

Children's House 1999 OFSTED Report

THE INSPECTION OF NURSERY EDUCATION

INSPECTION REPORT (OFSTED)

Name of setting: The Chidrens House Nursery

Setting number: 580004

Address: The Band Hall, High Street, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 2DN

Person responsible for the day-to-day management of the setting: Henrietta Ussher

Position: Head Teacher and Proprietor

Name of RgNI: Vicki Rewhorn

RgNI's registration number: 25791

Date(s) of inspection: 18 November 1999

The inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspection of the educational provision for four year olds. It was commissioned by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), a department of central government.

NURSERY EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of the inspection is to identify strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the desirable outcomes for children's learning on entering compulsory education, (i.e. by the age of five). It is also to assure parents and the public that nursery education funded by the state is of an acceptable quality. The inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SETTING

The Children's House Nursery is a small privately owned nursery which opened in 1996 in Kidlington, Oxfordshire. The nursery is managed principally according to the Montessori method of teaching but a range of resources is introduced to provide a wide curriculum for all children. The nursery opens from 8.30am to 3.30pm. Monday to Friday, during school terms and it is accommodated in a spacious hall. The nursery shares the premises with other groups so the equipment has to be set up and packed away daily. Social services register the nursery for twenty-four children aged from two to five years. Currently there are thirty children on roll, twelve of whom are four years old and eleven of whom are receiving funding. Funded children attend between three and ten sessions each week. There are no funded children who have been identified as having special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language. Three staff work full-time with the children. Two staff have relevant childcare qualifications and one is currently undertaking training. There are also two peripatetic teachers for dance and French who work with the children for an hour each week. Children attending are mainly from the large village of Kidlington and they come from a mixture of social and economic backgrounds. Since the last inspection in November 1997 there has been some staff changes but no other significant changes within the group.

1. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

The strengths and weaknesses of the educational provision

The Children's House Nursery provides good facilities and it is likely that all children will achieve the desirable learning outcomes in all six areas of learning by the age of five. The programmes for personal and social development and language and literacy are excellent. There are good programmes for mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Creative development is very good and physical development is generally good with one shortcoming.

Personal and social development is excellent and a key strength of the nursery. Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's confidence and independence through circle times and with children being encouraged to do little jobs each day. Children are introduced to a wide range of cultural and religious events and this effectively promotes awareness in these areas. Staff

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place good emphasis on children learning self respect by valuing their opinions and ideas and encouraging them to respect each other and to be kind to one another. The programme for language and literacy is excellent. Daily opportunities are provided for children to hear stories, songs and rhymes and for them to take part in discussions. Children listen well and join in enthusiastically. Early writing skills are fostered appropriately and children are beginning to associate rhyming words when making up poems. There is a good programme for mathematics. Staff introduce mathematical vocabulary in planned and routine activities. Children competently name three dimensional shapes and weigh heavy and light objects. They work together to solve problems such as planning a route for marbles to run along. After practical activities and discussions children record numbers on a chart to show their findings.

The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world is good. A wide range of topics is introduced and children are learning about the local environment and a wider world. Staff encourage children to question why things happen in simple science activities and they are currently discussing how things work in the topic of transport. The programme for physical development is generally good with one shortcoming. Children balance on equipment both indoors and outdoors and good use is made of playground facilities in the local area to develop climbing skills. Since the last inspection staff have introduced more challenging ride-on toys to further develop skills. However most activities to promote physical development are recreational with little structure to ensure children benefit from using all available resources in a balanced programme to develop all physical skills. There is a very good programme for creative development. Sound is explored effectively through games and by children listening to the sounds of musical instruments. Staff plan a balanced programme with both structured activities relating to the theme and opportunities for children to use their ideas freely and imaginatively through a wide range of media.

Curriculum planning is thorough and effectively promotes the desirable learning outcomes in all six areas of learning. Since the last inspection staff have extended their planning and now use their evaluations of past activities and the records of children's assessments to plan future activities which focus on the desirable learning outcomes. It is now clear from planning what children are intended to learn from activities.

