularly. Free access to all the activities is limited to those set out for children, however, staff encourage children to choose other toys if they wish and note this on the board. Some aspects of the layout require further development to ensure it is well organised and used, and inviting for children.

Children are kept safe because security is well maintained, risk assessments are completed and a safe environment is offered through appropriate equipment, such as radiator and socket covers. Staff encourage children to keep themselves safe through the sessions, such as reminding them not to run. However, hot drinks consumed by staff at the snack table pose a potential risk to children. Fire drills are practised to help protect children in the event of a fire and brief evacuation records are kept. Detailed risk assessments are completed for outings, helping to keep children safe when they leave the premises. The nominated person for child protection has a sound awareness of child protection issues. This helps keep children appropriately safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and happy and arrive with confidence. They enter the setting with enthusiasm greeting their friends and staff, and settle down to activities of their choice quickly.

Staff help children to feel settled and at ease because they support them well and engage them in conversations. Younger children are cared for well, although no written evidence is available to show how their development is planned for in line with the Birth to three matters framework. Children's needs are met well and they appear happy and settled at the pre-school.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some staff support children well and encourage them to think and make progress through discussions and interaction. However, this is not consistent amongst all staff, as they miss opportunities to challenge children. Some offer more of a supervisory role rather than encouraging the children to learn to their full ability through their play. At times children are not extended; staff intervene but do not always give children enough space and time to do or complete things for themselves. Some staff show a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage of education, recognising children's individual abilities and helping them to make progress accordingly. However, others demonstrate they do not fully understand the aims and objectives of activities and do not always help children achieve. A planning system is in place identifying activities planned over the course of the week; however, this does not support the newer or less experienced staff in understanding the aims of activities, and how they can help children to make progress along the stepping stones.

Children do make progress in all areas of learning. They show good levels of independence as they pour their own drinks, help to tidy away and are encouraged by staff to learn how to fasten their own coats. Children show confidence as they interact with one another and staff, talking about their home lives and events that are important to them. Children develop their mathematical skills as they count one another at group time and understand simple challenges as they sing songs, such as 'five currant buns'. They work out confidently how many more they need. Some staff use mathematical language with children, such as full and empty and children benefit from shape activities to help them develop a concept of shape. However, they are not always extended in this area.

Children communicate well and enjoy listening to stories. However, they do not readily access the book corner at other times, and it is not always organised to create an inviting easily accessible space. Children enjoy mark making opportunities as they use paint on a screen and a small range of mark making resources, such as small paints and paint brushes and coloured pencils. This range limits children in being able to widely express themselves creatively. However, children enjoy using a note pad and pencil to create a 'shopping list' of the healthy items they intend to 'buy'. Children enjoy opportunities for exploration as they use their hands to explore and create swirls in the paint on a paint screen. They look at the interest table, handling cones, feathers and magnets. Children enjoy the sand tray although this is organised in a way that limits children's accessibility, they also enjoy playing with their toys in the gravel. Children develop an awareness of cultures and beliefs through planned activities, such as Eid, Chinese New year and Ramadan. They are able to access a limited range of resources to promote technology, such as a tape recorder. A computer is available but used infrequently.

Children thoroughly enjoy the opportunities to be creative. They delight as they mix the paint with their hands on the paint screen, using paper to take a print of the patterns they have made. They also enjoy the marble painting activity. Children access the musical instruments regularly; they enjoy exploring sounds from a rain maker, bells and cymbals. However they are not always extended at this activity. Children access the home corner regularly; they enjoy dressing up and playing with the dolls and play food. However this area is not always attractively presented or organised. Children thoroughly enjoy singing and confidently select the picture

of the nursery rhyme they wish to sing; they are also given the opportunity to sing on their own if they wish, which some children do with confidence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are treated well as individuals. Staff offer children encouragement and support and as a result they are settled and confident. Staff offer all children the opportunity to have a go at an activity, encouraging those that might be less keen. Staff talk to children about their home lives and families, helping them to feel settled and secure. Children learn about the diversity of our society through a range of resources and planned activities. Parents and visitors are also invited in to share their knowledge, language and skills. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are extremely well supported and cared for by staff who are both sensitive and confident in their approach; this includes a nominated special needs co-ordinator. On occasions staff use sign language to communicate with children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are happy, settled and occupied and well behaved. They respond well to staff's positive manner; staff praise children frequently and use positive signs, such as 'thumbs up'. Children are encouraged to use good manners and are thanked for helping at tidy up time. At the end of the session children enjoy receiving a 'golden egg' from the chicken for doing something extra special, and then receive a sticker. Children delight as they are chosen, showing their stickers with pride.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to be involved by helping, getting involved on the committee or meeting with staff. They are provided with information, such as newsletters, a parent's pack and an information board. Annual open evenings are held and parents are encouraged to look at their children's records at any time. Parents receive some information about the Foundation Stage of education. They report they are happy with their children's care and education. Consequently, satisfactory systems are in place to enable staff to work in partnership with parents.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the setting is acceptable; consequently, staff are promoting satisfactory outcomes for children. A range of documentation is in place; however, there are some minor omissions and revisions that are needed, for example, ensuring the complaints policy has the correct address recorded. Although attempts are reported to have been made, Ofsted have not received information about new committee members; this is a legal requirement. Staff operate a well run session with a satisfactorily organised approach ensuring children enjoy a variety of experiences and activities. However, at times the environment could be further organised to promote children's learning opportunities. Informal systems are in place for the recruitment, vetting and induction of new staff with some paperwork available to support this.

Staff maintain extremely good ratios, enabling them to offer good levels of care to the children. Three of the eight staff are currently qualified and the supervisor ensures that 50% of qualified staff are available on a daily basis. Currently, however, the deputy manager does not have the right level of qualification. All staff undergo a suitable police check, which helps to safeguard children.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are supported by a committed supervisor and work well as a team, although some staff changes have occurred recently. Some informal systems are in place for assessing strengths and weaknesses of both staff and the setting, such as a staff appraisal system and recording areas for improvement on action plans. Staff contribute to the planning for funded children but clear evaluations are not kept. Systems to review and make improvements at the pre-school could be further developed. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in October 2004, staff were set recommendations in relation to both care and nursery education. Snack time has now been organised to ensure that children wash their hands beforehand, helping to avoid the spread of infection. The child protection policy now contains the required detail.

Staff have introduced more opportunities for children to learn about other cultures and children enjoy frequent multicultural activities and have access to resources promoting this area. The short term planning and the level of challenge offered to children both still require improvement. Staff have implemented action plans to help them monitor their provision, however, these are limited and little evaluation currently takes place. Some areas require further development and, consequently, have been set as recommendations at this inspection.

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.

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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 hot drinks are not consumed at children's level
- ensure Ofsted are notified of all changes of committee
- ensure a suitably qualified deputy is available
- ensure evidence of all staff qualifications are available and that all required paperwork is up to date and in line with the relevant National Standards

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):

- ensure staff offer challenges to children in all activities, thus extending their thinking and ability to make good progress, and allowing them to learn fully through their play
- further develop the organisation and presentation of the environment
- further develop planning to ensure it supports all staff in understanding aims and objectives of activities and links in with children's next steps and observations of their progress

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