



Barracudas Activity Camp

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY257417
Inspection date	23 August 2006
Inspector	Kim Wailling
Setting Address	Sherrardswood School, 3 Lockleys, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL6 0BJ
Telephone number	01438 714 282
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Registered person	Young World Leisure Group Limited
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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Barracudas Activity Camp is one of 27 activity camps run by Young World Leisure Group Limited. It opened in 2003 and operates from eight base rooms, a gym, a drama studio, an art room and a range of outdoor areas and facilities within Sherrardswood school situated in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 200 children from four to eight years may attend the camp at any one time, which is also open to children to the age of 14 years. The camp is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 during some school holidays. All children share access to enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 51 children from four to eight years on roll who attend for a variety of sessions. Children come from a wide catchment area. The camp currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and or disabilities.

The camp employs 24 staff. Over half of the staff working with children under eight years, including the manager, hold appropriate qualifications or are working towards a qualification. Barracudas Activity Camp takes part in the 4 Children Aiming Higher quality assurance scheme and has currently achieved accreditation.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is generally protected as staff follow appropriate routines. Children, for example, are reminded to wash their hands before eating and have use of very clean and well stocked toilets. However, when eating indoors, some children sit on upswept floors or use tables which are not wiped. This potentially, places children at the risk of infection. Children are made aware of how to protect themselves from the effects of bright sun and are encouraged to wear tee-shirts and sun hats when outside.

Children's health, if they have an accident, is very well safeguarded. The camp has a designated first aid room and ensures that first aid requisites are regularly replenished. Staff members that hold first aid training are confident and reassuring, efficiently dealing with minor injuries to children. All accidents are clearly recorded and parents and carers informed either by telephone, in the instance of a wasp sting, or at the end of the day.

Children's dietary needs are sufficiently met as staff members ensure that drinks and foods the children enjoy are made available. Children are encouraged to keep their water bottles 'topped up' and to have drinks throughout the day, particularly after vigorous exercise. Parents and carers are encouraged to provide their children with healthy packed lunches, which children eat together either as picnics in the school grounds or indoors. Staff are aware of the need to check for possible allergies when sharing foods such as birthday cake. The camp runs a daily 'tuck shop' which has healthy options, such as apple crisps, popcorn and yogurt covered fruit, for children to purchase. Consequently, proactive steps are being taken to support children's healthy eating and to ensure that they are well nourished.

Children play daily in the fresh air and enjoy physical exercise. This contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Children play organised team games, such as cricket, and enjoy using the adventure playground which promotes running, balancing and climbing skills. In addition, the camp offers a programme of activities, such as trampolining, which involves the children in vigorous exercise. Children's need for rest is acknowledged by staff and children if tired can opt out of physically demanding activities. However, no alternative activity is given and there is no area set aside for them to relax. This means that children's requirements for rest are not adequately met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept safe and are generally well cared for. Effective steps are in place in a setting where some activities are physically challenging. Children use sports equipment which is age-appropriate and fit for purpose, such as child sized hockey sticks and foam balls. Robust risk assessments are conducted on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Staff are very vigilant when conducting activities and take immediate action to minimise potential hazards to children. This includes making minor adjustments to equipment such as re-locating the aqua slide to avoid children slipping on muddy patches. Children keep themselves safe by following the setting's sensible safety rules. These are frequently discussed with children and a check is made of their understanding. Children report infringements to staff, as when a child failed to remove his shoes before using the bouncy castle. These incidents are dealt with calmly. Staff explain to children why such actions are a potential danger.

Most rooms used by children for indoor activities are clean and in a good state of repair. However, at the time of the inspection visit, two rooms used frequently by children under eight were not adequately ventilated. In these rooms, some children sat on a muddy upswept floor and used tables that were cluttered. These rooms were not welcoming to children. In addition, the camp has no suitable resources for children to rest or relax on undisturbed. This means that children are not always accessing the necessary facilities which meet their developmental needs.

Children's safety as they move around the camp is well protected. Effective measures are in place, especially in the presence of contractors carrying out maintenance in some areas of the campus, to safeguard children. Children, for example are always escorted to the toilet. In addition, staff use the safest routes to take children from activity to activity around the school grounds. This was effectively used to promote younger children's road safety awareness as one route involved using a small zebra crossing on the school drive.

