

Personnel of the Sooner City Nursery School and Kindergarten watch over some 200 children every day, but, please,

# Don't Call Them Baby Sitters

Dad rushes the two boys off to school at 7:30 on a cold, sleeting morning. Until 5:20 p.m. they will be in kindergarten and nursery at University.



**I**N A TEMPORARY BUILDING wedged between the University's Sooner City and the Women's Quadrangle is housed the Sooner City Nursery School and Kindergarten. About 200 children, ranging in age from a few weeks to five years, are brought here each weekday to spend either 4½ or 8½ hours. Parents of the children are either University students or employees. The service is offered them so that they may attend classes or work.

In exchange for such services, said Mrs. Erma Keeley, director, the School asks several things of the parents, one naturally being a slight monthly fee (the School is self-supporting). Another: "Don't call us baby-sitters!" Mrs. Keeley and a staff of 35 see to it that the children get plenty of food, sleep,

supervised play and fresh air—and more. "We teach them to sit and listen. A child's attention span is so short that five minutes of it is an achievement. We teach them to identify animals and different objects, to have respect for the property of others. We went to the public school teachers and asked them what they'd like for the children to know by the time they reach first grade. The teachers told us that they'd like for the children to be trained to listen, to take directions, and to be happy about it. We try to teach these things and have the children ready to learn when they reach elementary school. But we have to be careful; it's just as harmful to teach too much as too little."

Eleven years old, the School has almost

outgrown itself (from 40 children in the beginning to 200). An outgrowth of the War, it was founded in O. U.'s Woodrow Wilson Center as a service to families of veterans. As the School's enrollment increased, it moved into its present home, at first occupying part of the building, then all. Merely a child care establishment in those early days, it now concentrates on real training, issues individual progress reports, even has graduation exercises with diplomas. It operates for all except six weeks of each year, when the staff pauses to "catch its breath." Waiting lists for children wishing to enroll are long; many parents have found it smart to put their children's names on the lists before the tykes are yet born.

Photographed by  
BILLY BROWN



Mrs. Erma Keeley, director,  
helps father remove wraps of  
son just delivered to the school.

## GOOD MORNING TO CHRISTOPHER



Every morning the children say hello to Christopher as they are brought in the School's front door. The cage of the 3-year-old rabbit rests near the building's entrance. Every afternoon, when parents call for the children, Chris is recipient of many fond farewells. In pictures at left and above, the white rabbit endures portion of the close, loving scrutiny to which he's used to knowing 46 weeks out of the year. Actually Christopher is an unusual animal, if in name only: the staff discovered he's really a female.

DON'T CALL  
THEM BABY  
SITTERS  
Continued

Pantomime game conducted by instructor to 4-year-old group teaches as well as entertains. Right: animal recognition.



## THEY TEACH THEM HOW TO LEARN



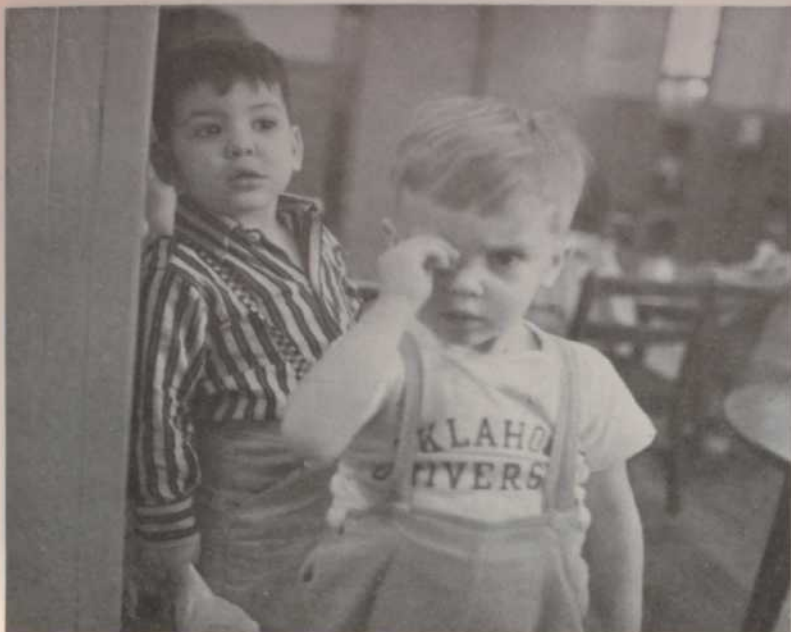
AIMED TOWARD the overall preparation for school, objectives of the Sooner City School include readiness, motor control, coordination, self help, numbers concepts, music and rhythm, health and nature concepts, creative art, self expression, and others.

