

Herald House

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY279983
Inspection date	26 February 2008
Inspector	Hazel McLean / Daphne Angell
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Registered person	Daybreak Nurseries LTD
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Herald House is run by Daybreak Nurseries Ltd. The day nursery opened in 2004 and operates from six rooms in a three-storey building. It is situated close to the train station in Amersham, Buckinghamshire. A maximum of 45 children may attend the day nursery at any one time. The day nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 19.00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 60 plus children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 are funded for nursery education. The nursery provides care for children who speak English as an additional language and children with disabilities and /or learning difficulties.

The day nursery employs 19 staff. Eleven of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and well-being is given high priority. Most staff are fully trained in first aid. This enables them to give children appropriate care if an accident occurs. Parents provide prior written consent to emergency treatment, or in case medication is to be administered. Staff maintain appropriate records of accidents and medication given to children. Children who are ill do not attend.

Children develop awareness of good hygiene in their daily routines as they learn about washing away germs before meals and after using the toilet. While toddlers and younger children are assisted and gently guided in these tasks, greater expectations are placed on the older, pre-school children who use the bathroom areas independently. Children are starting to learn about dental hygiene as they brush their teeth after lunch. The use of paper towels and lidded bins minimises the risk of contamination and cross-infection.

Children are provided with a well balanced, nutritious diet and menus are rotated to provide choice and variety. Children obviously enjoy the social aspect of mealtimes. Older children engage in conversation with adults and readily tuck into their food, while babies smile and gurgle, gazing wonderingly in anticipation of their next mouthful. Toddlers receive praise and encouragement as staff give gentle reminders about good eating habits. Staff are very familiar with children's specific dietary needs and demonstrate a sensitive approach as they answer children's questions and explain why some of them only eat certain foods. Special dietary food and vegetarian alternatives are presented tastefully and where possible, to closely reflect meals on the main menu. Children have ready access to drinking water which is easily accessible from water fountains sited around the nursery. Young babies are given food and drink in accordance with their individual needs and parents' wishes. There are good facilities available for the storage and hygienic preparation of feeds. Food intake is recorded and shared with parents.

Children of all ages participate in active indoor and outdoor physical play which increases their balance, coordination and large muscle skills. They use wheeled toys, such as tricycles and push-along trucks, with increasing skill and are supported by staff. Children enjoy circle games outdoors, involving running, walking, going 'around ' and 'under,' in' and 'out', while music and movement regularly takes place indoors and helps children to understand the dimensions and capabilities of their own bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe in a warm and comfortable environment that is adequately furnished to meet their needs. The nursery is bright and cheerful, thus enhancing the exciting atmosphere created by the children and staff. Some parts of the nursery are in excellent order, such as the Sunbeams' sleep and play rooms, which provide extremely refreshing, yet soothing environments to nurture young babies and involve them in rest and play routines. Other areas, while adequately maintained, provide less inspiring décor as some displays are insecurely mounted and do not always present as valuing children's own work. In Sunset room, the edge of the carpet is worn and presents a tripping hazard. Children are kept safe as they play indoors and outdoors.

Staff are quick to respond to children's needs, helping younger children to master control of tricycles and pedal around independently. They closely supervise children as they move up or downstairs, to and from the garden. They keep a close eye on the step by step movement of toddlers, while encouraging appropriate independence of older children, encouraging them to hold the rail when coming downstairs and stay focussed on what they are doing. Toys and equipment are maintained to good safety standards and regularly checked. Stair gates are in place at each level. This ensures children only have supervised access to stairs.

Staff implement procedures which ensure health and safety is high on their agenda and that they are well prepared in case of emergency. For instance, fire drill practice is carried out regularly and the outcomes monitored in order to evaluate where improvements can be made. Appropriate systems are in place for fire detection and evacuation, with all safety equipment being regularly checked. Daily risk assessments are carried out and these are generally effective in ensuring the premises are hazard-free. The provider responds with alacrity to health and safety concerns and staff are given appropriate direction to support new guidelines. For instance, a new catch is in place to improve the safety of the fire escape door in the Sunflower room, procedures regarding use of the door are displayed and all staff adhere to these.

The nursery has appropriate policies and procedures for the protection of children. These are shared with parents through the policy booklet and are based on Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), procedures. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of how to recognise abuse and are aware of the immediate steps to take if they had a concern about a child, although there are some inconsistencies in their understanding of what happens next and how the nursery policy links with the expectations of LSCB procedures. The provider is available to support staff and has immediate plans to consolidate their understanding, therefore, children's well-being continues to be protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and babies enjoy a range of activities suitable for their ages and different stages of development. They are very happy in their various occupations, from babies having a wonderful time pouring water into containers, toddlers enjoying the freedom to explore natural materials and two year olds intently focussed on sorting wooden shapes. Children's care is supported by the use of a key worker system to keep a close eye on children's development. Staff record children's progress in developmental plans and daily diaries which are regularly shared with parents.

