



Little Dragons Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY226127
Inspection date	17 May 2006
Inspector	Karen Molloy
Setting Address	Bushford Hall, St Georges Drive, Carpenders Park, Hertfordshire, WD19 4HA
Telephone number	0208 428 1454 mob 07905 884525
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Registered person	Little Dragons Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 Dragons pre-school opened in January 2003. It operates from one main room in Bushford Scout Hall in Carpenders Park, Hertfordshire. There is access to a kitchen, toilets and an outdoor play area. The pre-school serves the local area. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 9:30 to 12 noon during school term times.

There are currently 34 children from 2 years 6 months to under 5 on roll. Of these, 14

children receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs five members of staff and a volunteer. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification. The setting receives additional support from a qualified teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy as they follow appropriate health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands after using the toilet and before snack, help themselves to tissues and put them in the dustbin afterwards. They are reminded of the importance of washing their hands after touching a worm and are praised for doing so. Children are protected from the risk of cross infection because staff follow sound procedures. Food is stored correctly and surfaces are cleaned prior to eating. Children do not attend the pre-school if they are unwell or infectious and a medication and sickness policy supports this practice. Appropriate consent is obtained for emergency treatment or advice. A thorough medical form ensures staff are well informed of children's needs prior to them attending the pre-school. Children's well being is protected as staff have first aid knowledge. However, some staff need to update their first aid qualification and are currently seeking to access this training. Children rest and sleep according to their needs. During hot weather, after time outdoors, children sit quietly and rest, look at a book or listen to a story.

Children are nourished. They enjoy healthy snacks of crackers, raisins, breadsticks and fruit. Children's independence is encouraged as a small group of children are responsible for preparing the snack each day, which they do competently. They are shown how to use the knife correctly to spread the butter. During snack time, children are able to pour their own drinks using small jugs. They choose water or milk and really concentrate as they pour it themselves. Staff are on hand to support those that need it. Children's allergies or specific requirements are clearly recorded and shared with staff and helpers. Children enjoy occasional treats for special occasions such as a birthday.

Children benefit from a range of activities both indoors and outside that promote their physical development and encourage a healthy lifestyle. They utilise the garden daily for fresh air and exercise. Children use wheeled toys and learn to manoeuvre them around obstacles. Children take it in turns to be the 'leader' as they play musical instruments around the garden and follow the band! They are encouraged to move in different ways and stretch. Children develop large motor skills as they climb and slide. However, the outdoor equipment is not so challenging for the older or more able children. If the weather is poor, children participate in movement sessions, play circle and parachute games and use ribbon sticks. Therefore, they continue to benefit from physical activity. Children develop fine manipulative skills as they cut accurately with scissors, spread glue carefully and competently use a knife to spread butter.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, secure and welcoming environment where risks are identified and addressed. This means children can move around safely, freely and with some independence. Attention is paid to fire safety with fire drills logged and useful comments noted. Appropriate action is taken with all the necessary items taken outside during a drill. Fire equipment is in place and a policy and procedure supports the good practice. A daily checklist identifies areas of safety and a more detailed risk assessment is carried out on an annual basis. Children are beginning to learn how to keep themselves safe; they are reminded of the safety rules such as no running indoors. They are encouraged to help and tidy away and to move chairs around safely and quietly.

Children use a broad range of safe and suitable equipment. Many resources are easily accessible to the children with some good storage to encourage children to make independent choices, for example, at the mark making area, children can choose from a selection of materials. Resources are well maintained and children enjoy helping to keep them clean such as during the car washing activity. Sand is replaced on a termly basis and other equipment is washed regularly.

Children are kept safe outdoors. They re-cap on the outdoor rules before they go outside and are reminded how to use equipment correctly and safely whilst outdoors. Children are asked questions to develop their safety awareness; 'why must we hold hands?' they talk about safety outdoors and sing a song related to road safety to reinforce what they know. Effective organisation for trips ensures children's safety is promoted. Parents are informed by letter of any outings and a ratio of one adult to two children is maintained.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. All key staff have attended training and a new designated person will soon be responsible for child protection issues. Children are protected by staff who are vetted and have relevant experience. Safety procedures help protect the children; a password system is in place for the collection of children and they are unable to leave if there is any question about the adult collecting them. Visitors are requested to sign in and out of the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled. They arrive full of enthusiasm and are eager to start playing. Children move around the room freely making their own choices. They show an interest in what they do and are generally busy and absorbed in their chosen area of play. Children's individual needs are met and staff show a good awareness of their needs. Children's independence is encouraged and they are keen to put their own coats on and manage their own personal needs. Effective storage encourages children to make further choices and staff are on hand to support and encourage

them. Children form positive relationships with staff and their peers. Staff are very kind and caring to the children, they listen to them and respond promptly to their needs. Children, in turn are confident to approach the staff for support or reassurance.

Children enjoy a good selection of activities to support their all round development. They play for a long while with some resources such as the train track. Many children concentrate well although there are occasions in large groups when children are distracted, such as circle time. Children benefit from free play as well as more structured activities that are adult initiated. Staff are becoming familiar with the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have attended some training in this area. They have begun to use this system and link it into planning and assessment for the younger children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and this knowledge is shared with staff who have not completed training in this area. Staff interact very positively with children; they encourage, support and offer much praise. Children ask questions and respond well to clear instructions. Children have a positive attitude towards learning and show a real interest in the current topic, mini beasts. Children behave well and staff use effective strategies to keep the group calm and under control; after outside play the lights are dimmed as children rest in the book corner, where there is relaxing music playing. Children's confidence and self-esteem is given high priority as they are praised and their efforts acknowledged. At large group time, children's contribution is recognised and they are told to give themselves a big clap. Children with additional needs receive appropriate support to enable them to participate in all activities.

The learning environment and programme of activities is well planned to provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences. Children are given some challenges as they read a story and are given clues to guess different items. However, older or more able children are not always challenged sufficiently and this is a consideration for future planning. All staff have some input into planning and the system enables children's own interests to be included. Plans cover all six areas of learning, the learning intention and 'what next?' a section for looking at children's next step in learning. Future planning to show how staff provide challenges for older, more able children will enhance how staff plan ahead for individual children. Themes change every half term, allowing children to become really involved and gain an understanding of the theme. Activities are evaluated to be used for future planning. Staff gather information from parents about children when they start and make regular observations of the children. These are collated and a written report completed for each child. Parents have access to their child's observations and do request to see them. Staff are working on a pro forma to help them carry out a range of different observations such as time sampling, to help assess children's needs further.

Children explore early reading and writing skills in a number of ways. They are helped to recognise their name as they arrive and at snack time and are excited about guessing other children's names. They are beginning to link sounds to letters

and use circle time to focus on the letter of the week. Children help themselves at the mark making table with drawers of crayons, scissors, paper and templates and use these competently. Children's communication skills are promoted and they ask questions, respond to questions and recall on events from home. Children are taught to gain an appreciation of books, how to hold them, turn pages and predict the story end.

Children have opportunities to count and problem solve as they check the number of crackers and children at snack time. They use various objects to compare items that are the same or different. Children use the weighing scales to weigh play dough and see which shape is heavier or lighter. They are beginning to learn about shape, space and measure and use mathematical language as they compare short and long sides of a rectangle.

Children have opportunities to explore and investigate. During a topic of mini beasts, they are excited to discover worms outdoors and take delight in showing it to their friends. Children use a bug finder to study it further, they ask questions and the worm is discussed. Children enjoy some trips out such as the woodland walk, where they explore and collect items and bugs. They begin to gain an understanding of information communication technology as they use cameras regularly, both old and real cameras. Their understanding of time is developed as they discuss the days of the week. Children express themselves well. They enjoy playing together and use their imagination in different role play situations. They enjoy singing rhymes and songs and two children make up their own dance routine outside, which they perform confidently to the rest of the group.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children and parents are greeted warmly on arrival by staff. They separate from their parents or carers with ease and settle well into the session. Children's individual needs are responded to well and staff help children develop an understanding of their own culture and those of others. Different festivals are celebrated such as Christmas, Eid, Diwali, Hanukkah, St David's Day, Easter and Chinese New Year and children have access to some resources that reflect diversity. Children are respected and valued as individuals. They talk about their own lives and take it in turns to take 'Sizzles' the pre-school dragon and his case home. Children look after the dragon as it goes on its travels with the family for the weekend. Families record and often take photographs of activities and children help to recall and share these events at circle time. Children learn about the wider community as they visit and invite various people in from the community such as police and fire officers. Children with additional or special needs are fully included in the life of the setting. Knowledgeable staff have attended appropriate training and work with parents and other professionals to meet individual needs. The group ensures it is inclusive and makes any necessary adaptations for children.

Children behave well. They understand responsible behaviour and play together harmoniously. They understand the need to take turns, share and negotiate. Children

are aware and respond well to the boundaries. They become familiar with different 'indoor and outdoor voices' and learn to come back in quietly. Children are kind to each other and put their arm around each other as they sit in the circle. They develop confidence and good self esteem as staff give children lots of praise for helping and acknowledge their efforts. Children are encouraged to listen and strategies such as 'hands on heads' and 'wiggle your hands' help them to focus during group times. Good manners are promoted.

Children are cared for by adults who work in partnership with parents to ensure individual needs are met. Parents are actively encouraged to help at the group, which they do. Helpful guidance is displayed for parents suggesting things they can and cannot do and a parent who is obviously very clear about their role is observed being kept busy throughout the session! Parents also support the group in other ways such as 'Ground Force Day'. Feedback from parents is very positive and they comment on children's good progress, 'happy and settled children' and the good staff 'nothing is too much trouble'. Parents feel they are well informed. Regular newsletters notify parents of any changes, current themes and diary dates. They are also urged to share any concerns or ideas with staff. Children and parents are encouraged to share their news and bring in any supporting pictures, which helps to foster an important link between home and pre-school. A complaints procedure is in place although Ofsted details are out of date and there is currently no complaints record. The manager is aware of the need to address this to ensure all information is up to date. An informative brochure keep parents/carers well informed of the pre-school's policies and procedures. A settling in policy is helpful and reassuring and gives suggestions as to how parents can help make this transition as smooth as possible.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents are kept up to date and are well informed on a regular basis. A well illustrated board provides an effective way of informing parents of the Foundation Stage. Information about the week's colour, shape and number is also displayed and enables parents to know the focus for each week. Parents have opportunities to be involved in their child's learning; on arrival they help their child find their name and register themselves, which children do competently. Newsletters offer ideas to support learning at home, such as looking for books about insects. Information about children is gathered prior to them starting at the pre-school and helps to ensure children settle as easily as possible. It also helps staff plan appropriately for children's individual needs. Communication is effective and developed in various ways; via a notice board, regular newsletters and informal conversations. An information session has recently been organised for parents in relation to the Foundation Stage and feedback from this first session is positive. Therefore, parents are well informed of children's activities, progress and development.

The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a committed staff team who are well qualified and have a

high regard for the well-being of children. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of child development and are keen to develop and update their knowledge and skills further. All new staff receive the group's policies and procedures and a copy of the National Standards for Day Care. A good staff: child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play. Staff are well deployed and the key worker system is generally effective. Although, staff are aware of the groups being too large at times, it still enables staff to focus on a smaller number of children. Children are relaxed and comfortable within their environment. Although staff have to take everything out and put it back at the end of each session, they still provide children with opportunities to make independent choices. Children are confident to initiate their own play and make choices, yet still approach the staff for reassurance or support. All the required policies and procedures are in place to support the good practice, with the exception of a complaints record.

The leadership and management of funded education is good. The manager and staff team are clear of their roles and responsibilities and this underpins the smooth running of the group. Staff are enthusiastic and motivated. The manager maintains this by ensuring everyone is well informed, staff meet regularly as a team and training is actively encouraged. Each staff member has an area of responsibility to organise and focus on. Staff work well together and share information effectively. Children's care and best practice is monitored and reviewed, with improvements made as necessary, for example, the session times have recently changed to enable staff to meet each morning. This time is used to discuss planning, staff deployment and the learning intentions for the session, thereby ensuring children's needs are met. A regular appraisal/supervision system is in place and the manager uses this to identify any staff training needs or discuss work related issues. It is also used as a means of support and guidance. Training and development is actively encouraged and consequently, staff have attended courses and workshops covering a range of child development areas. Hence, staff are knowledgeable and up to date with current practice. The manager and deputy manager are receptive to new ideas and improving practice. They are in the process of developing information relating to the five outcomes for children which will increase staff knowledge in these areas and serve as a useful resource. The pre-school continues to liaise with other agencies and benefits from their additional ideas, support and guidance.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, children are able to utilise both toilets. They benefit from a range of healthy snacks. Staff are deployed effectively and the key worker system is in place, although changes may be made to enable smaller groups. A complaints policy is in place but some details are out of date and a new complaints record is now required.

In relation to the last nursery education inspection, staff have developed a well illustrated board detailing all areas of the Foundation Stage and a pre-school pack also contains information about the Foundation Stage. A positive parental involvement policy asks parents to contribute as much information as possible about

their child. A form given to new parents ensures this staff are well informed of children's abilities and needs prior to them starting at pre-school. Parents have open access to their child's records. Children have the opportunity to cover all areas of learning within the planned curriculum.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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):

- develop a complaints record and update Ofsted contact details.

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 planning to show how older or more able children are sufficiently challenged.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk