



The Firs

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY307619
Inspection date	22 June 2006
Inspector	Tracy Larnach
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Registered person	Ms E. Norris and Dr. T. Hooper
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 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?

St Barts Nursery, The Firs, is one of four settings run by St Barts Day Nurseries. It opened in 2001. The nursery occupies a detached house and uses five rooms for the children's work and play plus an office, kitchen and toilets. It is a privately owned setting and is situated in the coastal town of Sandwich in Kent.

A maximum of 45 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 throughout the year. Children attend a

variety of sessions each week. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 61 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery serves families from the local area and other areas in and around Kent. It currently supports children with special educational needs, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 18 staff. There are 14 staff who work with the children. Of these, 12 staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff members are working towards a qualification.

The nursery receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children get the opportunity to learn about health and hygiene through the daily routine; for example, they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet or being changed. Older children use the toilet and wash their hands independently. However, the staff do not give them gentle reminders when they return to the classroom to ensure this is happening. Children know why they wash their hands and talk about germs making them ill. There is liquid soap and paper towels to help prevent the spread of infection. Staff use appropriate practices to promote hygiene; for example, they use gloves, aprons and antibacterial spray. However, staff do not wash their hands between applying the children's individual sunscreens to ensure no adverse reactions. Staff are employed to clean the nursery and it is clean and hygienic. In addition, bins are emptied regularly throughout the day. There is a sick child policy, an adequate amount of staff trained in first aid and parental permission for emergency medical advice and treatment. As a result, staff are able to act in the best interests of children should they have an accident or become ill. However, the medication records are missing parent signatures to show they have acknowledged when medicine has been given.

Food is provided by the nursery. There is a four week menu to ensure that children receive a variety of different meals. The food is healthy with alternatives for children on special diets. This means that children are not made to feel excluded and remain safe. Information about the children's dietary requirements is displayed appropriately and staff are alerted to the signs and symptoms should a child have a reaction so they can act quickly. The nursery provides healthy meals and snacks; for example, roast chicken, fresh vegetables and yoghurt. Snacks include; fruit, raw vegetables, breadsticks, cheese and crackers. Children are learning about making healthy choices and are well nourished. At snack and meal times children sit together and staff encourage them to serve themselves; however, they do not routinely sit with the children to act as good role models. Water is available throughout the nursery so that children remain hydrated.

Physical play is part of the daily routine; for example, babies develop their physical skills as they pull themselves up to a standing position or walk pushing wheeled toys. All the children eagerly access the garden and become involved in a range of activities. Older children enjoy ride-on toys and running up and down the mounds in the garden. Children use a range of equipment with developing control; for example, spades, bikes, a balancing beam and a climbing frame. These activities contribute to their physical wellbeing and good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery is secure. There is an effective system in place for monitoring visitors and an arrival and collection procedure to keep children safe. The staff have parental permissions on file; for example, for outings. Children are protected from the sun with hats and sunscreen. In addition, staff are good role models and wear hats outside. Sunscreen is regularly applied by the staff. However, the nursery has not obtained parental permission as parents have all provided their own creams. Most of the staff have a satisfactory knowledge of child protection to ensure the welfare of children. However, there are staff who are unsure of the procedures. A system is in place for risk assessing to ensure hazards are identified and addressed. In addition, accident records are regularly reviewed for any patterns. As a result, children are kept safe. Staff are aware of the current recommendations for laying babies down to sleep so they are laid down appropriately. Staff are familiar with the fire evacuation plan. However, evacuation has not been practised regularly to ensure all children become familiar with the procedure. There is a system in place to ensure the attendance record is accurate so children are accounted for at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive happily at the nursery and are welcomed by name. Staff are caring in their interactions; for example, babies are cuddled and given a favourite activity to settle them. Babies and toddlers are happy and content. The younger babies enjoy treasure baskets and explore using their senses. Babies who are beginning to walk are given walkers to practise their skills. They benefit from being outside in the fresh air and enjoy making noises with rattles in the shade. Staff talk to them and praise them for their achievements promoting their self esteem. In the older babies' room, children enjoy saying each other's names as they say 'hello'. They smile with pleasure as they hear their name, giving them a sense of belonging. They become aware of themselves as they find their body parts. They clearly enjoy singing songs especially when they have actions which develops their language and coordination. In the two-year-olds' room children use their imaginations as they play in the role play area. Photographs show the younger children participating in activities such as play dough, dressing up and washing dolls. All children love playing outside where they have many opportunities to explore using their senses; for example, in the sand, water and play dough.

