



Smartys Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146737
Inspection date	28 November 2005
Inspector	Kelly Eyre
Setting Address	Old Community Centre, Burford Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2UZ
Telephone number	01462 441397
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Registered person	Smartys Day Nursery
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?

Smartys Day Nursery is run by a registered charity. It opened in 1993 and operates from two main rooms in The Old Community Centre. It is situated in a residential area of Hitchin, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 27 children may attend the nursery at any one time. It is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children aged from birth to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 7

children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery serves the local and wider community. It is able to support children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs ten staff. Seven of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification.

The nursery achieved the 'Investors in People' Quality Assurance Mark in February 2005 and is currently renewing the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Award received in July 2002.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment. They are developing a good understanding of the importance of hygiene practices, for example, they cover their mouths before coughing and staff discuss the relevance of this with them. Through topic work, they also have additional opportunities to learn about issues such as hair care, healthy eating and sun awareness. Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are very well documented. Staff ensure that children's dietary requirements are strictly observed and have developed a clear procedure for labelling and checking all foods, with an additional member of staff double-checking this. Children are offered healthy and nutritious snacks and meals. These are prepared daily on the premises using fresh ingredients and include a balanced range of all food types.

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 activities such as balancing on the balance blocks, music and movement sessions, crawling through the play tunnel and using the slide and ride-on toys. Children have many opportunities to develop fine control and co-ordination through using a range of implements such as scissors, pencils, paint brushes and dough cutters. The developmental needs of younger children are clearly understood and promoted because staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This is used when planning all activities and in reviewing children's progress, with staff recognising that children change and develop rapidly at this stage and therefore carrying out frequent assessments and reviews to ensure progress is appropriate and balanced.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where their work is creatively displayed and resources are well organised and easily accessible. Their safety is viewed as paramount and staff carry out daily safety checks, identifying any hazards and taking positive steps to remove or minimise these. Children are very well

protected as staff are security conscious, making sure that all external doors are secure and diligently checking all visitors. Children's safety will be further improved with the introduction of a written policy clearly stating the procedure to be followed should a child be lost within the setting. Children have a good understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves and others safe. They are consistently given clear explanations by staff and regularly participate in topic work and discussions covering issues such as road safety and stranger danger.

Children's safety is further promoted by the provision of appropriate equipment such as correctly sized chairs, tables and buggies. Children are able to select toys and activities from a range of good quality resources. Staff ensure that these are stored appropriately and rotated frequently so that children are offered different opportunities. Toys and equipment are checked regularly to ensure that they are clean and suitable. Staff plan ahead to ensure that children will be offered opportunities to use a wider range of resources which will help promote their development. They have produced a 'wish list' which details the toys and equipment they would like to provide, reviewing this regularly as items are purchased. Children's welfare is very well promoted as all staff have attended child protection training and have a thorough understanding of these issues and procedures, ensuring that they are able to identify, report and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled, enjoying their time at the nursery. They are keen to participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. All children are very confident in their relationships with each other and with staff. Their personal development and self-esteem are promoted through appropriate support and encouragement from staff. Children's work and photos are displayed, helping them to feel valued, secure and confident within the setting. Babies and children settle well and are secure in their relationships with staff because of the excellent admission procedure. Staff pay particular attention to making sure that they have all relevant information from parents. Each child has their own routine plan which is accessible to all staff, ensuring that children are always offered appropriate care and their needs are consistently met.

Children show a good level of independence as they carry out self-care skills and participate in activities throughout the session. However, some activities for older children have a high level of adult involvement and the daily routine for children over two years old is structured and does not always allow sufficient time for children to develop their ideas and determine their own play and learning. Careful planning of activities for all age groups ensures that children are consistently offered a range of opportunities, which are linked to their individual needs and capabilities, thus ensuring the promotion of all areas of development. Staff carefully assess children and note any areas which require further work and support, planning appropriate activities and re-assessing these areas to ensure that development is balanced. Staff make good use of open questions when working with the children, making the most of opportunities to extend their learning and encourage them to think further.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, planning and adapting activities appropriately. Children's progress in all areas is well balanced as staff use very good methods for assessing them, clearly using information gained from this to highlight areas to be covered and determine future activities. Planning of activities is practical and comprehensive and staff are able to check that all areas of learning are covered within the plans. However, there is not always sufficient detail regarding the extension of activities for older or more able children.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which include opportunities to participate in role play, crafts, construction and physical play. Staff use their experience and knowledge to ensure that children are purposefully occupied and are offered some challenge in their play. Children are aware of the opportunities offered and are able to feel involved in the daily routine because staff make good use of the visual timetable, clearly explaining this to the children throughout the day. Children enjoy referring to this, recognising the pictures and words and working out what activity comes next.

