



Cotton Socks

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY270018
Inspection date	01 November 2006
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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

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Cotton Socks Day Nursery opened in 2003. It operates from four playrooms, with kitchen and toilet facilities and an enclosed outdoor play area, within self contained accommodation in a refurbished village school. The nursery serves the local areas surrounding Barling, near Southend. There is also an out of school scheme which runs in conjunction with the nursery but has a separate registration in the local community hall. A maximum of 59 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open all year round from 07:00 until 19:00.

There are currently 45 children from birth to eight years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The nursery employs 14 members of staff. Of these 13 hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a further qualification.

The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very clean environment where staff follow efficient cleaning routines to help keep children healthy. As well as daily cleaning by an operative, staff ensure they take responsibility for the routine hygiene such as wiping tables with anti-bacterial cleaner.

Children are effectively learning some ways in which they can contribute to their own health. For example, staff remind them to wash their hands before eating and posters help them remember to flush the toilet and wash their hands properly after using the toilet. Although there is sufficient hot water available, staff do not always encourage all the children to use it, therefore children may not be fully protected from the spread of germs.

If children are ill or have an accident, they are cared for properly because most of the staff are first aid trained and carefully follow the newly updated procedures. All the necessary forms are completed to record medication and accidents and consent forms are up-to-date.

There is a well-written health and hygiene policy including a 'no shoe' policy for the baby room, which is consistently enforced. This protects the youngest children from germs carried in on the soles of shoes.

Children are well-nourished through healthy, appetising meals and snacks that take account of any special dietary needs. Several members of staff have a foundation certificate in food hygiene and safety, following effective procedures such as labelling food with the date when it is opened. Staff provide a wide range of nutritious snacks including raisins, satsuma, banana, apple and cheese and children are beginning to learn what is good for them to eat. Posters and menus support the ethos of eating five fruit or vegetable portions per day.

Whilst younger children have access to regular drinks in their own cups, the more able children can help themselves from a water dispenser in addition to their regular drinks. This helps children to begin to recognise and respond to their own thirst.

The planning for physical development in the setting is good, enabling all children to practise newly acquired skills or learn new ones. Staff identify a baby's physical stage of development and cleverly plan for their next steps, for example, placing toys just out of their reach to encourage their crawling. This practice ensures that children are all progressing at their own level.

All children, including those under three years, join in with a music and movement session once a week, so they learn to manipulate their bodies and copy a range of movements. The setting also provides a soft play area for children, enabling them to learn to balance and climb in safety.

Staff plan frequent physical play opportunities, both inside and out, for children over three years, using the curriculum guidance. The garden is well resourced and cleverly designed with strategically placed obstacles to encourage children's steering skills on the wheeled toys. Children go for regular walks in the fields where they can run at length, in safety, helping develop their stamina. More able children are learning to put on their own coats, using their hand-eye co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The nursery is an exciting place for children to be, with each room divided into areas of play and many posters and displays to brighten the walls. In the enclosed gardens there are enough bikes and cars for all the children.

The baby room is inviting and warm with plenty of natural light. A warm carpeted floor and ample mats allow babies to crawl and play on the floor comfortably. Babies enjoy looking at themselves in the low mirrors to help them develop a sense of me, myself and I.

Children are learning to make independent choices in their play because there is an abundance of equipment easily accessible to them. Small tables and chairs, toilets and washbasins further help them develop their independence.

Staff use circle time effectively to talk to children about particular safety issues, such as the dangers of fireworks and children are able to discuss their understanding to reinforce what they have learned.

Children are safe in the setting because the health and safety policies are followed, effectively identifying and addressing any hazards through the regular risk assessments. Emergency procedures are practised often. Fire equipment as well as electrical appliances are regularly checked for compliance so that hazards to children are minimised.

Staff use detailed risk assessments prior to outings and have responsible, named drivers for transporting children. Copies of driving documents are kept in the operational plan to reassure parents that positive steps are taken to keep their children safe.

Children are safeguarded because a member of staff in each nursery room has up-to-date child protection training and there is a named member of staff for child protection issues. Although not all the remaining staff have had training, they know who to go to for advice and the manager is eager for all staff to receive in-house training to further ensure children are protected. There are detailed child protection procedures readily available for reference, which include details of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children under three years are cared for effectively because there is clear planning using the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework. Some staff have had training and in turn, skilfully plan the programme. Staff regularly record observations for children's profiles and parents receive a copy. All the relevant observations are followed by an individually written next step for children building an accurate record of their progression. However, for children between two and three years, there are few date links in the profiles to identify the relevant observation.

Children engage in an interesting group activity each day, for example, exploring musical instruments or dipping their toes in paint. Children under two years often tentatively experiment with different textures such as cooked spaghetti and mashed potatoes. Staff understand and skilfully adapt the play for children, as their responses to this type of messy play, are varied.