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The quality of teaching and assessment is very good. Staff are relaxed and friendly in their approach and they work well together as a team. It is evident from planning, assessment and the observation of teaching that all staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the desirable learning outcomes in all six areas of learning. Some excellent questioning techniques are employed by staff, ensuring all children think for themselves. Staff place a strong emphasis on personal and social development and this is reflected in the good behaviour shown by the children. A wide range of activities is provided and staff cater for the needs of all children. This is particularly evident in language and literacy and mathematics with daily focused activities being undertaken by children working at their own pace. Staff give good encouragement to shy, less confident children and further opportunities are provided for children who work more quickly. Staff effectively link the daily evaluations of activities and their observations of children's learning to identify special educational needs and plan future activities which cater for those needs. Since the last inspection staff have undertaken training in special educational needs and now they are more confident about planning for identified children. There are no children who currently speak English as an additional language but teaching, particularly in language and literacy and mathematics would meet the needs of such children. Monthly meetings are held to discuss planning and assessment and this effectively links the two. The monitoring of teaching is informal through staff observation of each other at work but this is effective in this small nursery and staff undertake training as it becomes available according to their needs and interests.

Resources are sufficient in most areas of learning and used effectively to promote the desirable learning outcomes. The exception is in physical development where the available equipment is mainly used in a recreational programme and does not ensure that all children benefit from using all resources. Staff compensate for the lack of climbing equipment by making good use of the local park to develop physical skills. The range of resources provided are suitable for children with special educational needs and there are dual language books to support children whose first language is not English. The indoor accommodation is organized suitably to provide areas for art and craft activities, role-play, books and listening opportunities, table top activities and floor space. The outdoor area is a small hard standing surface and is used effectively to promote physical skills.

There is a good partnership with parents and carers. Parents receive helpful information about the nursery curriculum through the prospectus and through the noticeboard. Interactive displays about topic work encourage parents to be involved

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with their children's learning They regularly look at staff observations on children's progress and add their comments to assessment records. The partnership with parents has had a positive impact on learning and parents are happy with the provision and the progress being made by their children.

key issues raised after the last inspection required the setting to extend planning and link to assessment using evaluations of previous activities to aid future planning.

Good progress has been made in this area. The policy for special educational needs needed to be developed to suit a wider range of needs. There has been good progress in this area. Larger, more challenging ride-on toys needed to be provided to further develop physical skills. Good progress has been made in this area.

Overall good progress has been made in implementing the action plan drawn up in response to the key issues and no areas remain as key issues following this inspection.

2. KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve the quality and standards of the educational provision, the setting should:

Carefully plan physical play activities to ensure all children benefit from using all available resources in a wide curriculum; for example a rota could be formulated incorporating all equipment and children's participation in activities could be monitored to ensure they develop all physical skills.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues or points for development detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents, and to the Local Education Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.

3. SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

A. QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Personal and social development: Promotes the desirable outcomes

Language and literacy: Promotes the desirable outcomes

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Mathematics: Promotes the desirable outcomes

Knowledge and understanding of the world: Promotes the desirable outcomes

Physical development: Promotes the desirable outcomes

Creative development: Promotes the desirable outcomes

B. CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IS FOSTERED APPROPRIATELY

C. OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE INSPECTION

Since the last inspection the setting has made good progress in implementing the action plan.

Taken overall, the quality and standards of the educational provision are acceptable in promoting the desirable outcomes for children's learning. The action plan should show how the provider will address the key issues within 12 months of the inspection.

It is recommended that the next inspection occurs within two to four years.

4. CONTENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

The strengths and weaknesses of personal and social development

There is an excellent programme for personal and social development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately. Circle times are planned each day and children are encouraged to share their news and this promotes confidence. They are encouraged to complete little jobs independently such as setting up a table for snack time and watering plants and they are confident in their activities. Children are very independent, helping themselves to snacks during the morning. They concentrate well on their activities after being given guidance by staff and they persevere until they complete their work. Staff place great emphasis on children learning self-respect and showing respect for others; they value children's opinions and ideas. Children show initiative, helping younger children to achieve. Staff set clear, consistent rules for children so they are aware of right and wrong and children's behaviour is good. Large and small group activities are provided and children are encouraged to work together, sharing construction resources and

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taking turns at painting. Children are effectively encouraged to take care of their working environment, keeping it clean and putting away resources after use. They are encouraged to take care of living things, for example when making a wormery and when holding snakes! Children show a variety of feelings in these activities and staff promote this by discussing good and bad feelings. During a visit from the 'Guide dogs for the blind' children learn about other people's needs and learn to be sensitive to others. An awareness of other beliefs and cultures is fostered through planned activities. Weekly French lessons help children to learn about other cultures and a wide range of festivals such as Diwali, Advent and Thanksgiving are celebrated through art and craft activities and storytelling. There are opportunities for children to select resources to use independently or in groups. Personal independence is effectively promoted through hygiene and planned activities.

