



Blashford Lakes Playdays

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Deborah Page

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Type of inspection Childcare
Type of 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

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.
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WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Blashford Lakes Playdays is managed by Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It opened in 2000 and operates from Blashford Lakes Study Centre in a wildlife reserve. The provision is organised by the education officer. A maximum of 24 children under eight years may attend the play-scheme at any one time. It operates one day a week during school holidays from 10:00 to 15:00. The number of children attending varies. The education officer is assisted by experienced play workers employed by New Forest District Council, which also provides administrative support. A well equipped classroom acts as a base for outdoor activities with an environmental theme.

Children come from the surrounding areas. The scheme currently supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The scheme employs six members of staff.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well as written plans for outdoor activities include potential health hazards, such as, dehydration and sunburn. Staff make sure plenty of drinks are accessible at all times including spare water containers. Children are well protected from sunburn as parents are asked to provide sun protection. Staff also have spare sun cream for parents to apply on arrival. This contributes to children being well protected from the sun on the trips around the lakes. Good procedures are implemented by staff to make sure children regularly clean their hands, such as, after using the toilet, before eating and after exploring the outdoor environment.

Anti-bacterial gel is taken on outings for children to clean their hands before they eat their lunch. Children are well cared for by qualified first aiders if there is an accident. Good procedures include taking a first aid kit on outings. Appropriate systems ensure required medication documents are maintained and the best interests of the child are considered if a child is not well. Parents provide packed lunches for the children and staff make sure parents are aware there is no cold storage for lunch boxes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children feel welcomed as friendly staff greet them in a room with interesting displays, posters, photographs and mobiles. Equipment is well maintained and accessible, to support children in routine activities. This includes foot stools to support children in the toilets and spare ruck sacks for children to carry their belongings in, as they walk around the lakes.

There are good systems in place to ensure all children and staff are familiar with the emergency evacuation plan. There are regular fire drills. Excellent procedures ensure children are safe during activities. Children are asked to recall the various rules that apply when they are outdoors, in preparation for a planned walk. Staff reinforce the safety rules, such as, stay with an adult, do not go near the horses, keep to paths near the lakes and only eat anything if an adult says it is safe. Good procedures include staff regularly counting the children, to make sure they are all present.

Children are sufficiently protected from harm and neglect, as, staff are confident in most child protection issues and a policy includes most aspects of child protection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely well engrossed in the wonders of the natural world and their own imaginations. Highly skilled staff provide an extensive range of activities to keep children captivated in the superb activities organised exceptionally well by them.

Children are excited and are keen to start a walk, investigating new paths around the lakes. Within a short distance they are engrossed in the wonders that surround them. Children gather around with anticipation to see if there are any creatures under a corrugated sheet of metal and watch as large and, small ants hurry to hide their eggs. Another sheet is lifted and children are excited as a family of toads leap about. They notice how the toads change colour. The corrugated sheet is replaced exactly as it is found. Throughout the trip children learn to respect the habitats of different creatures.

Children are well fascinated by the different topics of interest pointed out to them. Staff explain why toadstools should be left alone and not kicked. Fox faeces are examined to see what has been eaten, including, beetles and fruit. Children guess and discuss what they see. Animal tracks including deer are pointed out and children continue to find more tracks of animals. They learn that some plants are edible and some are poisonous. Some children cannot wait to have a taste of an edible plant. It is spicy and they make all sorts of facial expressions. The children relish in tasting the blackberries.

Their imagination thrives as leaves with tiny holes are shown to the children and a staff member informs them, "they are the needles used by fairies". In wonder younger children carefully place a couple in their pockets. One child says, "if you don't believe in fairies, you won't ever see one."

Children delight in the opportunity to help cover the walls of a mud hut with mud. They want to know how it sticks. They look at the fibres used to keep the mud together and learn to wet the walls before applying the mud. They get through several buckets of mud. Children enthuse as they apply the mud in handfuls and spread it on with their hands. Children sing a song chorus of "mud, mud, glorious mud." They express how they feel, "soggy, disgusting, but, lovely" and "warm, I'm loving it". One new child stated, "this is my favourite". Those involved in erecting the mud hut frame explain to the children how it was made. Children and staff are covered in mud and as buckets of water are provided to clean themselves, some children realise how soft their skin feels.

Children gather together under a leafy corridor by the lake and as they sit, they listen to a story about a dragon's scales and they are taken in their imagination on a fantastic journey. The story is told extremely well by a staff member, with sound effects and lots of expression. The story ends, but the wonderment continues as children are taken on a flying experience among the sun lit branches. They are given a plastic mirror (the only magic dragon scales left in the world) to hold under their eyes, so that the leaves reflect in the mirror and they take flight. Children are mesmerised and continue to use the mirror in different ways to explore the environment.

At the end of the day staff ask the children if they have had a good time. A huge cheer is expressed by all the children. As children are collected one child says to

their parent, "we've seen amazing things today".

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are respected as staff make sure they discuss relevant care information about each child with their parent/carer as they arrive. Children respect each other and learn how to respect the environment as they explore and investigate the world around them. Children with specific needs are well cared for and all children are included in activities.

Children are extremely well behaved. They support each other and share tasks such as carrying ruck sacks and using the spray bottle of water on the mud hut. They listen well to instructions and know and respect the rules, as they walk around the lakes. Good procedures are in place as behaviour is managed well by staff. There is a behaviour policy for parents which includes aspects such as, bullying.

Parents are well informed about the setting as each parent/carer receives a leaflet that provides an introduction to the centre. Policies and procedures are available and accessible for parents/carers. There are several written consents that have been agreed with them. They are extremely happy with the care provided and are very pleased with the variety of experiences, education and fun children receive. Some children and parents/carers have the opportunity to complete evaluation forms about activities. Comments include, 'staff professional', 'excellent' and 'children learn so much'. There is a detailed complaints procedure, however, Ofsted's role is not clear for parents/carers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There are appropriate arrangements to make sure staff are suitable to work with children. Good procedures make sure children are closely supervised at all times. This contributes to children being protected from those persons not vetted. Children benefit well from the extremely good organisation of activities. They experience a wide range of different opportunities to explore and investigate the natural environment.

Documentation is well maintained, however, in the complaints policy Ofsted's role is not clear. Regulation procedures are not clear in the child protection policy. Staff are not confident in procedures if an allegation of abuse against a child is made.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting agreed to ensure that all policies and procedures are

readily accessible to parents and they are made aware of this. A file of policies and procedures is now available to parents and this contributes to parents having easy access to information about how their child is cared for. The setting also agreed to make sure contact details and addresses of all staff are included on the staff list. A record of all staff details is now available and this ensures a clear record is kept of those involved in the care of the children. The setting then agreed to advise parents that there is no cold storage facilities for lunch boxes. A notice is now displayed for parents.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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

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.

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 parents and staff are made aware of Ofsted's role regarding allegation and complaints procedures

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