Children of all ages take part in creative activities, such as making Mothers Day cards. Young children sprinkle glitter on to cards prepared by staff. Older children bake cakes, chalk and draw.

Older children go on walks to local parks or playgrounds and visit the local woods. There is an outside play area for children to use. Older children use this to good effect for running, jumping, pushing prams and playing group games. However, currently the whole available area outside is not used to full capacity to fully extend children's play.

Staff encourage children's communication development. They talk to the children, and when children are ready, they introduce activities to promote letter recognition, such as, colouring in sheets with the letter of their name.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff plan a range of age-appropriate activities to promote children's learning; these are linked to the stepping stones. Staff have recently begun to do formal evaluation of these activities.

There is a key worker system in place. The key worker carries out regular observations of their key children to plot their progress in learning. In addition, the key worker groups are used for specific activities to extend children's learning, for example, relating to number and letter recognition. Examples of work done by the children are stored within their folder and are used for updating their developmental record. Some staff within the room have attended Foundation Stage training to secure their knowledge and understanding of nursery education and how children learn. Children's developmental records from their previous room follow them when they join Sunset room. This gives staff an idea of children's starting points. They also obtain information from parents at this stage to further confirm the developmental stage of their child.

Plans incorporate topics. The current topic is 'Countries', with India being the country of the week. Staff plan for children to explore this topic through such activities as eating Naan bread or making bangles. Previous topics have included 'People who help us'.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is developing very well. Children are very confident. They act as helper of the day and do tasks, such as, heading the line when children go outside. Children have an understanding about sharing. They discuss, 'we'll get a turn'. Children wait patiently at snack and lunchtime. They help to tidy up, putting toys into the correct boxes or containers and carry them to the shelves. They take an active part in group activities, such as, sharing the stirring, smelling ingredients when making play dough to take home.

Children are skilled in communicating and using language for thinking. Staff support children's language and literacy by labelling equipment. There is an area identified for practising emergent writing. There is also a Book Area for children to use, which contains a range of age-appropriate books. In addition, staff have made a number of 'home made books' which contain pictures of various aspects of the nursery, such as, 'Our Morning at Nursery'. Children also listen to stories at group time. Children are beginning to recognise their names and are able to spell out simple names. They learn to recognise their names at snack and lunchtime.

Children are becoming skilled in counting. They count out cups of flour for members of staff making play dough or pieces of toast at snack time. Some children are very skilled, counting up to 30. Children have opportunities to explore weight, size and shape. They weigh play food and put this into pots of different sizes. Children have opportunities for 'matching' games, such as, when making up plates of food whilst playing 'Tummy Ache'. Children learn about patterns, for example, when making apple prints.

Children have opportunities to investigate. Photographs record children's visits to local woods and how they investigate the insects they find there. Children use the sand tray in the outside play area with staff supervision; they search for toy animals hidden in the sand, feeling the texture. Children take part in a group activity making play dough, feeling and smelling the ingredients. Children visit the local community, such as the local library and park. They are becoming aware of other cultures and countries through the topic of 'Countries'. They are aware of other languages through various notices and displays, such as 'Frere Jacques'. Children

can also have Spanish lessons as an optional extra. There is a computer available to promote children's IT skills.

Children have daily opportunities to extend their physical skills. They have regular visits to the outside play area to promote their large muscle skills, and use this for running, jumping, pushing prams. Staff discuss that other equipment, such as bikes and hoops, is also available. However, the outside play area is not used to its full potential to further extend and support children's learning. Children have opportunities to progress their small muscles, using knives and forks with skill at mealtimes. They are beginning to take an active part in maintaining their own health, for example, cleaning their teeth after lunch.

