



Ladybirds Neighbourhood Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY279805
Inspection date	04 April 2006
Inspector	Kathleen Margaret Wride / Suzette Butcher
Setting Address	Halton Lodge Children's Centre, Grangeway, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 5LU
Telephone number	01928 589234
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Registered person	Pre-School Learning Alliance
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care, Crèche

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?

Ladybirds Neighbourhood Nursery opened in March 2005 to serve the local community of Halton. It provides full day care, out of school and a crèche as part of Halton Lodge Children's Centre in the area of Runcorn, Cheshire.

The Pre-School Learning Alliance is the registered body and provides full day care for 51 weeks of the year from 08.00 to 18.00 each week day. There are 101 children on roll, of these 45 are in receipt of nursery education. Out of school care and crèche

services are also provided when required. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery comprises: 3 rooms for children aged under 8 years; a crèche room; 2 outdoor play areas and associated facilities.

The local authority fund a Sure Start programme, through the centre's management board, which provides additional services to meet the needs of the community. These include: parenting classes; play workshops; childminder drop-ins and opportunities for parents and carers to become involved. A programme manager oversees these services which mostly take place in the centre. Activities also take place in eight linked settings where a crèche service is provided, when required, to support parents taking part. There is a community café on site.

There are 16 day care staff who work with the children. Of these, 11 hold early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualification level 2 or 3 and four members of staff are on training programmes. They are led by a management team and employed by the Pre-School Learning Alliance. A qualified teacher is employed by the centre on a part time basis and the provision receives support from the local authority early years team.

This inspection was part of a pilot Children's Centre inspection. It was carried out for Ofsted's Early Years Directorate by a team which included a Team Manager, a Child Care Inspector and one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for throughout the setting in a healthy and hygienic environment. Promoting children's health is given a high priority and the nursery have successfully achieved a Foundation Stage Gold Award from Halton Primary Care Trust for their health care programme. A designated member of staff coordinates and promotes new ideas to continually improve and extend current healthcare practice which link effectively to the Birth to three matters framework. Staff work in partnership with parents and other agencies within the children's centre, such as health visitors, to support children's individual health needs. Staff are trained in procedures to support those with specific health needs which enables a wide range of children to access the centre. The risks of cross-contaminations and infections are minimised as staff are vigilant and follow effective procedures. Children learn to follow good health and hygiene routines when staff support and guide them through toileting and personal care routines. Older children are beginning to understand why they need to wash their hands as they talk about washing off the dirt and germs. However, children are not given the opportunity to become fully independent in their personal care as well intentioned staff do too much for them.

Children's dietary needs are successfully met because staff work well with parents to gather, record and review relevant information. Weekly menus are carefully devised to provide a nutritious and healthy diet for children and daily menus are clearly displayed for parents each day. A record of each child's diet is shared with parents

when children attend for full day care. Parents comment that their children have tried and enjoyed a wider range of nutritious items during their days in the nursery and that this is having a positive impact on their general health and diet at home. Children enjoy tasting foods from different countries and cultures when, for example, they experiment with chopsticks and Chinese foods during Chinese New Year. Fresh drinking water is available for children to help themselves at all times. Younger children are offered drinks on a regular basis and learn to point to their own cup when they are thirsty. Children are encouraged and praised as they develop self-help skills and good manners. For example, younger children enjoy independently dipping breadsticks in a cheese dip at snack time and learning to use their spoon and fork at mealtimes. Older children proudly pour their own drink from a choice of milk or water and help themselves to fruit and vegetables. They confidently take turns to clear away plates and cups each day. Mealtimes are social occasions where staff and children sit together and enjoy each other's company.

