

Oak House Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	223576
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Inspector	Josephine Mary Hammick
Setting Address	Oak House Nursery, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7JD
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Registered person	Susan Marshall
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Oak House Nursery School opened in 1987. It operates from the owner's home. There are four classrooms, a baby unit, toilets, kitchen, enclosed outdoor area and the family lounge for rest periods. The nursery serves families throughout South Herefordshire and beyond.

There are currently 128 children under eight years on roll. This includes 31 funded three-year-olds and 20 funded four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions each week. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. The nursery opens five days a week throughout the year. Sessions last from 08:00 to 17:30.

Twenty-one staff work with the children. The majority have early years qualifications, others are completing their training. All regularly access ongoing training. The setting receives support from the Local Authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children stay healthy and are well protected because staff have an excellent understanding of health and safety. There are thorough procedures in place to minimize the risk of cross-infection. For example, cloths are colour coded for specific tasks and vinyl cloths are used to cover the tables before food consumption. Children are well cared for in the event of an accident. Three staff hold first aid qualifications to enable them to deal with accidents effectively. Detailed documentation is kept and shared with parents to ensure they are kept informed of any accident their child may have. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through vigilant and well established routines including washing their hands before eating food, after playing outside or using the toilet.

Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday practical experiences. At snack time children enjoy daily access to fresh fruit such as, apples, melons, strawberries, bananas and sometimes have exotic fruit to taste. They are developing their independence by handing around the prepared fruit and drinks. Children are learning the importance of a healthy lifestyle through discussions with staff, and activities such as, cooking which are linked to themes. Healthy lifestyles are incorporated into all aspects of play, including outside, where the children are fascinated, inspired and motivated by growing their own plants from seeds. They water and nurture them in pots before transplanting the maturing plants into soil and watching them grow into vegetables and fruits that they wash and prepare to eat. The children keep photographs and graphs to plot and monitor each stage of growth. Children are reminded that living things need to be watered and cared for in order to grow and flourish.

Children's physical development is promoted extremely well. Planning and themes are organised to include indoor and outdoor resources. Children benefit from a designated member of staff having responsibility for outdoor play provision. Children enjoy plenty of fresh air and outdoor activity which supports their physical development effectively. They relish the large, child-friendly garden where they can stretch and let off steam. An excellent variety of activities are available to them to stimulate their overall development. Children enjoy running around, climbing, balancing, using the wheeled toys, investigating sand and water and developing role play in the many 'zones' incorporated into the outside space. They particularly enjoy imaginary play outside, using the café, play house and garage with enthusiasm. Babies have their own designated play area in the garden where they can sleep in their prams and climb and explore baby sized equipment safely and securely. All children are able to develop their finer physical skills by, for example, using pencils and scissors and piecing together intricate pieces of construction materials appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy and benefit from a colourful, stimulating, child-orientated and accessible space. They are extremely confident, happy and secure in the nursery. Children have very good access to a wide variety of high quality toys, resources and equipment which they can access easily because they are stored at their height. The well thought out routines enable children to access a good mixture of free play and adult-structured activities.

Children's safety is given a high priority; there are procedures in place to ensure that hazards are identified. There are good systems in place for ensuring children are safe on the premises, for example, a secure coded entry system, a visitor record and very good supervision of children at all times. Children are developing an understanding about safety through activities and general routines. For example, they regularly practise emergency evacuation procedures and know not to run inside the building.

Policies and procedures are mostly in place which help to ensure that children's welfare is promoted effectively. Child protection training is accessed and updated as a matter of routine for all staff. They have a thorough knowledge of local procedures and who to contact should there be a concern about a child in their care. However, written procedures to follow in the event of allegations being made against a member of staff or volunteer are not in place, consequently children's welfare is not fully protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children benefit from a colourful, stimulating and interesting environment in which they are happy, content and secure. Younger children mix well with older, more able children and they access a wide range of activities throughout the nursery. They are busy and occupied with favourite activities including role play, information technology, painting, water and sand play. They also benefit from the use of the well-organised and thought out sensory room where they can explore tactile and visual experiences in a safe, secure and relaxing environment. Children enjoy high quality relationships with staff and their peers and are developing their independence and confidence well. They have excellent support from staff, who actively and enthusiastically engage in their play and have a sensitive understanding of what is needed to help children progress.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Children are making excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Children aged three and four years utilise a wide and high quality range of resources and equipment which help them develop and extend their learning very well. With help from parents, children's starting points are identified on admission and is ongoing so that learning is pitched at a child's own stage of development. Children are separated into age groups to enable them to benefit from the best possible opportunities to further their knowledge and experiences.