All staff working with children under three are using the Birth to three matters framework. They plan around a theme or use the Birth to three matters books to choose and provide activities that the children can all participate in at their own particular level. For example, there is evidence in the baby room of the babies experimenting with cold spaghetti, icing sugar and enjoying baby massage. Staff regularly observe the children but have not yet developed the use of observation to plan activities to meet the children's individual needs and give them the opportunities to practise their skills. As a result, not all activities are developmentally appropriate for the younger children; for example, long group times when children become restless and colouring with coloured pencils which are difficult for them to use.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. The room used by the funded children is arranged well and the children are able to independently select from the toys and activities available. Staff have an adequate knowledge of the early learning goals and stepping stones. The regular staff take turns in completing the planning. This is developing; for example, themes evolve from the children's interests and the role play is changed to support them. Children are currently learning about pirates and a pirate ship is being created in the role play area. The staff have made photo stories about the themes so the children can re-visit them. Staff observe their key children and document the observations on a daily sheet that is shared with the parents. However, although the focused area of learning is circled and observations are documented, the next steps for the children's learning are not interpreted using the observations. This means the observations are not being used effectively to plan and staff have no clear developmental records. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. However, it is difficult to see whether it is because of the activities and if all children are being challenged appropriately.

Children interact well and talk with others confidently. They use speech to explore real and imagined experiences; for example, a group of children were watching shadows on the wall as they ate their snack pretending they were ghosts. There are opportunities to link sounds to letters; for example, children have letters and letter activities available and staff interact positively with them talking about the letters and sounds as they play. As a result, many of the children are able to identify some letter sounds. In addition, there is a letter of the week; however, this is presented at circle time, when some children lose interest. Children are developing a love of books and visit the reading area independently. Consequently, they are learning that print carries meaning. Children mark make on a large white board and have access to tools in the writing area. However, there is little evidence of children's attempts to write their names on their work. Children do not have name cards to help them become familiar with their name. They do, however, have their own labelled trays and pegs for their personal belongings. This gives them a sense of belonging in the group. Children used some numbers during play; for example, on the key pad on the role play door and numbers on matching and sorting activities. However, children are not encouraged to count throughout the session. In addition, there is little opportunity to use numbers in simple addition and subtraction during practical activities. Children learn about space, shape and measure as they complete puzzles, fill containers with water, and play with sand. Children use language to describe shape, position, size and quantity; for example, as they planned the pirate ship.

