

Little Sparrows Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203982
Inspection date	05 February 2008
Inspector	Deirdra Keating
Setting Address	Elim Church, High Street, Ingatestone, Essex, CM4 9EY
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Registered person	Elim Pentecostal Church
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?

Little Sparrows Nursery opened in 1998. It operates from the main hall in the Elim Pentecostal Church in the village of Ingatestone, Essex. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:15 to 17:45 for 48 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 51 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 38 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is currently working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and dietary needs are met well because practitioners work well with parents. Clear working policies are proactively shared with parents to ensure that children are protected from cross-infection. Children are starting to learn about good hygiene practice, staff actively promote washing hands with warm water and soap after going to the toilet and before meals. Children receive very good care if they are ill or have an accident because the setting has correct and appropriate procedures in place. Staff are calm, competent and caring as they follow clear procedures for minor accidents. A well stocked first aid kit is readily available and a good number of staff have first aid training. All accidents are documented and signed off by parents on collection. This ensures that children's health is not compromised.

Children benefit from a healthy diet, they enjoy varied, nutritious food and snacks that comply with all special dietary requirements. Children learn about being healthy through a range of interesting topics that are brought to life through exciting and hands-on activities. They grow vegetables in the garden and enjoy a social lunch time where they join in with informative discussions about the nutritional content in their food. Staff sit and support children as they eat their lunch, they discuss their food and the positive impact on their bodies. Fresh drinking water is on offer at all times, this ensures that children remain well-hydrated throughout the day. Children can rest and sleep according to their needs on portable beds or on cushions in a carpeted area. Children enjoy daily fresh air and exercise; they use the outdoor area every day where a varied range of activities enables them to get exercise outside in the fresh air. Wheeled toys, balls and a small trampoline are all available for children to develop their physical skills. Children also visit the local park and go out for walks in the local community.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in warm and welcoming environment. The setting consists of a large hall with toilet facilities leading from the entrance hall. An extra room accessible via the garden area provides another room for activities. Staff have creatively organised the space in the hall to provide defined areas. Activities are set out prior to children arriving and look appealing and inviting. A carpeted area with comfortable seating provides a cosy book corner. The room is decorated with banners and photographs of the children giving a colourful and homely appeal. Children use good quality equipment which is safe, hygienic and appropriate to their age and stage of development. Equipment is regularly rotated and planned in order to ensure that children are stimulated by the resources on offer.

Children practise what they do in safe surroundings and learn some sense of danger. Road safety is promoted through topics and discussions. Regular fire drills are carried out and logged and all prevention equipment is checked and in place. An accurate log of all persons in the building is kept at all times; this protects children from fire and monitors all visitors. Access to the provision is closely monitored by staff who use a password system to ensure children are collected by authorised persons only. The premises are generally secure, however, the lock on the front doors is not secure which could compromise children's safety. Children are protected well from potential harm, the child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up to date and that staff understand their responsibilities. A written statement is shared with parents and carers prior to admission and children's ongoing well-being is prioritised at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed by caring staff who are genuinely pleased to see them. They settle well and become independent as they choose between a variety of toys and activities. Children develop imaginary games during this early part of the session which is relaxed and fun. They delight in creating hidden areas under the table as they eagerly wait for their friends to arrive. Creative resources are used to help children settle into the routine; such as a picture timetable of the session. Good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework has a positive impact on children's achievements. Children clearly enjoy using natural and tactile resources as they play with rice and pasta using real utensils and a toy cooker. Children develop a strong sense of self through positive interaction with adults. The small numbers enable staff to know children and families well. Parents are warmly welcomed and clearly relaxed as they settle children on arrival. Consequently, children are comfortable and confident in the nursery.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Plans are clearly linked to stepping stones and are topic based. Children enjoy free-flow play for the first part of the session. Staff follow children's play extremely well, adapting activities to children's ideas and consequently, children participate with high levels of interest. Staff have created a warm and welcoming environment with defined areas. A second room enables staff to work with children on a one-to-one basis and maintain an optimum learning environment. Staff are directly involved in children's learning, working in small groups where children focus intently on activities.

Assessment is based upon observations recorded in children's records of progress and staff consider and record children's next steps in their learning. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included well, visual aids that are meaningful and relevant are used to encourage children to participate in activities. Staff provide sensitive intervention in children's play extending their ideas and enhancing their imaginary games. Children's behaviour is good, staff notice their achievements and acknowledge them positively, this gives children encouragement and confidence as they learn new skills. The first part of the session has a relaxed pace and children are purposefully engaged in activities of their choice. However, other parts of the session are structured into group times where children are expected to sit for long periods and have little choice about activities and resources.

Children settle well and have formed good relationships with adults and peers. They work well as part of a group taking turns and sharing fairly with some support from staff. Children are becoming increasingly independent as they put on coats to go outside. They confidently share books with other children in a group and are animated and focused as they share the pictures and text. Books form an important part of nursery life, family members are invited in to share books with children. Children are starting to link letters to sounds well as they self-register on arrival.