Children develop early writing skills as younger children benefit from the use of circle time to help them recognise letter sounds, whilst older children enjoy making patterns on paper, tracing and writing simple captions to drawings. The use of high quality story sacks, puppets and prompts stimulate children and ensure that they listen and respond to stories, rhymes and songs with enjoyment, delight and enthusiasm. Younger children relish the use of a basket full of objects that act as prompts for their favourite rhymes and songs, for example, a duck to link in with 'Five Little Ducks went Swimming One Day'. They are confident to join in with familiar text, sounds and rhythms. Older children have fun interpreting pieces of music by tapping out rhythms and moving their bodies and using musical instruments in time to the music. Story, music and song times are exciting and happy occasions.

Children count confidently up to and beyond ten. They use mathematical language such as 'How many?' and 'How many more?' in their daily activities as they compare size and quantity. For example, they count the cups at snack time and the children at circle time; they look at and compare the size of tadpoles in a tank. Children are familiar with numbers as shapes by the use of display. Songs and rhymes are used to demonstrate the concept of addition and subtraction. Children are very skilled at completing tasks on the computer with limited guidance. They benefit from the use of information technology such as the computer, interactive white board and 'Bee Bot' which are available at all times. Children are able to use the child-sized keyboard and the 'mouse' competently.

Staff are able to extend children's learning by stimulating their curiosity and interest. The role play areas are linked into themes to support the current topics and projects, for example, in the 'Kindergarten' a blow-up dinghy, nets and binoculars are some of the objects used to create a role play area linked into the theme of ponds and pond life. In the blue room passports, key board, postcards, maps of the world and holiday brochures are used in the 'Travel Agents Shop' to link in with the theme of holidays. Outside children delight in using, amongst other things, the 'Garage', where they immerse themselves into being mechanics mending their pedal cars, filling up with petrol or diesel and changing tyres.

Children are happy, enthusiastic and motivated to learn; interested in what is happening around them; intrigued and keen to discover, explore and investigate, and are confident to ask questions. They form solid relationships with staff and other children and appear extremely happy, content and secure in the environment. Achievements are acknowledged and valued by staff and admired by other children, parents and visitors. The confidence and enthusiasm of the children shines out and it is obvious that they relish their time in the nursery.

Children's achievements are very well documented and shared with parents. They clearly show how children are making good progress. Assessments are used to plan children's next steps for learning and to develop planning so that activities provide excellent learning opportunities for all children whatever their individual stage of development. Children are highly motivated and have an excellent attitude to learning. They are interested and excited by all activities because staff make them interesting and are constantly reviewing and developing resources for children. For example, the children are very keen recyclers and are becoming proficient at sorting out card, paper and plastic to put into their child-sized recycle bins. The nursery is part of the Eco-Schools project and children have a developing understanding of their part in caring for the environment. Books and equipment are purchased frequently to link in with the current theme and to refresh curiosity. For example, the children are fascinated by the nets containing caterpillars at various stages of growth. The older children are proud of the fully fledged butterflies that they study and care for before they are released to go free. Staff know the children well and are skilled at providing activities at a level which both stimulates and challenges them.

All children are fully involved and engrossed in a very exciting range of developmentally appropriate activities, indoors and out, which provide challenge and stimulation. For example, they are busily engaged developing their early writing skills, role play, creative activities, sand play, construction, sorting, counting, singing and cooking. Staff are able to extend children's learning by asking questions to make them think and problem solve. For example, when children study the pond water they have collected, they are challenged to monitor and think about tadpoles, their habitats, their food, and how they grow and develop into miniature frogs before being released back into the pond.

A strong emphasis is placed on developing children's self expression. Children are able to produce excellent drawings, pictures and models to represent their ideas. They are attractively and imaginatively displayed to acknowledge their efforts and achievements. Recent examples include a large detailed map of the locality, willow weaving, and on the fence, an extra large mural of free painting using big brushes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's understanding of diversity and the world around them is promoted very well through discussion, theme work and age appropriate activities. For example, the children celebrated Chinese New Year with a variety of activities including a Chinese restaurant in the role play area, displays on the wall of Chinese dragons and noodle eating practise using chop sticks. Children's individual needs are identified upon entry, closely monitored and accommodated, and well supported within the daily routine of the setting. Independence is encouraged and supported very well and children have the confidence to follow basic self care routines themselves, for example, changing their clothes and shoes before and after P.E. sessions at the village hall. Children with learning difficulties and/or disability are cared for in partnership with their parents. Staff have specialist training and use individual play plans in order to assist children to develop and learn at their individual pace and therefore make progress. The partnership with parents, schools and other agencies is an important factor in this. The positive attitude of staff towards diversity ensures that all children are included and welcomed. This is also true for children whose first language is not English. Children benefit from the staff acquiring familiar objects and books in their first language, creating displays using dual language and making difference positive.

The children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Children are happy, busy and keen to learn. They are highly motivated and enjoy the wide range of activities available to them, whether through free choice or adult-directed. Children are well behaved, they listen when required and show concern for others. They know the simple 'rules' of the nursery and are involved in developing and implementing them. Staff are skilled at using appropriate techniques to foster positive behaviour, such as distraction, discussion, encouragement and positive praise. Children are constantly praised and their efforts are acknowledged. For example, their work is displayed on the walls and discussed at circle time. Children's self-esteem and respect for others is given priority. They are considerate to each other and are able to take turns, help younger ones and are kind. They respect the staff who in turn respect them. Staff act as positive role models.

The partnerships with parents and carers are outstanding. A relaxed, happy and welcoming atmosphere ensures that parents are able to discuss informally, or comment more formally, on any issues that they may have through the children's development profiles and personal contact with staff. A full prospectus is given to them when they first visit and they are kept up to date through newsletters, social events and parents' meetings. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that children are cared for consistently and in accordance with their parents' wishes. Daily verbal feedback and availability of written plans ensure that parents know what their children have been doing and their progress. Babies daily routines are recorded in detail for parents to have. In addition, parents or carers are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning through being informed of themed activities or sharing any skills they may have. Early discussions with parents when children start ensure that planning is sensitive to a child's individual stage of development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from staff who are very well qualified, organised and are generally aware of procedures to ensure their safety and quality of care. Recruitment and vetting procedures are thorough and vigilant. They include an extensive and formal induction, ongoing appraisal and regular team meetings and training. All staff are checked for their suitability through the Criminal Records Bureau and have their own copy of the nursery staff handbook which includes the code of conduct.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The staff team have a clear overview of the setting as a whole, with regular access to training and ongoing review of policies. This helps to ensure that the care and education provided for the children is constantly under scrutiny and in turn helps to maintain a steady and highly skilled staff group. This ensures the consistency of the care and learning for the children. Staff are happy and motivated, they work well as a team.

Most documentation is in good order and in line with requirements. Paperwork is clear and detailed and stored securely within a lockable cabinet on site, ensuring children's records remain confidential. Appropriate consent forms and detailed information is obtained from parents prior to their child attending the setting. Policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to work in practice.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to continue to research and incorporate current good care and educational practice into the existing nursery improvement plan. The provider continues to do this by attending training courses, conferences and accessing up-to-date publications. The benefit is reflected in the excellent practice throughout the nursery. Children benefit from staff being up-to-date with current methods to create a rich learning environment.

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

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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 outstanding.

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):

- extend the written child protection policy to include procedures to follow in the event of an accusation of abuse being made against a member of staff or volunteer.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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