Children build with different bricks developing their design and making skills as they make different structures. The computer is a popular activity and the children have become competent at using the mouse. Children learn about time as they talk about their home life, what they did yesterday and plan themes and activities. They know the routine and are able to explain what happens next during the day. They find out about the world as they visit local places of interest, for example, Farming World. A French teacher regularly visits the children. She works with the staff to compliment the theme. As a result, the children are learning about other languages in the wider world. Children clearly enjoy exploring different media developing their creativity. They are able to create with play dough, paint, glue and glitter and have lots of choice in how they use these materials. A music teacher visits weekly to encourage an interest in music. She has begun to share her ideas with the staff so that children who do not attend on the day she comes can have similar experiences. However, children have few opportunities to access instruments as they have to be brought down from the sensory room. Children sing songs from memory and clearly enjoy singing. They use their imaginations as they role play; for example, some children were wearing construction hats revisiting a previous theme. Staff provide a range of outdoor activities for the children. They clearly enjoy being outside; however, the activities are not planned to ensure the six areas of learning are reflected in a challenging and interesting way.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled. They cooperate well and show care and concern for each other. Staff are kind and caring in their interactions. However, not all staff use best practice for behaviour management as children do not always receive clear explanations about any unwanted behaviour, which is confusing for them. Staff praise the children for their achievements. This develops their self esteem. Children are encouraged to take care of their needs and are becoming independent; for example, they put an apron on to paint and the older children go to the toilet independently. Positive images of culture, gender, ethnicity and disability are reflected in the environment, and special holidays and traditions are acknowledged. Children with English as an additional language attend the setting and staff use appropriate strategies to settle them in. A special educational needs coordinator works with outside agencies to develop individual educational plans as appropriate.

The funded children are interested and motivated to learn; for example, they were excited when they discovered the bugs outside and were clearly thrilled with the progress of the pirate ship. The environment is prepared so that children can self select. Many positive relationships have been established amongst the children and adults. Funded children are well behaved, take turns and share. They learn right from wrong because staff talk to them about being kind to each other. They help to care for the nursery's pet hamster, taking turns to look after him at weekends, which teaches them responsibility. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are greeted warmly and are

welcome in the nursery. They are happy with the care and feel that they can readily approach the staff and the manager with any concerns. Parents receive a copy of policies and procedures and the complaints log is available for them to view. Information is posted about the Foundation Stage. Parents have the opportunity to share their views as the nursery owners initiate an annual survey. The results are published in an annual report. Parents receive daily reports and regular newsletters and feel informed about their children's learning through the daily sheets. Parents are asked about their children's learning at home. A form has been developed to collect information to assess children's starting points when they enter the nursery, although it has not been used as of yet. Parents are invited in for parent evenings and may contribute to their child's records at this time.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The daily routine is organised to include quiet times, active times and meal times. Children are able to move freely and safely in the nursery. A key worker system is established to ensure appropriate care; however, staff do not always organise themselves in a way that ensures waiting time is minimal for the children. The owners have recruiting procedures to ensure staff are suitable to work with the children. A staff handbook and an induction is in place; however, not all staff are confident about the child protection procedures. The complaints procedure has been updated to meet new legislation. All the required documentation for the safe and effective management of the setting and for the welfare and care of children is maintained and stored securely, although the medicine records need some attention.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager, with support from the nursery owners, continues to work for improvement through the 'National Day Nurseries Association Quality Counts' scheme. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and are encouraged to undertake additional training as available. The owners monitor, evaluate and review the nursery education and have identified weaknesses that are currently being addressed. However, the pace and routine in the funded room does not always ensure the children are engaged and stimulated; for example, the staff were not prepared for circle time, resulting in children becoming fidgety. In addition, children have to wait while they all wash their hands for snack, then again for lunch. Staff are required to work out how to use their time effectively to plan. They discuss and plan as a team at quiet times and outdoor times which is sometimes difficult. However, they are beginning to bond as a team learning about each other's strengths and weaknesses. Newsletters are given to the staff and staff meetings are held as needed.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

A complaint was received in October 2005 raising concerns in relation to National Standard 4 - Physical Environment and National Standard 7 - Health. The provider investigated the concerns and reported their findings to Ofsted. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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

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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):

- ensure parents sign to acknowledge all medication given
- ensure child protection is covered adequately during induction and all staff are familiar with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures
- continue to develop the use of observation to plan activities to meet the younger children's individual needs
- ensure staff consistently give clear messages and explanations for unwanted behaviour
- ensure staff deploy appropriately to minimise waiting and ensure children's individual needs are met.

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 use of observation and assessment in order to identify children's next steps in learning and inform the planning
- ensure the more able children are adequately challenged

- continue to monitor, review and evaluate the education programme.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk