

The Learning Tree

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309724
Inspection date	19 September 2007
Inspector	Judith, Mary Horsfall
Setting Address	St. Philips Church Hall, Chatterton Road, Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire, BLO 0PQ
Telephone number	07970 358 784
E-mail	
Registered person	TLT Childcare Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Out of School 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?

The Learning Tree was first registered 1998. It is the only facility operated by a local limited company. The setting is situated in a quiet village close to motorway links and the town of Ramsbottom, Lancashire.

A maximum of 20 children between the ages of two and eight years may attend at any one time. The facility offers out of school care and preschool care on a sessional basis. It is open each weekday from 09.20 to 13.00 for children aged two to four years during term time. The out of school facility is open from 07.45 to 09.00 and 15.15 to 18.00 during term time and for some full days during main school holidays. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 74 children, on the register, of which 10 are in receipt of government funding for preschool education. Some children over the age of eight years also attend. The facility currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The facility employs seven members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. Support is gained from the local authority and the area special needs support worker.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because practitioners are active in following appropriate health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures such as thoroughly cleaning tables before offering food and wearing disposable gloves when changing nappies. Children are beginning to learn about healthy lifestyles and say that if they do not wash their hands before eating they will get sick. Smaller children however, cannot reach the hand soap and paper towels in the toilet area which reduces their opportunities for learning independence and self care.

Children are well protected in cases of accidents or illness because there is a well stocked first aid kit and the staff have taken extra training to ensure children can receive specific medical treatments when required. Comprehensive health and sickness policies are actively implemented and all necessary consent, accident and medication forms are carefully maintained, ensuring children are well protected.

Children enjoy regular access to the outdoor play area partaking in a wide range of activities which promotes their physical development, for example, playing football, sliding, climbing and cycling. They learn good control and co-ordination over their bodies through physical activities indoors, such as circle games and using tools including pastry cutters and paintbrushes.

Children have opportunities to rest in the quiet area as and when they choose. Children are well nourished and choose from a wide range of healthy snacks provided throughout the day. They learn about healthy eating through discussions with staff during activities such as cookery. Children can access drinking water at all times, contributing to their good health and well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a secure and welcoming environment. Effective, daily risk assessments are undertaken and potential hazards are identified and minimised. Children are able to play safely and independently, moving with confidence both indoors and outdoors. The staff are highly vigilant and offer appropriate supervision as children play, such as reminding them to sit carefully when eating and not to rock back on their chairs. Children are learning about the importance of safety. For example, they say they must always wear their seat belts in vehicles and that the staff will not start the minibus until they are all strapped in.

Children benefit from a wide range of readily available resources which meet their needs. Indoor toys are generally clean but the outdoor large play equipment is rather splashed and soiled by muddy rain water, which makes it less attractive to children. Resources are well organised and easily accessible to the children, promoting choice and independence. Children's art work is attractively displayed and they proudly show visitors their colourful, well labelled pictures.

Children's welfare is compromised as some members of staff have a poor understanding of the issues with regard to child protection. Child protection procedures are in line with local authority guidelines and relevant telephone numbers are available.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the setting because staff robustly support them in their play and activities. They are highly effective in making sure activities are enjoyable, stimulating and matched to the children's needs and interests. They closely observe children's involvement in focused activities and spontaneous play and make excellent use of the information gained to plan activities that are stimulating and challenging for all children. Caring, sensitive staff show genuine affection for the children, which ensures children are fully secure and happy in their care. They describe staff affectionately as 'really kind and gentle' and 'a bit of a laugh'.

Children show a real sense of belonging as they successfully contribute to the life of the setting. For example, they make their own snacks, contribute enthusiastically to planning activities and take pride in caring for the environment. Throughout the setting children follow the exemplary role models of staff members and show a great deal of care and consideration for each other. For example, children new to the setting soon feel at home as older children spontaneously help them settle in, giving them a guided tour and assisting them in becoming familiar with routines. Children make excellent use of the wide range of toys and play equipment available to them. They particularly enjoy cooking, football and craftwork, saying 'there is something new to do everyday'. Children are very confident and happily join in with organising and tidying away activities. They relish playing independently, with older children in particular forming strong relationships with their peers and happily seeking out their friends to share their play.

Children show a great deal of sensitivity to the needs of others and demonstrate a strong commitment to other children and the staff at the setting. The children feel a real sense of belonging, with one saying 'if you kick one of us, we all limp'. A rich, varied and imaginative programme of activities is on offer for children of all ages, including a wealth of fun, exciting off site excursions, such as visits to museums, nature reserves, farms and other local facilities.

Staff are making expert use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to enhance their practice, which has a positive impact on the quality of the young children's learning. Children make choices of where they want to play, and are able to access resources independently to extend their own interests and learning. A key worker system is in place for younger children, which makes it easier for a member of staff to keep a track of a particular child's development, and relate any information to their parents.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a strong understanding of the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage' and how children become active learners. Planning is linked to the six areas of learning and to children's abilities and needs. Regular, comprehensive assessments are carried out to monitor children's progress. Using this information staff identify the next steps in children's learning and link these to the stepping stones, to track children's progress.

Children are secure and confident in their environment, separating from their parents with ease. Children feel a sense of belonging as they, and the staff wear colourful tee shirts with

the setting logo. They are beginning to relate well to each other and have an affectionate relationship with staff. Children are gaining confidence in personal care as they try to put their own coats and shoes on for outdoor play. They enjoy activities such as making and eating bread and soup. Children are beginning to demonstrate delight and pleasure in books, which they access freely and handle with care. They join in story time with great vigour, listening well and recounting favourite stories. Children access a well resourced mark making area to practise their writing skills and are aware of writing for a purpose such as creating a 'shopping list' for the planned birthday party.

Mathematical concepts are well incorporated into the daily routines. For example, children are encouraged to count spoonfuls of flour during the baking activity and staff ask children at story time about comparative shoe sizes. Whilst the children have access to some programmable toys, the computer is currently out of order which reduces their access to technological equipment. Children cut out different patterns with the pastry cutter and are beginning to differentiate shapes. Some children confidently count beyond 10 and can correctly name some numerals.

Children learn about their environment because staff invite people from the community into the setting, to meet the children and to talk about their role. An example of this was a visit from a lay preacher to talk about harvest time and other local visitors including staff members who brought pets including a pony for the children to see. Other visitors have included the Bishop of Manchester, a dental hygienist, school crossing patrol person, fire service officers and community support officer, all of whom enhance the children's learning by talking about the wider world. Children learn about different cultures and religions through resources and celebrations of different festivals.

Children move freely with confidence, both indoors and outdoors, negotiating space well and manoeuvring around obstacles to avoid collisions. They enjoy physical games and confidently explore a very good range of creative materials, such as paint, malleable materials, collage, sand and water. They freely access these materials to represent their feelings, thoughts and ideas, and are learning to use one object to represent another such as play dough being 'cakes'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are strong systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The setting has comprehensive policies which are actively implemented to ensure all children are treated and valued equally as individuals. A key member of staff is designated to liaise with children, parents, carers and other professionals. Continuity of care for the children is promoted due to daily exchanges of verbal information between the parents and the staff. Children benefit from the wide range of information available to parents from specific leaflets about child centred community facilities to a newsletter updating them on the setting's activities. Parents are very positive in their views saying they are highly pleased with the friendly caring environment and the warm, friendly staff. The children's behaviour is managed very effectively and supported by a clear policy. Children are polite, caring and considerate of others around them. The staff use appropriate strategies to promote positive behaviour, such as smiles, positive role modelling and frequent words of encouragement and praise.

Children learn effectively about the world around them through planned activities taking them out into the local community. For example, they visit the library, post office and the park. Furthermore, they celebrate cultures and festivals, such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Easter

giving them a deeper sense of the wider world. The children have access to a limited range of resources which reflect positive images of gender, race and disability which restricts their learning in this area. The children genuinely care about their peers and speak with real affection about their friends in the setting. Older children take responsibility for spontaneously helping newer, younger children, showing them around the building and explaining routines. The children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. The staff have developed effective and professional partnerships with parents and carers, with parents signing a detailed parental partnership document, outlining expectations on both sides. Parents say the staff are very approachable and that they are given plenty of information about their children's progress and education. The setting is committed to using the partnership between staff and parents to enhance children's developmental and learning progress. Links between the setting and the home are extended by activities such as a story sacks where the parents continue the activities at the preschool in the home environment with support and resources offered by the staff. Parental views are actively sought and acted upon, using methods such as questionnaires and an open door policy where parents are always welcome. Art work is regularly sent home and parents comment on how it is labelled to clarify which elements of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals are covered in the activity. Parents are given information on the early years Foundation Stage curriculum at enrolment and extensive files of plans, work sheets and activity ideas are freely available to parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a supportive environment by staff who have all undertaken the necessary checks and clearances. The well organised and trained staff team actively promote children's learning and play. They have a good knowledge of child development and ensure that children enjoy their time at the setting. Creative use of space and resources allows children to move freely, making choices and decisions. As a consequence, children confidently initiate their own play and show good levels of independence.

Thoroughly maintained records and documentation are of a high standard. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and shared with parents, which promotes children's welfare by contributing to the continuity of their care. Children are relaxed, happy and well occupied, enjoying the activities they engage in.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. Staff are well supported through regular appraisals and team meetings. Management have clear, high expectations of how staff should work and what they should understand regarding the setting's policies and procedures. Overall staff are supported well by the managers to ensure children receive varied opportunities and experiences on a day to day basis. The managers have identified areas of strengths and weaknesses and motivate the staff by being positive role models.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the provider was asked to revise the child protection procedure to include action to be taken if a member of staff has allegations made against them. This has now been addressed, improving the safety of children.

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 all staff are familiar with child protection procedures and are able to put the procedures into place
- ensure smaller children have free access to soap and hand drying materials in the toilet areas.

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):

- improve access to information technology

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