Children are growing in confidence and develop a strong sense of themselves because staff value their work by displaying it on the walls. The displays explain the aims of the activity and what children gain from it to help remind staff of the importance of play as well as informing the parents.

Children are becoming skilful communicators through consistently good interaction with staff who understand that the children need to take their turn in the 'conversations'.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn, planning effectively to enable them to progress confidently towards the early learning goals. Although the room leader takes responsibility for the planning she welcomes the contribution of ideas from other staff. Plans link clearly to the early learning goals and include a key learning intention. Teaching reminders, such as language to use, help staff to present the activity properly and observations of the children are recorded. Consequently, children's progress is monitored.

Children are challenged in their learning because staff understand their individual learning styles and know how they are progressing. For example, a small group of children were asked to help build a tower and encouraged to repeat the activity until it was relatively successful. Relevant questions displayed on the wall help staff remember questions to ask children to challenge them. There is evidence that differentiation takes place and is understood by staff although it is not always clearly detailed in the planning.

Staff use methods that help all the children to learn effectively, taking account of their individual abilities and other relevant factors in their lives. For example, knowing important information about children's homes and families helps staff plan appropriate activities to inspire them.

Children benefit from a rich learning environment, because staff make effective use of time and resources. The pre-school room is an exciting and interesting place for children with many play opportunities always available. A messy play room with sand, water and paint activities is

always open to them and a craft table remains at the ready for children's designs. Overall, the room is well-organised although the role play area lacks definition and order.

Staff use assessments of children's progress to guide their planning and teaching. Incidental observations are added to progress records and a tracking matrix is completed for each child, to ensure observations are consistently carried out. Key workers examine the observations to establish how these can influence the planning to further benefit the children in their learning.

Children are very confident and becoming independent in many ways. They welcome new people into the setting by asking their names and the reasons for their visit. More able children have opportunities to be helpers and sometimes take the initiative to clear up after themselves. They have their own trays with their names and photographs on to help them feel a sense of belonging. In addition, the screen savers on the computer are photographs of children and staff engaged in various activities and the children are fascinated by these, often referring to them.

Children are very familiar with information and communication technology. They recognise different types of computers and talk confidently about how they use them. Children use cameras to take pictures of their friends and look at technology in the home to begin to learn what it can do. Staff encourage children to learn a sense of time through talking about tomorrow and yesterday.

There are several daily routines, which help children recognise their names, for example, during snack time when using name cards and name placemats. Children begin to understand that text has meaning, because there are labels and notices around the room at their level. Children have frequent opportunities to practise their mark making, through using clipboards and pencils or using chalks on the ground in the garden.

Children are learning to enjoy books and have access to a good mix of both story and information books. The book corner is comfortable, inviting and well resourced. Staff have introduced text from the environment, for example, shop logos and magazines to help children see that reading is useful.

Children are learning about numbers as labels and for counting, often counting spontaneously during their play. In the garden, there are large numerals attached to the fence, which are used in games and number recognition. The maths area provides equipment for counting, weighing and shape matching and sorting. Staff talk to children about numbers during daily routines such as looking at the date. They reinforce words such as bigger and smaller, longer and shorter. Puzzles and shapes help children to recognise how some components fit together and they begin to look at shapes in their environment.

Children's creativity is encouraged through regular use of a creative area with materials to use for painting, collage and junk modelling. They can use their own ideas or ask staff for help, knowing that they will be supported. Children have musical instruments available all the time and staff have tied pots and pans to the fence in the garden to give children opportunities to make music. A music and movement teacher visits once a week and children enthusiastically join in, they have tried various dances from belly dancing to ribbon dancing. The garden offers

further creative opportunities for children when staff draw train tracks, roads or boats, on the concrete to inspire their imagination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children take part in charity events to help them learn about people who live different lives. For example, they contributed towards 'World Water Day' and learnt about people in the third world gathering their water. They tried to imagine how hard it is to carry water by carrying things on their heads. Children are constantly reminded to be polite to one another and the children independently remember their manners with each other and with staff. Children often go for walks in the fields to look at the changing seasons and show an interest in nature.

The setting encourages a holistic approach to raising children's awareness of equal opportunities. There are many pictures and posters depicting positive images of people with disabilities and from different backgrounds. Children listen to music, practise dancing from other cultures and have dressing up clothes from around the world. Children learn about different families and celebrated 'Grandparents day' by inviting some of their grandparents into the setting to read stories.

Staff are aware that some children may have special needs and have systems in place to support them. There is a special needs co-ordinator with appropriate training and in addition, another member of staff is about to commence the training. Staff are confident to speak to parents and discuss individual learning needs. The clear policy details inclusion and how children's individual needs will be determined and met through the liaison with other professionals.

