

Rothamsted Little Stars Nursery

Rothamsted Research, West Common, Harpenden, HERTFORDSHIRE, AL5 2JQ

Inspection date	25/07/2013
Previous inspection date	01/03/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	1
	Previous inspection:	1
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Children thrive and make excellent progress in their learning because there is a wealth of stimulating activities to explore and the staff are skilled in supporting children's learning through play.
- Indoor and outdoor environments are packed with exciting opportunities for children to explore and discover. This keeps children motivated and develops their enthusiasm for learning.
- Children rapidly become independent because staff encourage them from an early age to make choices and to do things for themselves. This prepares them very well for their future move to school.
- Relationships throughout the nursery and within the local community are exceptionally strong. Parents and children actively contribute to activities and projects, such as working towards becoming an Eco-school.
- The manager has built a strong, dedicated staff team with a real sense of passion for their work. This creates a positive and respectful working environment that enables everyone within it to feel secure.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in all the main rooms of the nursery and outdoor areas.
- The inspector held discussions with the nursery manager, and the regional and quality improvement managers for the company.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children throughout the inspection.
- The inspector spoke with parents and took account of their written comments.
- The inspector sampled some policies, records and documents, including evidence of staff suitability and qualifications.
- The inspector examined planning documents and looked at observations in children's learning stories.

Inspector

Hilary Preece

Full Report

Information about the setting

Rothamsted Little Stars Nursery was registered in 2000 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery is run by Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited and serves mainly children whose parents work for the Rothamsted Research in Harpenden, Hertfordshire, although some children attend from nearby towns and villages.

The nursery is accessible to all children. It operates from purpose built premises within the grounds of Rothamsted Research and there are two fully enclosed areas available for outdoor play.

The nursery employs 18 members of childcare staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and two members of staff including the manager hold a degree in Early Years.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 80 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- continue to explore ways of providing children with greater access to the separate 'grass garden' area to further enhance their outdoor play and learning experiences.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children thrive in this vibrant and stimulating nursery. Staff plan a diverse range of interesting activities, outings and experiences that reflect the children's developing interests and needs. This means children are extremely well motivated, they make rapid progress in their learning and development and are therefore extremely well equipped for their future learning in school. Staff use a straightforward but very effective system to plan for each child's learning based on observations they have made and by those contributed by parents. Information about children's learning is frequently shared with parents so they are kept exceptionally well informed about the progress their children

make and how they can continue to support this at home.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and as a result, they make good progress based on their starting points. Staff are very knowledgeable about how to support children with speech and language difficulties. Together with parents and the appropriate agencies and professionals, the staff devise precise plans that enable children to develop and overcome any barriers to their development. Similarly, those children who speak English as an additional language are supported well because staff aid their communication by using key words and providing hand-made books in children's home languages. This is essential in providing these children with a secure foundation in their home language on which to build their understanding of English.

Staff are skilled in scaffolding children's learning through everyday play. As a result, children are eager to explore and to discover the world around them. Staff build on toddlers' enthusiasm for bugs and insects by encouraging them to dig around in the soil to see which bugs they can find and question them on where the spider might be if it is not in its web. Children are fascinated when they find a bug and staff show them how to make it appear bigger under a magnifying glass. Pre-school children make up their own experiments in the water tray. They fetch scissors to cut some dried plants to add to the water in the expectation that the water might make them grow again while others make 'potions' and 'cocktails.' Children have extremely well-developed imaginations and clearly have a lot to say. Staff consult with children to plan exciting role-play areas where children can explore their interests and ideas. For example, children recently set up a museum where they made dinosaur bones from baked dough to excavate in the sand. Staff confidently give babies the freedom to explore sensory activities using their bodies in whatever way they feel comfortable with. Some babies adore being stripped to their nappies and using their hands, feet and bottoms to explore the feel of paint and see the marks they make with it on a giant canvas. Others are happy to watch and absorb this new experience or use brushes or paint rollers to make marks.

Excellent provision is made for outdoor learning with all children benefiting from free-flow access between indoors and outdoors. In addition to the main outdoor area there is a supplementary 'grass garden' that provides wonderful opportunities for children to make camps in the willow tree house and to grow vegetables. Children plant seeds and nurture the plants until they are ready to harvest. They enthusiastically pull up turnips, dispose of the leaves on their new compost heap and take the vegetables to the nursery to be washed and cooked for lunch. However, this area of the garden is not readily accessible to children at all times and there is scope to extend the frequency with which it is used in order to maximise its considerable learning potential.

Company-developed programmes are used extremely well within the nursery to support children's literacy and numeracy. For example, to help children master the fine motor coordination required to hold and control a pencil for writing, children use a sewing table to practise using large needles to weave threads through hessian. As a result, pre-school children have significant control in using pencils and enthusiastically 'write' in the role-play areas. Staff plan practical and fun activities to help children understand quantity and number. An example of this is making fruit smoothies and recording children's favourite

varieties in a pictorial graph.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The staff provide an extremely warm welcome to children and their families. The arrangements for settling in new children and gathering information from their parents in order to understand children's needs and routines are highly effective. As a result, children quickly form bonds with their key person and other familiar adults and they feel secure and self-assured in the nursery environment. Key persons talk with great sensitivity about the individual needs of the children and clearly demonstrate how they support children's emotional development. On occasions when children are less settled when separating from their parents and carers, key persons provide plenty of gentle reassurance and comfort in quiet, cosy areas of the nursery away from the bustle of activities going on elsewhere. This gives children the space and time they need in order to feel secure and ready to join in with others. Children are very well prepared to make the move to the next room in the nursery because they regularly share outdoor play space with other rooms, which familiarises them with children and staff. In addition, there are regular settle visits to the new room, but only when children are developmentally ready. Excellent communication between key persons and parents ensures that information about the children is shared and understood.