The strengths and weaknesses of language and literacy

The programme for language and literacy is excellent. Children listen well and enthusiastically join in the stories, songs and rhymes which are planned daily. During circle times children are encouraged to talk about their experiences and to contribute ideas to the discussion. New vocabulary is introduced effectively in both routine activities and through topic work. In the topic of 'Transport' children have learnt the word 'buoyancy' and during story telling they explore the meaning of 'midnight' and 'observe'. Role-play areas are often changed in line with the theme; children have enjoyed making up stories in the 'home corner', 'vets' and at present in the 'garage'. They practice early writing skills, taking messages and notes in their play. Staff encourage children to scribe alongside their pictures and children competently write their own name using upper and lower case letters. Rhyming words, syllables and letters are emphasized in stories and rhymes and children have made up their own poems. They play games to match rhyming words and match initial letters to objects. Staff encourage them to recognize letters by shape and sound and activities focus on a letter each week. During the inspection children named items beginning with e.g. 'j', jam, jack-in-the-box and jar. They drew pictures of them and practiced writing the letter. There is a good range of books available and children select them freely with good supervision by staff to ensure they learn that text reads from left to right and top to bottom. During focused activities on language and literacy with staff children are learning to blend letters and they are beginning to recognize familiar words. All children competently select their name badge each morning.

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The strengths and weaknesses of mathematics

There is a good programme for mathematics. There are focused activities each day planned to develop all mathematical skills. Children sort items into boxes, they match pictures, they compare the sizes of rods, they put blocks in order and they count the number of children in a line. Sequencing books have been made by the children and they recognize patterns in their art activities; for example they follow patterns when threading beads and explore the patterns made by car wheels. Mathematical vocabulary is effectively introduced into planned and routine activities and children competently name three dimensional shapes, name sizes when talking about spheres and talk about heavy and light objects when they are weighing items. Number rhymes, songs and stories are regularly introduced and children play games using counters and matching amounts to numbers. They recognize numbers in the number line and when using a calculator. Staff introduce many Montessori resources to promote children's awareness of addition and subtraction and children competently write numbers in their work books. After practical activities children record numbers on charts to show their findings; for example they have made a chart of a travel survey, showing how many cars and how many lorries they saw. Staff provide opportunities for children to solve problems in their play and children work out how to build a run for marbles.

The strengths and weaknesses of knowledge and understanding of the world

There is a good programme for knowledge and understanding of the world. Staff plan activities around themes and children are learning about the local environment and a wider world. Children go on walks to the library, park and woods, learning about the purpose of some environmental features and resources such as a farm and train layouts reinforce this learning. When discussing the theme of 'Transport' children discuss the 'journey of a parcel' and countries around the world. They talk about the wheel and how wheels have been used in the past, introducing a sense of history. Children are encouraged to talk about their families and past events in their own lives, for example in the topic of 'Myself. Living things such as snakes have been explored during visits from a reptile centre and children explore plants and

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learn to care for them. Natural objects such as leaves, seeds and feathers are explored by children in craft activities and during the inspection children enjoyed bark rubbing. 'Made' objects are displayed on the interest table for children to explore. Seasonal changes and weather patterns are discussed and daily findings are recorded on a chart. Staff encourage children to discuss how leaves change in Winter. Differences and similarities in vehicles is discussed and in line with the topic on Transport children have made a graph to show how they travel to nursery. Children also record their findings in other ways, for example drawing pictures about Summer. Simple science activities are featured in the programme and these activities encourage children to question why things happen and how things work. Children have looked at forces and motion; they have tried floating and sinking and they have used magnets. There is a range of construction toys which children use competently to design and build. They effectively select materials to cut, join and fold and they use a variety of tools. Children are becoming familiar with technology through using a calculator to promote mathematical skills and by using a tape recorder to listen to tapes.