Children's behaviour is managed consistently, using 'Steps to Success'. This system advocates positive methods to encourage children to behave well. There are 'Golden rules' on the wall so staff can remind children of their expectations.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff provide plenty of information around the pre-school room to let parents know what their children are learning from the activities. The setting invites parents and carers to formal open days twice a year where they can see their child's records and discuss their progress with staff. Parents receive 'profiles' about their child every six months but at present are not able to add their own written comments about their child. Parents are actively encouraged to get involved with their child's learning through receiving daily sheets, photographs and information about topics so children to continue learning with their parents at home.

Parents are regularly updated on all the setting's policies and procedures and the prospectus contains clear information to help parents make informed choices. Parents receive daily sheets to show them what their child has been doing during the day and about their personal needs. As a result, children are cared for in accordance with their parent's wishes. Parents have access to all written information about their child and are frequently updated on their progress. Parents are able to air their views about the setting in response to regular consultation through questionnaires.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is good. There is an effective management team with roles and responsibilities. Although there are currently some changes to the senior staff, the provision of the nursery education is not affected. The setting assesses its own strengths and weaknesses realistically and constantly. Regular staff meetings, the use of self evaluation and input from EYDCP helps thoroughly monitor and evaluate the provision for nursery education. This ensures the setting remains committed to improving care and education for all its children. There is evidence of much reflection in the nursery and comprehensive on-going action plans to show how any weaknesses identified are being addressed.

Children are protected and cared for consistently because staff are checked through robust procedures. All staff have written job descriptions, new staff inductions take place and established staff have appraisals annually to identify strengths and weaknesses. Staff are actively encouraged to go on training and to take part with in-house training to further their knowledge of childcare. Following this, staff are encouraged to complete a training and development feedback sheet to make them think about what they have learned and put it into practice for the benefit of the children.

The setting is well-organised and children are cared for in safety and comfort by staff who know their roles and responsibilities. The routines are followed so that children know what comes next in their day, but staff are also open to being flexible with their time so the routines are not rigid. Children benefit from a balance of activities supporting their care and education so they can thrive and progress well. Overall children's needs are met.

All the records are well kept and meet the National Standards, to ensure children are cared for properly and in line with their parent's wishes. Policies and procedures are available in a large well-organised operational plan and are demonstrated in practise. Reviews of the policies and procedures takes place regularly to ensure the setting is operating effectively and consistently with current childcare philosophy.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting was asked to increase staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage and early learning goals. Key staff are now employed who have training and experience of delivering the foundation stage curriculum. Therefore relevant activities are provided for children helping them to progress well towards the early learning goals. The setting also agreed to improve planning, delivery, evaluation and monitoring of the activities to help challenge children in their activities. Planning is primarily undertaken by the pre-school room supervisor and clearly links to the early learning goals with a learning intention. Staff deliver the curriculum using prompts such as particular language or questions to ask. Plans are evaluated and the system is monitored through looking at the outcomes children achieve and by senior staff having some input into the planning. As a result children are challenged effectively and motivated to learn through the exciting activities provided.

During the last inspection the setting was asked to provide more information regarding the Foundation Stage and to share children's progress records with parents. Parents are now given a prospectus which explains the Foundation Stage and there are explanations of learning intentions on display boards showing what children are expected to learn from an activity. Parents have regular access to their children's progress records through planned open evenings. In this way parents are able to help their children to continue with their learning at home.

Following the last inspection the setting agreed to use daily routines to encourage understanding of linking sounds and letters, emergent writing and all aspects of mathematical development. Staff now plan purposeful activities into the routines such as counting fruit at snack time or looking for their name cards. Children have access to clipboards and pencils at all times and often use water and brushes to mark make in the garden. As a result, children's mathematical development and learning of communication, language and literacy has improved.

At the last inspection the setting was asked to develop the operational plan to include relevant policies and procedures about the setting, including a comprehensive sick child policy, procedures for completing accurate accident records and keeping pets and wildfowl. The operational plan has been devised and includes all the necessary information regarding the nursery so that parents can ensure their children are cared for in accordance with the National Standards.

During the last inspection staff were asked to develop their knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures. There are now staff in each room who have attended training and all staff are aware of their responsibilities so that children are safeguarded.

As a result of the last inspection, the setting was asked to ensure there were sufficient staff working with the children. A staff deployment sheet ensures staff are aware of where they should be and what their responsibilities are. Furthermore, changes in staffing arrangements have resulted in better deployment so that children are cared for properly.

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 good.

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 children follow effective hand washing procedures that includes the use of warm running water.

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 parents opportunities to add their written comments to the profiles of their children receiving nursery education.

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