Indoor and outdoor energetic play opportunities enable children to make progress in their physical development which contributes to their good health. A covered outdoor area is available for children in the nursery and crèche to enjoy playing in the fresh air in all weathers but it is not maximised. The indoor soft play area allows children to explore and gain confidence in a safe environment. Children learn to move with control and use their bodies in different ways as they run up and down the hill or chase after each other on the grass or soft play surface. Toddlers explore their environment as they learn to crawl through a tunnel or skilfully climb in and out of a clear storage unit. Babies happily sit and move on a rocker with adult support or test out their balancing skills as they gain strength and confidence. Children enjoy manipulating different consistencies as they gain and refine their fine motor control. Young children experiment with tactile and sensory resources in heuristic play or with natural materials such as sand, shaving foam or blowing bubbles. Older children learn to cut with scissors or use tools to create play dough shapes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety and security is given a very high priority within the welcoming environment. A secure entry system with a receptionist in place ensures that visitors to the centre are clearly identified and children are protected. Coded locks and staff key-fobs provide further security and enable children to move about freely and safely within the crèche and nursery. Staff complete rigorous daily assessments of indoor and outdoor play areas to minimise risks and safeguard children. Children demonstrate an awareness of possible dangers and hazards as they help to brush up sand from the sand tray or quickly draw staff's attention to a drink spilt on the floor. Staff are vigilant and high staff ratios ensure that children are closely supervised at all times. However, sometimes children's learning is inhibited as they are not encouraged to think about how to keep themselves safe by considering the outcomes and consequences of their actions.

Children and their families are warmly welcomed in all areas within the spacious and inviting setting. Informative notice boards, photographs and bright, tactile displays of

children's art work enhance the attractive environment to create a strong sense of belonging for young children. Areas are well stocked with toys easily accessible to children. Large floor cushions and soft play materials create a safe environment for babies who are just beginning to explore their environment. Babies and young children sleep safely in cots or on a mattress and are frequently monitored by staff. An excellent range of good quality, suitable resources are available for children throughout the setting and high safety standards are maintained. Natural materials and everyday objects are in daily use in, for example, treasure baskets or wet spaghetti play. Areas are imaginatively created with curved, low level wooden furniture and barriers with clear windows to provide interest and variety for young children.

The good welfare of children is maintained because staff all recognise their responsibility to protect children and have a clear understanding of child protection issues and procedures. A nominated person is responsible for the appropriate handling of any concerns. She attends regular training to ensure that all contact details and procedures are correct to enable the setting to safeguard children. This is then shared with staff. Strong links are maintained with parents and support agencies and any issues or concerns are acted upon promptly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are relaxed and settled. They develop good relationships with staff and their peers enabling them to make satisfactory progress in their development and to build their self esteem and confidence. Staff are beginning to use the Birth to three matters framework and make observations of children to inform planning. However children's playing and exploring time is limited due to the organisation of meal and snack times which is too lengthy in both preparing children and clearing away afterwards. Treasure baskets and other tactile toys are used to help children develop using all their senses. Children's care needs are met due to the high staffing ratio and attention to health and safety. Children mix with others at key times, such as the Easter bonnet parade. They identify themselves on photographs and point to their friends. They play outside and develop physical skills but not frequently enough. This is because of the insufficient emphasis given to outdoor play in planning and difficulties with timetabling the shared use of the outdoor area. Children in the crèche have a range of activities to meet their developmental needs. Staff understand the specific needs of children attending for short periods of time and plan accordingly.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are happy at nursery, they move around the setting confidently and have good relationships with the adults who care for them. Good support is given to new starters and children with learning difficulties or disabilities. The behaviour of the children is good and when minor difficulties arise they are dealt with promptly by staff. Children participate keenly in activities and most persevere with their chosen pursuit for quite long periods. However, there are currently too few opportunities for children to develop

independent skills or make choices and decisions as routines are rigidly set by staff who escort children to the bathroom and promptly clear up after minor spills. The nursery is adequately resourced and benefits from a useful, covered, outdoor area but there are too few resources to encourage challenging physical development for the older children. The nursery manager is aware of this and has compensated, in part, by putting in place a programme of active play and dance led by a specialist teacher.

Children have frequent opportunities to talk to their friends and nursery staff and are capable of holding meaningful and interesting conversations. They listen well to stories and rhymes, responding enthusiastically to questioning and often joining in with a well known story. However, the pace of learning is sometimes too slow because teaching is not sufficiently well matched to individual learning needs. This means that, although children are progressing towards the early learning goals, the progress of some is not as good as it should be. Although staff undertake frequent observations which provide useful evidence for children's individual profiles, assessment information is not linked to planning for the next steps of learning for each child. The emphasis at planning meetings relates more to the routines and organisation of the day than how activities are planned to meet individual children's learning needs.