Different age groups are divided into different sections and rooms at the School (infants are cared for in a building across the street from the main quarters). Relief from studies are provided by birthday parties (*see photo at left*) and by play periods outside when the weather is good, in a large upper-floor playroom when it is inclement (*see opposite page*).

There are small tables and chairs in the school where children are taught to feed themselves. Hallways are lined with small lockers, one for the wraps of each child. Walls are covered with projects of the children—finger paintings and the like.

There are dreams of having a new school building someday. Space is now at a premium, and play facilities could be better. Recently the University's School of Architecture has shown interest in helping to produce the new building, has even submitted designs for it, so the dream may come true.

Everyone helps celebrate a birthday, such as the group shown at left, and there are about two dozen birthdays per month. Girl wearing crown and opening present is honored today.



Playtime inside the building on a bitter, freezing morning finds two fellows momentarily paused to rest. One in the University T-shirt is a mite sleepy.



Most of the Nursery and Kindergarten games are constructive, teach the children to follow instructions, also to think for themselves.

Playtime outside on nice afternoon finds the Lone Ranger whipping into a bit of action as crowd of schoolmates, mostly girls, admire his lightning draw.



Struggle over a toy illustrates attitude which the School attempts to correct—respect for the possessions of others. Children are watched closely, and situations such as this are soon straightened out. In this section, one staff member supervises ten children.

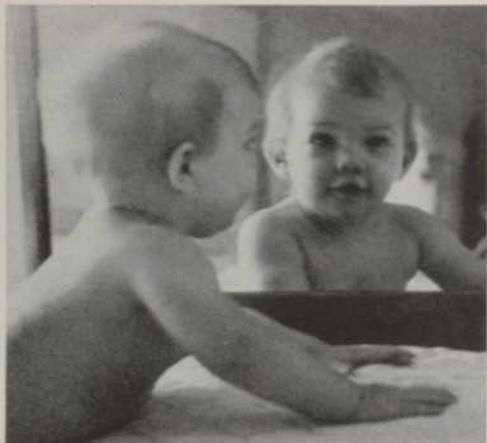


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SITTERS  
Continued

As this child washed hands following finger painting, one of the attendants said to another: "Let's not forget to order more paper towels. I find we have only thirteen rolls left."



## A ROOM WITH 25 BABY BEDS



**T**HOUGH ALL CHILDREN are fascinating in their attitudes of complete honesty and naturalness, it is the tiniest ones who are real charmers. Visitors to the School come across entire rooms of them, areas where as many as 25 baby beds stand side by side. The youngest ever taken by the School was two weeks. Between the ages of 9 and 18 months they begin to learn how spoons can be used by oneself, what various pieces of furniture are really for, and the delight of graduating from a crib to a play pen. There is one staff member to watch over each three or four of them, and the watching is fulfilling and fun.

Mirrors are a favorite of babies. An infant girl, placed on her stomach before a mirror (above, left) is at first startled, intrigued by reflection of room behind her. She reaches to touch the reflection (above, right), then catches sight of herself (right). Afterwards, realizing that she was looking at herself, she laughed delightedly at her sudden discoveries.





The afternoon nap is a sight to behold. Shoes removed, this boy and approximately 180 other children rest in individual, steel-frame beds in many rooms.



Most of them sleep on their stomachs. Ordinary noises don't easily awaken them. Here a girl is told it's time to rise and shine.

Exploring the campus, a group is led by an instructor holding a rope. The children are told to hold onto the rope at all times, and they usually do.