Children show enthusiasm and become engaged in their play and activities. They have a clear understanding of their own needs and are confident in meeting their personal needs. They have good relationships with their peers and with staff, listening carefully to instructions and carrying out tasks to help, such as fetching the register and handing out plates at snack time. They count and use mathematical language in their daily play and conversations, for example, comparing the size of construction pieces and working out the date.

Children are gaining a good knowledge of their community and the wider world through the provision of a range of resources and creative activities. These include themed work such as the current topic of 'Christmas Around the World' where children have looked at the traditions and languages of their own and other cultures. Children have a good appreciation and understanding of the natural world, promoted through opportunities including keeping and observing small pets such as fish, snails and stick insects.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are able to feel welcome and comfortable because staff value and respect their individuality and take care in getting to know each child and their routines. Children are offered a wide range of opportunities which promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include topic work covering different religions and traditions, for example looking at how Christmas is celebrated around the world. Children have looked at basic words in other languages and these are displayed around the setting. All children and staff also make regular use of sign language, using this confidently for a range of communication and words such as 'nappy', 'poorly', 'more', 'paint', 'bus' and

days of the week.

Children are kind and considerate to each other and to staff. Their behaviour is very good throughout the sessions as they move from one activity to another. They respond very well to staff, and the positive approach and excellent staff role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children who have special needs have their requirements identified and met as there is a clear policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented, working with individual children and parents to make sure that all are included in the activities and daily routines. Staff are skilled in ensuring that all children are able to participate at a level appropriate to them and are offered activities and opportunities which reflect their needs and abilities and will promote their development.

The quality of the setting's partnership with parents and carers is very good. There is a strong commitment to involving parents in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are welcomed and staff go through all procedures and policies with them to ensure that they are aware of these. Children benefit from 'stay and play' days where parents spend time playing with children during the sessions. Parents are kept very well informed of their children's progress through topical displays, newsletters, regular discussions with staff, parents' evenings and annual reports. There are informative notice boards containing information about a number of issues including current themes, child development, health and safety. Parents are also able to access clearly marked files containing practical information about the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and high quality care can be provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of all children who attend. Their play opportunities are greatly enhanced by the good organisation of space. Staff move equipment and adapt the setting throughout the day so that they are able to offer children a varied range of activities. Children's welfare, care and safety are promoted through the staff's experience and practical knowledge of the nursery's policies and procedures. Children's care is further enhanced by the excellent staff induction programme which ensures that all staff are supported, have the relevant knowledge and are able to work appropriately in all areas of the setting. There are robust procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. However, the checking process has not been completed for committee members. Children's records are kept up to date and contain all relevant information. Staff records are detailed but staff do not always record their exact times of attendance.

The quality of leadership and management is good and children benefit from a well-managed setting. The play leader acts as an excellent role model and staff are highly motivated, attending additional training, expressing their ideas and demonstrating their enthusiasm for their work. Sessions are well planned, with a balanced range of activities which cover all areas of development. Good planning

and evaluation of activities ensures that resources are well prepared and sufficient time is allocated for each task. Children's progress is clearly tracked through ongoing assessments and parents are kept very well informed of this. Staff meet regularly to plan future work, using information from assessments to inform this and to ensure that the needs of individual children are met and their development promoted.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the group was asked to ensure that parents sign each entry of the accident and medication record and that parents are aware of Ofsted's phone number. Staff make sure that all accident and medication sheets are signed by parents and have now included Ofsted's contact details in the brochure provided for parents and have also displayed this on the notice board, thus improving communication and ensuring that parents can confirm that their children's needs are being appropriately met. The group was also asked to ensure that the organisation of storage allowed children more access to resources and freedom of choice. Resources are now labelled and are easily accessible, with many stored at child-height. They are rotated frequently during the sessions so that children are offered a wide selection and choice throughout the day.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints received by Ofsted. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- further develop the written policy for lost or uncollected children so that it contains all relevant details
- increase opportunities for children to make decisions about their daily play and activities and to enable them to develop their independence (also applies

to nursery education)

- ensure that an accurate record is kept of staff attendance
- ensure that Ofsted is informed of all committee members and there is evidence that all appropriate checks have been completed.

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):

- develop the planning procedure to clearly show how older or more able children will be challenged.

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