Whilst nursery staff give good support to individuals and groups to promote personal, social and emotional development, support for other areas of learning is more variable. Opportunities are missed to extend learning through challenging questioning, role modelling or simply maximising learning opportunities. A qualified teacher has recently been employed to work in the setting. Because of time constraints the amount of time she spends with children is limited and her role is not yet sufficiently clear. As a result her work is not yet making an impact on children's learning. Managers are aware her expertise is not yet being used to best effect.

The nursery staff clearly enjoy their work and have the potential to become an effective team. They undertake evaluations in order to bring about improvement and have formed effective relationships with the reception class teacher from the neighbouring primary school. They provide a very high standard of care for the children and make nursery fun. However, they receive too little guidance on how to improve the learning of children in their care.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have access to good quality resources in a fully inclusive environment. Good equipment, displays and activities enable children to understand about the wider world. They take part in activities for Chinese New Year and enjoy an Easter bonnet parade. Children's special needs are met very successfully by staff who know how to access support for specific needs. A trained special needs coordinator ensures that early identification of any children with learning difficulties or disabilities takes place and action is taken to provide additional support. Overall children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are met.

Behaviour is good. Children understand the house rules and are polite and helpful to each other and staff. Behaviour is managed by staff in prompt and successful ways which is consistent in the main. Children begin to learn early about what is acceptable behaviour.

Partnership with parents is good. They receive good information in a variety of ways: policies and procedures are clearly displayed throughout the centre; parents meetings are held to discuss children's progress. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their children's education through meaningful tasks they are given to do with their children at home. A toy library provided by the centre is well used as well as a sensory room and community café. Parents say they are very satisfied with the service they receive. The setting is very flexible to parents needs who use the centre for many other activities as it is the hub of the community.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are rigorous systems in place to assess the suitability of prospective employees and the suitability of existing staff is effectively monitored. Comprehensive induction procedures are implemented for new staff who are welcomed and supported during their probationary period. The current staff team are well-qualified, experienced and have worked together for a number of years. This promotes stability and continuity for children and families. The management team demonstrate a strong commitment towards continual improvement and development to meet the needs of children and their families. The operational plan is comprehensive but not fully effective in meeting children's learning needs. Annual staff appraisal systems promote good practice and identifies training needs. Staff are actively encouraged to attend relevant training to continue their own personal development. Records are stored in a safe and confidential way and shared with individual parents and also kept for the required length of time.

The leadership and management of nursery education are satisfactory. A great deal has been achieved in a very short time and a strong team has been created. Managers have a very clear idea of the nursery's strengths and are beginning to identify areas for development. Whilst most roles within the nursery are well defined and line-management responsibilities are carried out effectively, not enough attention has been given to monitoring the effectiveness of the nursery education. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Additional Services

The provision of additional services is strength of the nursery. Parents and the wider community have access to services which develop their parenting skills and support them in their work and leisure. Great care has been taken to encourage a wide variety of groups to make use of the centre and courses have been designed, after discussions with users, to reflect their needs and interests. Course tutors are selected not only for their technical expertise but also for their ability to build effective relationships. Evaluations are carried out for each service to ensure that adults and children get what they need when they need it. These have recently become more

detailed so that staff can identify the reasons why some activities might be more successful than others. The centre is very inclusive and communication is very good. Parents know what is available and how to book it. They are encouraged to bring their friends and a reward and incentive scheme for bringing new users is about to begin. The very effective early work done with the community has broken down many potential barriers and good working relationships have been formed with childminders in the area and the two schools nearest the centre. Effective links have been made with elderly people and the café caters for a wide age range, from tiny babies to pensioners. The confidence and skills parents develop through using the centre has a positive impact on children's learning. This can be clearly seen in a recent initiative around the teaching of French. Adults and children from two to five years learn the language at the centre and this continues when they move into the neighbouring primary and secondary schools. Many adults who were reluctant to learn a second language as children have enjoyed learning with their children and see it as fun. Since everyone starts from the same, low, baseline confidence is quickly built up and parents are proud of their own and their children's achievements. Within a very short time the centre has become an important part of community life and the hub of family learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report since 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.

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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):

- review the operational plan to ensure that staff make the best use of their time

to support children and to maximise learning opportunities (also applies to nursery education).

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):

- give children more opportunities for independent learning, making choices and decision making (also applies to care)
- use the information gained from observations to plan the next steps in learning for individual children (also applies to care).

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