

Little Stars Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY287543
Inspection date	08 November 2007
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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

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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?

Little Stars Day Nursery registered in August 2004. It operates from a single storey setting which has two playrooms and is located in Ampthill. The provision serves the local and wider area.

A maximum of 14 children may attend the provision at any one time. There are currently 25 children aged from two to under five years of age on roll including funded three and four-year-olds. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area. They are open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 each week day throughout the year. The provision is closed for public holidays and for one week at Christmas.

The provision supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is able to support children who speak English as an additional language. There are four staff directly working with the children, including the manager, and all hold recognised early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment where there is plenty of space and separate areas to offer a wide range of activities. Children's immediate safety, health and welfare is well promoted because staff understand and promote children's good health. Children have clear encouragement to begin to care for their own health needs as staff offer good role models and give clear explanations. Additional methods including posters and signs that remind them to wash their hands. They carry out project works which focus on health during extended topics. Children confidently tell staff that washing their hands is to 'wash the germs away' giving clear indication that they understand the daily routines.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious foods, including a broad range of fresh fruit and vegetables which they bring to the provision. Children's everyday meals are provided by parents and carers; they bring a broad range of cold meals or home cooked meals into the setting which are then prepared by staff following guidelines from previous food handling training courses. Children take part in planting and growing seeds such as radishes, carrots and spring onions and follow the growth with interest exploring the links between food, water and healthy development. They harvest the foods and show great interest in their results, trying the foods and talking about the new tastes. Children are gaining a clear knowledge of thirst and the need to drink after exercise as they seek water and juice from their individual named 'sports' drink bottles.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in structured activities. These include opportunities each day to use the garden area. It is equipped with static equipment, sand trays, wheeled vehicles, a play house and other outdoor items. Children have free access to a digging area where they explore and study insects and mini-beasts that they uncover. Their exploration is supported as they have appropriate footwear and clothing for free play in all weathers. This means that their physical development and inquisitive exploration is fostered. Children will have further benefits within the garden when new development is carried through; this will include further equipment as well as rejuvenation of the lawn areas. Children use small equipment such as pencils, glue spreaders and small construction pieces which aid their development of fine manipulative skills. Younger children are developing their independence physically and emotionally. They are active and becoming increasingly independent, acquiring control over their bodies and new physical skills. They are learning to express their needs and are beginning to meet those needs independently, for example, by being able to access washing facilities for themselves.

Children's general health and safety is supported by all relevant paperwork and records. Children's medical needs, both ongoing or of an emergency nature, are dealt with through clearly outlined procedures carried out by qualified staff. Clear methods of recording and procedures underpin all aspects of physical care. These stringent, well-executed measures ensure that children's health can be promoted at all times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given a high priority and risks of accidental injury are minimised because staff are vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Policies,

procedures and paperwork in this area are very well planned and reviewed. Staff carry out daily safety checks, repeating these throughout the sessions to ensure continuing safety, for example, checking that the garden areas are ready for use. Children are secure because the setting is monitored clearly to ensure that locks and door bells are used to maintain full safety for children.

Children have some understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves, and others, safe as they fully participate in tidying away and take part in regular emergency drills. Children have opportunities to develop road safety awareness because staff introduce topic works into the setting and use the provision to show children road safety. They are able to act out real situations to further their developing knowledge. Children are given explanations by staff about using materials safely and understand the importance of listening to instructions in order to prevent accidents.

Children are cared for in a welcoming setting where their work is creatively displayed and resources are organised and accessible. Continuous monitoring of the environment and staff's constant attention to details ensures that children's access to play materials reaches a high standard of safety. This is further promoted by the provision of appropriate equipment such as correctly-sized slides, play houses and climbing frame.

Children are very well protected because staff understand how to safeguard children and the appropriate steps to follow. The manager has completed additional training and other staff are actively seeking further training also, this enables them to continually remain abreast of issues and updated regulations to effectively protect children in their care. There are robust procedures for the induction of suitable staff and their ongoing suitability whilst employed by the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They are eager to attend and participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. They settle eagerly when they arrive in the mornings and have a clear knowledge of the routine. Children have a sense of belonging in the nursery which is shown as they are welcomed by their friends, find their indoor footwear, and wave goodbye to parents and carers from the front window. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff, participating in discussions and initiating conversations. For example, they ask questions about why other children arrive mid-session and show interest in the explanation about where they have been. Children and staff engage in discussions about a variety of topics such as viewing photographs together and commenting on how nice each other was looking on the day of the photography session. Staff understand how children learn and continually encourage, support and praise them. This helps children to become confident and seek out the activities.

Younger children are encouraged to become vocal through example and imitation, they begin to use language and gesture to communicate their ideas. Staff take note of the progression younger children make, repeating words and sentences to them and using clear eye contact to help children see that they are being listened to. Older children have a good use of language, they make requests, explain their thoughts and ideas, and take part in negotiation during their play. For instance, when other children disrupt a game which they are playing, they are able to ask whether the action was deliberate or accidental. They express their feelings of being cross at the action rather than responding in a physical manner. All children enjoy stories, songs and musical rhyme. They sing with confidence together and show a developed sense of humour as they act the songs, using facial expression in order to make each other laugh. Children enjoy

having stories read to them and share books both with each other and staff throughout sessions. The nursery plans activities that operate in family grouping and this encourages younger children to copy and imitate their peers whilst trying new skills. Children develop self-esteem and confidence because staff use lots of positive language followed with praise and encouragement for their achievements such as 'well done for trying a new taste'. They enjoy a broad range of topics with activities which stimulate children's interest linked to each one. For example, activities linked to Halloween included tactile play with 'frogs in jelly', fairies and castles, and stories such as 'A Dark Tale'.

Children settle quickly due to the staff's care, understanding and planning. They ensure that they have necessary information about children, including their likes and dislikes. Younger children's learning and development is promoted because staff have a sound understanding of child development. The manager has a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and has worked out a method to implement this. Assessment and developmental progress books have been introduced and assist the ongoing support to children. They are helped by specific and target observation although are not yet fed by spontaneous observation which may arise from children's self-initiated learning. There is only a limited amount of information gained from parents at the beginning of care in the setting and limited opportunity for them to be involved in the children's development. Insufficient information is gained to enable a detailed starting point for development to be established and this impacts on their learning opportunities.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The manager has a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage which is consistent across the staff group. They plan together to link information gained through assessment to planned activities both long-term and short-term. However, this does not currently show the support needed, the extensions possible, the individual children's capabilities or how to use observation of child-led activities to monitor their progress. Children's learning is reinforced as staff ensure that activities and themes are cross-referenced. For example, using topics that look at life cycles of living things, children explore the physical links to energy, explore growth together, hygiene, use new and descriptive language, and increase their understanding of the natural world. Assessment of children receiving nursery education is linked to the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones and each child has a clear progress file. This contains examples of their work and target observations as well as annotated examples of observation. Children's progress is sound and is progressing in all areas because of a range of suitable and accessible activities and staff who spend time listening and supporting their play.

Children show great enjoyment as they participate in the balanced range of activities. These include opportunities to engage in imaginative role play, exploration of the world around them through gardening and topic works, and a wide variety of crafts and construction. Children are beginning to use drama as they dance and express themselves when they move to the music to which they are introduced.

Children are confident using language to make their wants and needs known and to participate in discussions. They negotiate turns and ask each other for help where needed. Children show interest in each others families and listen intently when each other speaks about things which have happened at home or with their extended family. Children enjoy stories and books, both alone and at story time, where they join in with rhymes, anticipate endings of familiar phrases and pay attention to the text in the books. There are some opportunities for mark-making and

labelling around the room which prompts some interest as children ask what labels say. However, the mark-making materials are used insufficiently and there are few occasions when children are supported to show interest in initial sounds and letters during routines and free play. Children have limited encouragement to use mark-making for different purposes and this impacts on their development of early writing.

Children count confidently and access construction resources at all sessions encouraging them to build and create with blocks and other substances. For example, they compare height as they build or climb the wall bars and see that they are taller than children standing on the ground. Children identify numbers around the setting and show interest in how two separate numerals make up another number such as '13' made from a 'one' and 'three'. However, there is insufficient use made within daily activities and routines to develop children's calculation skills, use of predicting and estimation, or problem solving on a daily basis. This impacts on their overall understanding of mathematics within everyday situations.

Children are gaining a good knowledge of the wider world through the provision of a range of resources and innovative activities. They have explored life in other cultures through celebrations, foods, utensils used for eating, and craft works. Children do not, however, have opportunities to explore or identify the features of their own community through practical activities and this limits their sense of local community. Children explore science using practical materials such as magnets and magnifying glasses, they extend their language as they observe magnets attracting and pulling together. Children talk about the daily routines and show that they understand routines within the day. All children are encouraged to take part in activities which promote some understanding of annual events such as Remembrance Sunday. This is approached by staff in a manner which gently fosters children's knowledge of people who help them and who should be shown consideration. This is shown as they talk to staff about grandparents who were part of the armed forces and who 'kept the country safe'.

Children develop a good range of physical abilities because they can explore large movement throughout the day using the wall bars indoors and the freedom to dig and explore the garden areas. They use the garden in all weathers and particularly enjoy planting and harvesting foods they have grown. This leads to them experimenting with new tastes such as spring onions, discussing how large onions can make you cry when they are cut. Children show interest and discuss the feel of their mouths after such a strong tasting food has been swallowed. Children have good opportunities to link these activities to natural wildlife as they explore the reasons why some foods or flowers failed to thrive or were eaten by birds or insects.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full and active part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality and the family context for each child. Families benefit from very flexible hours of care within the provision which supports children's transition into their school from the pre-schooling period. Children are offered a wide range of opportunities which promote their understanding of the wider society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include themed works entitled 'around the world' and celebrations connected with Chinese New Year and other cultural events. Children are confident within the setting and express clear opinions and wishes regarding their daily activities. They have opportunities to direct their own play and, when wanting to choose a different activity from the remainder of the group, are supported in this. This enables them to direct their own learning and have some

control over their daily life. Participation in realistic role play such as in the home corner enables children to gain a clear knowledge of their surroundings and make links with their own homes.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are generally kind and considerate to each other and to staff. Their behaviour is good throughout the sessions as they choose their activities. They organise turn-taking between themselves and share readily and invite other children to join them such as when they are in the role play area. They understand that their behaviour affects others and can be affected by others in turn. For example, when one child interrupted others children's games, they asked if the action was on purpose or accidental, following that up by saying that this action had made them cross! This shows that children are able to distinguish between right and wrong, accident or deliberate acts, and to voice opinions rather than taking physical action. Children feel a strong sense of belonging and enjoy looking at photographs of each other around the walls and in the 'school photographs' taken recently. They show delight in pointing out that each other looked pretty or smart, and eagerly looked at each persons photograph asking to see each one in turn. Children are able to feel secure as staff make efforts to understand significant events in their lives and anticipate the possible disruption these may bring. These include the birth of new babies to the family and events which happen within the extended family.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented, working sensitively with individual children and parents to make sure that all are included in the activities and routines. They welcome other professionals to the setting and liaise with them to develop plans for the children which are fully shared with parents and carers. Additional care and methods such as signing, closely recording the progress and development relating to language, ensuring that any specific dietary requirement is met. Staff are very experienced within this area of care and are able to offer that experience to children and families. This ensures that parents and carers are recognised as the primary carers for children. Children for whom English is not the first language would receive support as staff work hard to establish working relationships with all parents and their extended family. For example, they plan to explore alternative methods of communication such as dual language labels around the setting and requesting translation from parents and carers.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for nursery education is satisfactory. There is a commitment to involving parents in the setting. Parents are kept well informed through regular newsletters, questionnaires, meetings with staff and open access to their children's files. They are invited to parent evenings and enjoy information seminars from outside professionals. Parents are invited to feedback their comments and thoughts through comments sheets and questionnaires. Informative notice boards are supplemented by access to leaflets regarding all care issues as well as the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. However, there is no ongoing method to involve parents and carers in the learning of their children. They have only verbal opportunities to contribute to the development plans for their children and have no involvement in any detailed entry profile for the children which would form the basis of any planning for progression for children. This prohibits parental involvement in the children's development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit from the care provided by dedicated staff. Their daily comfort and enjoyment is enhanced