Children are starting to learn about shape, space and weight through fun and interactive resources. Different boxes and packaging support children as they start to learn about shapes. Children practise their counting skills through number songs and rhymes where they learn to take one away. Fun and appealing ideas such as measuring teddy bears encourages children to recognise and write numbers. Children are starting to predict and problem solve as they take part in experiments. They slide different objects down cardboard tubes and observe the varying

speeds. Children learn about rural lifestyles and lifecycles as they grow vegetables from seed and care for them as they grow. They learn about transport and travel through train trips and visits to the local train station. Children can freely play outside where a good range of resources have been developed to provide a stimulating outdoor area that reflects all areas of learning.

There are many opportunities for children to develop their creativity. Children happily engage in imaginary play where staff support them well. They play cooperatively as a group as they act out a train journey, they improvise using chairs and a toy steering wheel as they enthusiastically develop their own imaginary journey. Wheeled and push-along toys encourage them to negotiate space and move safely within a confined space. Children develop their hand-to-eye coordination as they fit pieces of a puzzle together. Children thoroughly enjoy the many interesting and appealing physical activities provided by the nursery in the large hall.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a good sense of belonging in the nursery, they are welcomed by their friends and friendly, enthusiastic staff who know them well. Children learn social skills and enjoy being with adults and other children. They play harmoniously in small groups and staff are very proactive in helping children to respect one another and their environment. Children actively help tidy away toys, they are all given different jobs noted on a white board and talk enthusiastically about their roles. Children are strongly encouraged to talk about their home lives; this helps them feel accepted and part of the community. They gain a good sense of community through fundraising where they raise money for a range of good causes. Staff are very proactive in sourcing a varied range of positive images representing examples of diversity. This helps children to value diversity and develop an understanding of the wider world. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The setting has a very positive approach to caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The member of staff responsible for this area has attended a good range of relevant training. The staff team meet individual needs well by providing one-to-one support for children and developing a close working partnership with parents and carers. The setting works very well with other professionals to enhance the quality of children's time at the nursery and aid smooth transition into school. Innovative and creative resources are developed to enable children to communicate and enjoy sensory and tactile experiences. Staff are well-organised and prepared for children who require additional support, this ensures that resources are readily available and children have access to all activities. A clear behavioural policy details guidelines regarding behavioural expectations and management in the nursery. Behaviour is good throughout and any minor disputes are dealt with sensitively by skilled staff. Calm and caring staff facilitate children to manage their own disputes well. They offer words and role model statements in order that children learn to share equipment and communicate their feelings in an appropriate manner.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from a positive partnership with parents through practitioners continuing to share important information about children's needs and interests. A book lending scheme encourages families to share books with children at home. Newsletters keep parents informed about topics and themes and staff exchange information verbally on a daily basis. Creative ideas provide an innovative system for parents to share children's achievements. These are recorded on 'happy petal' shaped observations and displayed on a notice board. Written records are available on request, however, these are not provided for parents to share on a regular basis. Parents are warmly welcomed and receive good

information collated into an informative prospectus. Parents are welcomed and are very relaxed as they settle children in. New parents are welcomed in by friendly and relaxed staff who proactively share the groups' policies and explain all aspects of nursery practice. An informative notice board provides parents with information and a clear complaints policy is available. Parents speak very highly about the approachable, attentive staff and are clearly very happy with the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for well by suitable adults, who are dedicated, experienced and have had all necessary checks to ensure children's safety. The premises are well-organised. Indoor and outdoor space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for children. Children benefit from good levels of supervision, a contingency arrangement outlines clear procedures to ensure that children are supported and ratios are always maintained. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of children's care and learning. Children's well-being is promoted well by the records and policies that are shared with parents. The manager has a good understanding of the National Standards and her responsibility to comply with the conditions of the registration.

The leadership and management is good. The group is led by a manager and overseen by a steering committee from the church. The manager is proactive in accessing available funding for new resources and staff training needs. Consequently, children benefit from well qualified staff who are committed to their ongoing professional development. Job descriptions and an appraisal process ensure that all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and their training needs are identified. Regular discussions and staff meetings take place to monitor and evaluate the provision and identify areas for improvement. Staff work efficiently as a dynamic and cohesive team to ensure that children's overall development is monitored and children receive good individual support. Self-evaluation has been considered well to identify strengths and weaknesses with areas for development highlighted. This ensures that the nursery continues to improve. The nursery has good links with the school; visits from the reception teacher enable children to have a smooth transition into school. All required documentation is in place to ensure that children are looked after according to their parents' wishes.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to produce a risk assessment for swimming activities and ensure all toys and equipment are safe, secure and fit for purpose. Swimming is no longer part of the curriculum and children use a balanced range of suitable equipment that is safe and hygienic. Consequently, children can play safely with resources that are well maintained.

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.

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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):

- ensure the premises are secure (this refers to the lock on the front doors).

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 sharing of children's written records with parents and carers
- provide more opportunities for children to access resources independently and make more choices within their learning.

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