Children are eager to play actively outdoors in the fresh air because the outdoor play areas are packed with exciting resources for them to explore. They move around confidently in different areas and negotiate equipment as they steer dolls' buggies around obstacles or pedal around a track. Babies have plenty of challenging opportunities to crawl and climb both indoors and outdoors. They confidently use a soft play area that allows them to develop their strength and coordination as they climb over padded blocks, into a ball pond and up a slide. This helps them control their movement and take risks within a safe, controlled environment. Children's excellent health is further promoted through consistently strong hygiene procedures and eating nutritious and well-balanced meals and snacks. Staff tend to children's health and personal care needs very effectively and frequent discussion with parents means there is continuity in care when, for example, children are being toilet trained. From a young age children are encouraged to help prepare their snacks and serve their meals. The staff help toddlers to use knives to spread toppings on cracker biscuits and pre-school children very ably manipulate tongs and serving spoons to help themselves to meatballs, pasta and salad. They confidently scrape their plates after eating and rinse cutlery under the tap. These independence skills prepare children very well for the lunchtime routine they can expect as they move on to school.

Children behave extremely well. They use polite manners and they cooperate well together in a group. Staff are quick to step in to help children resolve any negative behaviour and children soon apologise and move on. At times when children are naturally exuberant and lively, staff skilfully channel this energy into constructive activities in order to maintain a safe and pleasant environment for others. Children show an exceptionally well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The staff make very good use of a soft toy named 'Candyfloss' who reminds children about safety when using

equipment where there is an element of risk. For example, whenever children use scissors Candyfloss reminds children that they need to take care and hold the scissors safely when carrying and using them. Children take part in an environmental review as part of the Eco-school project in which they help staff to monitor the environment. As a result, they have gained a mature understanding of how to recognise risks and are quick to point out, for example, the risk of scratches from brambles or thistles that they spot in the nature garden. A recent interest in fire fighters and a visit from the local fire service has prompted pre-school children to act out scenarios of what to do if there is an emergency.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

There is very high regard for children's safety and the nursery demonstrates that all safeguarding and welfare requirements are clearly understood and met. Staff carefully implement risk assessments to ensure children are kept safe within the premises and on outings. Staff demonstrate that they are very knowledgeable and confident in knowing what to do in order to protect children and the nursery is swift to act in the event of any safeguarding issues. It rigorously follows procedures and works together with the appropriate agencies to investigate any concerns, after which it makes a thorough review of procedures to ensure that the high standards of care are maintained at all times. This means children are safeguarded.

There are rigorous recruitment, induction and performance management systems which ensure that all staff are suitably qualified, experienced and share the same passion for working with children that the manager exudes. As a result, the staff team is strong and there is a real sense of enthusiasm for doing the very best for the children. The manager regularly observes her staff to ensure that they meet the high standards that she expects and she ensures that any under-performance is tackled promptly. A well-established programme of supervision, training and professional development enables staff to continue to develop their skills, whether they are more experienced senior staff members or apprentices beginning their careers in childcare. The manager very effectively oversees the planning and delivery of a highly stimulating and exciting educational programme and, through regular and rigorous monitoring, demonstrates that all children make significant progress in their learning and development. This is being further enhanced through the development of a new software system for tracking and monitoring children's progress.

The manager and her team are very innovative in developing new ideas and sharing good practice, which continually drives improvement. They introduce many initiatives that successfully engage the whole nursery community. For example, as part of the Eco-school project, a committee comprising representatives from the staff, parents and children have developed exciting plans to build a greenhouse using recycled plastic bottles to build on the other already well-established forms of recycling with which children are involved. In addition, the nursery makes excellent use of parents' expertise to involve them in supporting interesting, first-hand experiences for the children, such as, bringing in a collection of insects and bugs for children to examine using professional equipment. Excellent partnerships extend to working within the local community. For example, there are highly positive links with the local library, the fire service and children's centre, which

are used to extend children's learning experiences. The manager has very successfully encouraged all staff to become reflective practitioners. They carefully evaluate their work and take responsibility for making improvements within their rooms in order to continually meet the needs of the children. Self-evaluation throughout the nursery, therefore, is extremely rigorous and effective in ensuring that high quality practice is sustained.

Relationships within the nursery are exemplary and parents report their wholehearted support for the manager and her team, particularly with regard to communicating information. Parents frequently share their views by adding comments to a 'staff appreciation tree' in the reception area, from which it is evident that there is significant respect for the staff. This fosters an extremely welcoming and inclusive atmosphere within the nursery. The nursery has developed very strong working partnerships with other early years settings, professionals and agencies. These include robust procedures for seeking advice and guidance from external advisors when additional support is needed for individual children. In addition, there is excellent communication with teachers to enable information about children's learning and care to be shared as children prepare to move on to school. This contributes significantly to ensuring that there is continuity in learning for children. As a result, the nursery ensures that the needs of all children are met exceptionally well.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	123610
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	924377
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	43
Number of children on roll	80
Name of provider	Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited
Date of previous inspection	01/03/2010
Telephone number	01582 763133 ext 2506

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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