by the organisation and the attention to all details relating to their care and well-being. Children's varying needs are consistently met and they are offered a broad, planned range of activities and play opportunities. The setting has areas which may be used freely by children to make use of all facilities within any area and link them to their own chosen direction of play. Children are able to move safely and independently confidently initiating their own play and learning.

Children's welfare and safety are promoted through the setting's clearly defined policies and procedures and the daily monitoring of these. There is an excellent induction process for new staff, providing information and support. This is supported by the observation process used to assess staff practice and will be continued by the planned staff supervisory and appraisal system. Staff ensure that training needs are identified and planned for within the development plan and staff are able to work appropriately with all children. The provision has a clear development plan which incorporates a self-evaluation each six months, this ensures that staff review their practice and look at planning and topic works in relation to children's ongoing needs.

The leadership and management for children in receipt of funding for nursery education is satisfactory. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the manager leader has of her role and responsibilities as well as the firm support offered by the owner. Both persons ensure that they are aware of all regulations, carrying out planning for further training for both the manager and other staff. The manager acts as an excellent role model and staff show that they are both independently motivated and supported by her and the clear direction they receive. All daily sessions are planned, with a balanced range of opportunities throughout the day. However, this does continue to require attention to ensure that both focussed activity planning and those activities which arise spontaneously are supportive of children's development. There is also insufficient observation and assessment to show how children are progressing and this prohibits future planning from building on what children already know. Staff pay attention to what children are doing and ensure that they are always given sufficient time and resources to complete their activities and tasks. Staff meet regularly to plan future work, and thereby ensure that the needs of individual children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection for care the provider was asked to develop the resources to challenge the older age group of children. The provider was also asked to review the organisation to ensure that a balance of child-led and adult directed activities offering independence was provided within the daily routine. The provider was asked to review the procedures to ensure that specified policies were effectively implemented in practice.

Since that time the provider has increased the range of provision offering increased challenge within all developmental areas. This ensures that all children are able to work towards reaching their full potential with appropriate support. The provision continues to be increased.

The provider has reviewed and adjusted the daily organisation to ensure there is a balance of adult-led and child initiated activities to promote independence and self-initiated learning.

All policies have continued to be reviewed and adapted by the management and staff group. This attention to self-assessment ensures that the setting is able to continue to support children and families through well-organised practice.

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.

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 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):

- develop assessment records to show children's starting points and progression, ensure that parents are fully involved and that they are informed by the use of spontaneous and focussed observations to support all areas of development.

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 opportunities for children to observe, find out about and identify features of the place and community in which they live and the natural world
- broaden opportunities for children to attempt mark-making for a variety of purposes; use daily activities to encourage children to link initial sounds and letters to develop communication, language and literacy
- provide more opportunities for children to count and calculate in everyday situations; ensure that they have opportunities to problem-solve, weigh and measure, and make estimations for size and distance
- extend the planning to show how children will achieve the intended learning and its purpose. Plan the staff role and resources; show how additional support or extension will be offered to individual children.

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