Staff ensure that there are planned activities within the curriculum for children to have opportunities to be creative. However, activities tend to be planned or adult directed, which does not allow, for example, opportunities for free painting on a daily basis. In addition, children's work is not sufficiently displayed within the room to celebrate their creative achievements. Children have opportunities to use their imagination through planned activities. For example, they pretend to be lions, cheetahs or turtles in outside play. There is a variety of Home Corner equipment and dressing up clothes available. However, the free use of these is not sufficiently planned into the curriculum to further support children's imaginative development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are very relaxed and comfortable in the setting. They are given opportunities to join in all activities and participate in ongoing social play. Staff are welcoming in their approach and body language, positively encouraging children's interaction and involvement. They listen avidly to children's spontaneous comments and respond with enthusiasm during the conversations engendered. Staff are keen to provide an inclusive environment and help all children feel welcome. They are aware of how to promote this and take steps to support children in valuing differences and diversity. This has started to feature across all aspects of the nursery, through displays of children's activities, festival charts and play materials, such as, dolls of different races and reading materials. Topic work on the World map being led by staff and older children has generated ideas across the nursery and gives opportunities for children to experience new foods and gain an understanding of diversity in the wider community. While no children with disabilities or learning difficulties currently attend, the staff show through their willingness, adaptability and strong sense of purpose, that they are able to work closely with parents to plan and provide an environment where such needs are addressed.

Children have extremely good relationships with adults, receiving praise and encouragement in their daily routines. Staff guide children with quiet reassurance and gentle reminders which helps them consider the needs of others as they play harmoniously. As a result, all children are very well behaved. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are warmly invited into the setting and speak highly of staff and their approach to caring for their children. They receive regular information about their child's day, verbally from staff, as well as in the form of daily diaries for younger children. They have access to a number of notice boards, where they can see at a glance, for instance, staff qualifications, latest news, topics and planning and forthcoming events. They are given a comprehensive parents' pack on entry to the nursery. This includes an attractively designed booklet outlining the nursery's policies and procedures, and various feedback and information sheets which are completed

with a staff member. This enables staff to become familiar with vital information about each child's needs and arrange the settling in process to take account of this.

Partnership with parents relating to nursery education is satisfactory. Parents receive a Welcome Pack when their children join Sunset room. This includes some information about the Foundation Stage. Staff use the child's ongoing development records within the nursery to identify children's starting points on the stepping stones. Quarterly parents' evenings are organised to discuss children's educational progress alongside daily feedback. Parents are free to look at the children's records at any time and staff are always available to discuss children's progress with parents. Regular questionnaires are also sent to parents to obtain their views on any aspect of the nursery provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff present as well informed and knowledgeable. They regularly attend training and have access to a training programme which coincides with their development plans and the appraisal process. The recruitment processes are fair and open, with potential staff being subject to rigorous vetting procedures before commencement of employment. Appropriate staff records are maintained to a high level of confidentiality. The nursery is part of a wider organisation and is supported by well organised documentation and paperwork.

Children's well-being, safety and development is promoted well through good organisation which stems from management policies being implemented by staff in their daily routines and interactions with the children. The staff team functions as an extremely strong unit under the leadership of the acting manager, with each individual demonstrating a responsible and adaptable approach to the needs of the organisation in the provision of good care for the children. They are flexible and readily adapt to fit in with ad hoc requests and spontaneous changes in routine. Ratios are adhered to in all areas of the building and staff move around to ensure there are no gaps, particularly at break times. This happens smoothly and seamlessly as staff are very willing and cooperative. A keyworker system ensures that each child's care is prioritised by a responsible adult and that suitable provision is made within the daily planning and room organisation to meet individual needs. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management relating to nursery education are satisfactory. Staff working with the funded children are enthusiastic and committed to their work. They take a full part in the activities that they plan for children. Staff working with the funded children have regular discussions and meetings about the effectiveness of the curriculum and for planning purposes. However, some weaknesses are identified in the quality of teaching and learning which have not yet been addressed. Staff are to introduce a Free Flow system within the area providing nursery education with effect from 1 March 2008. As this is yet to be implemented the effect on the nursery education children is not yet evident. Staff have annual appraisals to identify any training needs. They access courses through Buckinghamshire County Council. Staff are currently in the process of attending training in preparation for the implementation of the forthcoming Early Years Foundation Stage.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, a recommendation was made to ensure children's easier access to a varied range of activities and resources; including positive images of the world. The nursery has started to address this by providing a wider range of accessible play materials and resources

which reflect positive images of diversity. Children celebrate festivals such as Eid and through a world theme, children are introduced to a variety of new experiences, food and customs. This helps them to value diversity and become familiar with the traditions of other races and cultures. Staff recognise the need to continue to make resources more accessible for older children and have made firm plans to support this through free-flow play.

Nursery education not applicable.

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 that the carpet in Sunset room is made completely safe

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):

- provide a balance of child led and adult led activities, to ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to initiate their own activities and extend their learning
- review the use of the outside play area to provide additional opportunities for children to extend their development and learning (also applies to care)
- ensure that children have sufficient access to activities and materials to provide freedom of expression, creativity and imagination (also applies to care).

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