The strengths and weaknesses of physical development

The programme for physical development is generally good with one shortcoming. Daily opportunities are provided for children to develop physical skills. Large equipment such as bikes, ride-on toys and a barrel are provided to develop large muscle skills. Since the last inspection staff have introduced larger, more challenging bikes to further develop skills. Small equipment such as bats, balls and hoops are introduced to develop small muscle skills. However most activities provided are recreational and it is not ensured that all children benefit from using all available resources to develop a range of physical skills. Balancing beams are used indoors and stepping stones are introduced outdoors and this effectively promotes balancing skills. There is little opportunity for children to develop climbing skills on site but staff make good use of the local park to promote these skills. Movement activities and yoga classes are introduced weekly and children move confidently with coordination and show good imagination. In their movements both indoors and outdoors they show an awareness of space and others. Resources such as keys and padlocks, dressing frames, threading beads and screw-top bottles are effectively introduced to foster hand eye coordination and fine muscle skills. Staff give good supervision to children using tools with dough, scissors, pens and pencils to ensure they handle resources safely and with increasing control.

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The strengths and weaknesses of creative development

There is a very good programme for creative development. Children explore sound effectively in listening games and by discussing the different sounds of musical instruments. They explore a range of colours in their activities and mix their own paint. Staff plan activities which encourage children to work in both two and three dimensions; they explore shape when modelling with dough and when making models with recycled materials. They use a variety of materials in their collage work and staff encourage them to explore textures and there is a display showing work with leaves and twigs. Staff encourage children to use their senses in many planned activities; they discover items in a 'feely' box; they explore 'smells' in bottles; they learn alphabet letters feeling sandpaper shapes. Staff plan a suitable balance of both structured activities relating to planned topics and opportunities for children to use their ideas freely and imaginatively, using a wide range of media. Good imagination is shown by children in role play areas; for example children fix a tyre in the 'garage'. Children interact well in storytelling with staff encouraging them to use their imagination. A variety of music is explored and children enjoy dancing and using musical instruments. Staff plan activities incorporating musical instruments and children beat their names and play musical games. Children explore space in movement activities and they effectively act out stories and nursery rhymes.

5. PLANNING OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

The strengths and weaknesses of the overall planning of the educational programme

Curriculum planning is thorough and effectively promotes the desirable learning outcomes in all six areas of learning. Long-term plans of the group are based on the desirable learning outcomes in all six areas and on Montessori principles. Medium-term plans are the topics to be covered in all six areas of learning. Weekly, topic and daily plans are then formulated and these include all six areas of learning placing good emphasis on the three core areas of personal and social development, language and literacy and mathematics. Since the last inspection daily books have been introduced for focused activities and these show clearly what children are intended to learn from the activity, how children are to be supported during the activity and an evaluation of the activity. There are focused activities planned for language and literacy

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and mathematics each day and this ensures adequate emphasis is given to these areas. Staff group children according to age and ability for some activities but at other times children work alongside each other with staff setting rules about the number of children at an activity; for example children playing in the 'garage' had to wear one of four belts so they knew how many children could play there. Good priority is given to personal and social development with staff providing daily opportunities to promote children's confidence and providing multi-cultural and cultural opportunities to promote learning in this area. Staff meet monthly to discuss planning and assessment and they effectively use the evaluations of past activities to formulate future plans.

6. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

The strengths and weaknesses of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is very good and promotes the desirable learning outcomes. It is clear from the observation of teaching, planning and assessment that all staff have secure knowledge and understanding of the desirable learning outcomes. Staff work well together and they are relaxed and friendly in their approach. High priority is given to personal and social development and children are confident, independent and well-behaved. A wide range of suitable activities is planned with a balance of adult-led activities and child-initiated activities. Staff encourage all children to participate in activities but they are flexible in their teaching allowing children opportunities to show initiative and free expression. Children work well with good supervision and direction by staff. Activities are planned to cater for the needs of all children and staff effectively link planning and assessment, using the evaluations of previous activities to plan appropriately for all children. They continually observe and assess children during activities and these findings are transferred to records of assessment. Since the last inspection the system of recording children's progress has been extended to focus on the desirable learning outcomes. These are now manageable and effective and staff clearly identify special educational needs from assessments. Clear explanations are given to children before activities so they understand what to do. During the inspection children were given good explanations about the items they could use for painting; they could then choose to paint independently during the morning. Children are questioned effectively so they think for themselves; for example "How can we lift this heavy item? What could we use?" Monthly staff meetings monitor planning and assessment

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effectively. The monitoring of teaching is informal with staff observation of each other at work and this is effective in this small environment. Staff undertake training according to their needs and interests as it becomes available.

