

Characters Day Nursery

Richmond House, 49 Alma Road, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 4HE

Inspection date	15/09/2014
Previous inspection date	15/12/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Staff develop warm and caring relationships with children and their families.
- The outdoor play area provides space for children to be active and develop their physical skills.
- Children enjoy learning in the safe and secure environment staff provide.
- Staff provide a variety of age-appropriate resources which children use independently to develop their ideas and interests.

It is not yet good because

- The provider does not always update all suitability checks for new staff but relies on checks completed by other settings.
- Children do not always make good progress in their learning because teaching is sometimes inconsistent.
- Staff do not regularly monitor children's interests and progression to ensure they continually challenge and extend their learning.
- Management do not always engage the views of others or use self-evaluation processes well to help them improve outcomes for children.

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.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children engaged in activities both indoors and in the garden area.
- The inspector spoke to parents, staff and children and listened to their views of the nursery.
- The inspector completed a joint observation with the manager of children engaged in an adult organised activity.
- The inspector sampled documentation relating to children's learning and development, self-evaluation and staff suitability.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager.

Inspector

Tristine Hardwick

Full report

Information about the setting

Characters Day Nursery registered in 2006 and is privately owned. It operates from five rooms within a two storey building in the Stoke area of Plymouth, near Central Park. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 8am until 6pm for 51 weeks of the year. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged three and four years. There are currently 49 children aged from six months to five years on roll. The nursery employs 11 members of staff. There are 10 members of staff working with the children; of these, four hold early years qualifications at level 3, two hold qualifications at level 2 and there are four who are unqualified. The nursery also employs a cook. The nursery supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The nursery receives support from the local authority early years advisor.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- develop robust procedures to ensure all new staff have up-to-date suitability checks completed
- support staff to extend their skills to ensure they consistently provide good quality learning and development experiences for all children
- use observations to regularly monitor and assess children's learning in order to plan and provide challenging activities that respond to their individual needs and interests.

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

- develop robust self-evaluation processes that take account of the views of staff, children and parents and focus on improving children's achievements and learning.

Inspection judgements

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

The nursery is divided into dedicated rooms for different age groups. In each room, staff provide a wide range of resources. Children enjoy playing with them because they are

relevant to their different ages and stages of development. For example, babies and younger children develop their senses as they explore natural objects, such as pinecones, while older children enjoy completing puzzles. Consequently, as children's abilities grow, staff generally provide more challenging activities to engage their interests and extend their skills. Resources are available at a low level so that children can make choices and help themselves. This enables them to develop their independence and follow their own ideas.

Staff gather information from parents when children first attend the nursery. This helps staff get to know children, devise activities which they enjoy and promote their ongoing progression. For example, staff effectively teach older babies to place wooden hoops on a small pole in order to encourage their coordination skills. Older babies benefit because staff know how to extend them. Generally, staff observe children's achievements and periodically assess their level of development. Staff use this information to plan activities and learning opportunities. However, a significant period of time lapses between each progress review. Consequently, staff do not always respond effectively to children's changing needs and interests. As a result, not all children progress as well as they could do. Staff complete the required progress check for two-year-old children appropriately and share this with parents.

Overall, children make steady progress in their learning. However, teaching skills are inconsistent. Some staff effectively extend children as they play. For example, older babies learn to recognise colours because staff name the colours they see. Staff make black and white pictures of familiar things, such as trees and toys, then talk about them with the children. Over time, staff introduce new colours slowly to build on children's existing knowledge. However, not all staff recognise opportunities to teach children during everyday activities. For example, when children collected spiders in the garden staff did not take advantage of this opportunity to extend their learning. They did not encourage children to count how many they found or think about why there were so many. As a result, some staff do not take full advantage of children's interests to extend their learning and understanding of the world around them.

Generally, most staff encourage children to develop their language and communication skills appropriately. They talk to children during their play and some staff link nursery rhymes to children's chosen activities. For example, when a child began playing with a sparkly shaker a member of staff started singing. Older babies joined in with hand movements and moved their bodies in time with the song. Some staff encouraged older children to talk about what they were doing and count the buttons when dressing a doll. Consequently, children develop their counting skills, which helps them prepare for school. Staff help children become aware of words and letters as they teach them to recognise their names. Staff also teach children how to stay healthy and prevent the spread of germs. Children confidently explained they put their drinking cup onto their name card so they do not use the same cup as someone else.

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

Staff develop sound relationships with children. As a result, children are happy and most engage well with their activities. Staff encourage children to take pride in what they do. For example, staff praise children when they help to put the toys away, especially those found underneath the sofa. This helps children take care of their environment and develop their confidence. Staff present positive role models to children. They speak politely to children and are calm when dealing with inappropriate behaviour. For example, when children did not want to share toys staff helped them to do so. As a result, children develop appropriate social skills in preparation for school. Likewise, children develop caring attitudes towards other living things as they help staff feed the pet rabbit. They talk about what the rabbit is doing and why he is asleep during the day.

Staff help children to develop a sense of belonging and feel confident in the nursery. For example, staff display pictures of family members in the baby area and babies looked at these for reassurance. All staff are responsible for a designated group of key children and build special relationships with them during their time at nursery. Consequently, this promotes their emotional development. Babies in particular, learn well because they feel secure in a trusting relationship with their key person.

Staff suitably support children during meal and snack times. Children choose where they would like to sit and engage in conversation as they eat. Generally, staff encourage children to sit appropriately at the table and most use cutlery well. The cook creates interesting menus and food that children enjoy, such as Spanish sausage casserole and rice. Staff liaise closely with the cook to ensure she is fully aware of children's individual dietary requirements. The cook takes care to provide children with similar foods while catering for their individual needs. This helps all children feel part of the group. As a result, all children enjoy meals together. Children have drinks throughout the day, which helps to ensure they do not become thirsty. Staff support children's personal care needs well and promote their increasing independence as they grow. For example, older children use the toilet and wash their hands unaided to keep themselves free from germs.

Staff support children to develop their physical skills well. The outdoor area is fully enclosed and only accessible through the nursery. The garden provides an interesting variety of activities, which challenge children's physical abilities. Children learn to use their large muscles as they explore the climbing frames and develop their smaller muscles using tools in the sand. Children gain greater control of their bodies as they learn to manoeuvre themselves over balancing blocks. Staff are ready to support children and teach them how to use equipment safely. The floor is covered with either chipped bark or rubber, which helps to cushion falls and reduce any injuries. Staff have complete relevant training which helps them to deal appropriately with accidents and emergencies. Furthermore, staff complete appropriate documentation which is shared with parents to ensure they are fully informed of the care their children receive.

Staff ensure children play safely and freely by conducting daily safety checks indoors and outdoors. This provides children with safe, uninterrupted play opportunities, free from hazards. This helps children develop good levels of concentration as they prepare for school.

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

It is a legal requirement for providers to obtain an up-to-date and enhanced criminal records disclosure for all new staff who work directly with children. The provider is aware of this responsibility and can demonstrate the suitability of existing staff. However, the inspection found that the provider had not applied for new Disclosure and Barring Service checks for a new member of staff to ensure their continued suitability for this employment. This was because a check had been conducted by a previous employer shortly before their employment commenced in this nursery. Although this does not have a significant impact upon children, it is a breach of the statutory requirements.

The provider has recently taken over as the manager. She is focussed and keen to improve outcomes for all children. Some improvements have been made since the last inspection. For example, children have regular opportunities for outdoor play. However, current self-evaluation processes do not clearly identify all areas for further improvement or consider the views of staff, parents or children. There are some procedures to support the professional development of staff such as annual appraisals and supervision meetings. However, these arrangements do not sufficiently focus on helping staff to develop their teaching skills. Consequently, not all staff consistently challenge and extend children's learning effectively. Additionally, staff do not always monitor children's learning regularly. Consequently, they do not always have up-to-date information to plan for individual learning. As a result, not all children progress well.

Overall, management and staff have a suitable understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They implement appropriate policies and procedures to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Management review procedures annually and provide clear information for staff and parents about how the nursery operates. Management and staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues and are aware of the procedure they should follow if they have concerns about a child in their care. All staff receive a thorough induction into the nursery practices which helps to ensure they follow procedures appropriately. Consequently, this helps keep children safe and protects them from harm.

Management and staff receive support from the local authority advisor and this helps them develop their practice. Following advice received, staff and parents worked together to devise ways of managing children's behaviour consistently. As a result, children feel secure and understand how to behave. Staff also involve parents appropriately in supporting children's development at nursery. Parents comment that 'staff are wonderful' and 'really supportive' towards children and their families.

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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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	EY332113
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	834702
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	49
Name of provider	Characters Partnership
Date of previous inspection	15/12/2009
Telephone number	01752 662 886

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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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