Children's welfare is very well protected as staff members demonstrate a good working knowledge of child protection issues. All staff members attend a comprehensive induction program that includes what to do if they become concerned about a child in their care. This is underpinned by relevant documentation which can be easily accessed by staff. This indicates that protecting children from harm is given a high priority. Children's departure at the end of the day is extremely well managed and orderly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enthusiastically join in with the broad range of events that the camp has to offer. The sports programme is extensive and includes games of hockey, foam fencing, learning circus skills such as juggling, using the aqua slide and trampoline, which the children find challenging and motivating. Alongside this, children have access to spacious school grounds, making good use of the adventure playground

and patio areas. Younger children, in particular, were very proud of the pavement chalk drawing that they had worked together to create.

Children play cooperatively with each other and form new friendships. Children are grouped according to age and are assigned room supervisors, who are responsible for base rooms. These groups are given names, such as Minnows, Starfish and Dolphins, which are effectively used to create a sense of team spirit, belonging and comradeship. The Minnows, for example, sang a rousing marching song which, at the time of the inspection visit, echoed around the camp as the group moved to and from activities. However, team games, such as dodge ball, are organised which involve older children so that younger children can mix with others.

Children settle quickly as most staff interact with them and join in with their play. Children have relaxed relationship with staff, who are genuinely interested in what the children do and say. Indoor activities are organised, such as drama sessions, conducting simple science experiments, drawing, face painting and games such as Jenga, which promotes children's learning in an enjoyable way. This year watching videos are not included in the programme. As a result, children are actively engaged, busy and having fun in a setting which offers a good balance of activities that are age-appropriate, meeting the needs of the different ages of children attending.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued. Staff recognise children's achievements, offer praise and encouragement. This enhances children's self-esteem. Children feel a sense of belonging as they confidently use all available areas. Children from a wide catchment area attend the camp and are well supported to ensure that they feel included. Children with specific learning difficulties and disabilities are welcomed. Their needs are discussed with their parents and carers at the outset and strategies are agreed to support them. Children are helped to develop a positive attitude to similarities and differences as staff celebrate individual success. Children, for example, are encouraged to applaud the efforts of others when personal goals, such as using the trampoline unaided for the first time, are achieved. Children's art work is displayed. Children can access drawing implements and toys, such as jigsaws and a play house, in their base rooms while waiting for planned activities to start. However, the range of these resources is limited.

Rules are discussed with children that they respond to. Children behave very well and play harmoniously together. Children are asked their opinions about activities and their suggestions, where possible, are implemented. This means that mutual respect has developed, which empowers children. During supervised group activities some staff skilfully stand back to allow children to find their own answers before intervening. This enables children to find their own solutions. However, when staff see inappropriate behaviour this is challenged and dealt with through appropriate strategies, such as talking through with children the consequences of their actions. This means the children's enjoyment is not overshadowed by the actions of others.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's needs, both as individuals and as a group, are effectively met because of the appropriate and careful organisation of the setting. At the time of the inspection visit, for example, staff deployment rotas ensured that children were sufficiently supported in activities which increased involvement and enjoyment. All records and procedures seen satisfactorily supported the effective and efficient running of the camp. In addition, frequent contact with the registered body and visits from the area manager means that any problems are quickly resolved. This adds to the smooth running of the camp during its four weeks opening period. As a result children's sense of well-being and care is enhanced.

Children enjoy the company and friendship of the staff, who work well as a team. This team spirit is reinforced by staff induction sessions held before the camp opens. The majority of staff join in with children's activities and clearly enjoy what they do. The manager and his 'blue shirt' deputies are well qualified and experienced in working with differing ages of children. They confidently lead the large staff team and are excellent role models to less experienced staff members. Consequently, competent organisation means that the summer camp offers a good quality of care to children under eight. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure that 50% of staff working with children under eight held appropriate childcare qualification. This has been fully addressed. Room coordinators working with children under eight are experienced and hold appropriate childcare qualifications. This means that children's needs, both as individual and as a group, are effectively met.

In addition, the provider agreed to put in place measures that ensured that children were protected from direct sunshine, had access to a suitable first aid kit at all times and were offered healthy options at snack times. Appropriate actions have been put in place which enhances the health of children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted has received one complaint relating to National Standards 3: Care, learning and play, 5: Equipment and 6: Safety. The complaint related to concerns about the showing of an inappropriate video for the ages of the children present, children being left unattended over the lunch break and the recording of children's activities. As this group is a holiday play scheme and the complaint was received after the group had finished for the summer in August 2005, Ofsted made a telephone call to the registered provider to discuss the concerns raised. As a result of this telephone call no further action was taken. The provider remains qualified for registration. The registered provider has made a record of the

complaint in their complaint record.

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 that provision is made for children who wish to relax and play quietly, equipped with appropriate furniture
- ensure that areas indoors are clean and adequately ventilated.

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