The strengths and weaknesses of equality of access and opportunity

All children are treated equally and all have access to all activities. In this small group staff are aware of children's participation in activities and they encourage children to join in. Children work at their own pace with staff planning carefully to cater for all needs, linking planning and assessment. Focused activities in language and literacy and mathematics ensure that good emphasis is given to these areas. Good encouragement is given to children who are shy and less confident and staff extend work for those who learn more quickly. Since the last inspection staff have reviewed and rewritten the policy for special educational needs in line with the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. They are now more confident about catering for children with special educational needs when they are identified from assessments. There are no children who speak English as a second language at present but the emphasis staff place on language development and the high staff/pupil ratio would ensure the needs of such children are met, particularly in language and literacy and mathematics.

The strengths and weaknesses of the learning resources and accommodation

Resources are sufficient in most areas of learning and they are introduced effectively to promote the desirable learning outcomes. The exception is in physical development where staff do not provide all children with the range of equipment to develop skills appropriately. The available equipment is used mainly in a recreational programme which does not ensure all children benefit from it. Since the last inspection staff have introduced some larger, more challenging ride-on toys to develop large muscle skills. Balancing beams, a barrel and a variety of small equipment are introduced to promote balancing and small muscle skill. Staff compensate for the lack of climbing equipment by making good use of the local park to develop climbing skills. The range of

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resources available make them suitable for children with special educational needs and there are dual language books to support children who speak English as an additional language. Multi-cultural books, dressing-up clothes, cooking utensils and a variety of 'practical life' resources enhance the programme for personal and social development. Number games, shape toys, comparing cylinders and matching games foster all mathematical skills. A good range of books and role-play resources are effectively introduced and letter and word puzzles and games all help promote language and literacy skills. Children use magnets and magnifiers to explore and investigate and children competently use keys and locks, nuts and bolts, questioning why things happen and how things work. A wide variety of art and craft materials and musical instruments are introduced appropriately for children to use their ideas freely and imaginatively. The indoor accommodation consists of one room suitably organized into areas for art and crafts, role-play, books and listening, table top activities and floor space. The outdoor area is a small hard standing surface and it is used appropriately to develop physical skills. Staff also make good use of the local area to promote physical skills and knowledge and understanding of the world.

7. PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The strengths and weaknesses of the partnership with parents and carers

Staff have formed a good partnership with parents and carers. Parents receive helpful information about the nursery curriculum through the prospectus and the notice board. Newsletters inform them of topics to be covered and they are invited to send in items from home relating to the current theme. Interactive displays are provided for parents to see what their child has been doing and what they have learnt. Staff encourage parents to continue learning at home by sending home activities to complete. A 'home links' book is completed and staff comment on children's learning at nursery which parents can add to. They are also invited to contribute to midterm progress reports or when they see their child's assessments on open days. These reports cover all six areas of learning so parents learn of their child's progress in all areas. Parents are very happy with the provision and the progress being made by their children. They comment on the calm, friendly approach by staff and the easy access to staff in order to discuss their child's progress. The partnership with parents has a positive impact on children's learning.

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8. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

Key issues raised after the last inspection required the setting to identify a focus in all major activities, stating what children should learn. Planning and assessment needed to relate more directly to the desirable learning outcomes and evaluations from activities needed to be linked to assessment and future planning. The nursery policy for special educational needs needed to encompass a wider range of needs. A wider range of larger, more challenging ride-on toys needed to be introduced to develop physical skills for older children.

The setting has extended their system of recording children's progress to cover the desirable learning outcomes. An observation book is now used each day to identify what children are expected to learn from the activity and an evaluation which is linked to assessments and future planning. Staff are now more focused on the desirable learning outcomes to ensure a balanced curriculum for all children.

A co-ordinator for special educational needs has been appointed and she has undertaken training. The policy for special educational needs has been extended and the co-ordinator is more confident at identifying special educational needs and catering for all needs.

Some larger bikes have been added to resources and children are becoming competent at pedaling them. Children are enjoying the benefit of these additional resources which further promote physical skills.

Overall good progress has been made implementing the action plan drawn up in response to the previous key issues. No key issues remain following this inspection.

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For further information about the Children's House Montessori Nursery, please do not hesitate to contact us at the above address