



Barracudas Activity Camp

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY257626
Inspection date	10 August 2006
Inspector	Gail Groves
Setting Address	St. Nicholas House, Bunkers Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP3 8RP
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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?

Hemel Hempstead Barracudas Activity Camp is one of 27 activity camps run by Young World Leisure Group Limited. It opened in 2003 and operates from 11 classrooms and two halls within Abbots Hill school situated in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 130 children under eight may attend the activity camp at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 during some school holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 72 children from four to seven years on roll who attend for a variety of sessions. Children come from a wide catchment area. The group currently

supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The group employs 24 staff. Over half of the staff working with children under eight years old, including the manager, hold appropriate qualifications or are working towards a qualification.

The setting takes part in the 4 Children Aiming Higher quality assurance scheme and has currently achieved a Level 2.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. The group works closely with parents to meet children's health and dietary needs and sufficient staff with current first aid certificates are always available to deal with accidents and to administer medication if required. However, children often sit on the floor to eat their snack or lunch and although large paper floor coverings have been provided on which they can put their food, these are not used consistently. Also, although children learn to understand some simple, good health and hygiene practices, such as washing their hands after using the toilet, they are not consistently required to wash their hands before eating or taking part in cooking activities. Routines such as wiping tables before and after cooking activities are also not carried out. Consequently, children are at risk of infection.

Children are given opportunities to buy snacks from the group's tuck shop. Careful consideration has been given to providing healthier options, such as fruit crisps, yogurt fruit and mineral water or fruit juice rather than chocolate bars and fizzy drinks. Posters encourage children to think about what a healthy diet entails and discussions with staff help to raise their awareness still further. As a result, children are encouraged to develop good eating habits.

Children take part in a wide range of regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors. This helps to develop their motor skills and coordination and encourages them to develop a healthy lifestyle and an enjoyment of exercise. For example, they swim, play dodge ball, cricket and tennis, use the trampoline and bouncy castle and learn circus skills, such as balancing and juggling. The daily timetable is carefully planned so that energetic activities are balanced with less active play, such as arts and crafts, reading and card games. As a result, children can rest according to their needs and regain their energy levels.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor

environment in which the risks to their safety have been minimised by the use of well-implemented policies and procedures, regular and comprehensive risk assessments and good quality staff training. For example, emergency evacuation procedures are practised every week to ensure children's awareness of what is required. Accident records are regularly analysed to identify possible safety issues and when children are moving around the site, staff are vigilant that risks, such as steps and steep slopes, are avoided or negotiated carefully to prevent injury. Children use good quality, suitable and safe equipment which is well maintained and meets their differing needs. Rules to prevent accidents when using equipment, such as the trampoline, are rigorously enforced by staff. As a result, children are learning to keep themselves safe.

Children are safeguarded because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. For example, induction training for new staff comprehensively covers child protection issues and ensures that staff are aware of the categories, signs and symptoms of abuse and understand their legal duty to report any concerns they may have to the Camp Manager. There is a clear recording system in place for logging concerns and confidentiality is stressed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are involved in a broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and learning. Children can choose from at least two different activities during each one of the six daily activity sessions. For example, they can choose to take part in physical and sporting activities, such as games of hockey or foam fencing or play on the aqua slide or electric go-karts. They also have opportunities to enjoy creative activities, such as clay modelling, painting and gluing as well as face painting and dance and drama sessions. At other times they enjoy quieter play, such as icing biscuits or completing jigsaw puzzles. As a result, they are developing independence and are becoming confident to make decisions, explore and investigate.

New children settle and quickly become happy in the setting because they are supported by sensitive staff who encourage them to become involved in the activities on offer and to feel that they are part of the group. Staff value and recognise children's achievements and efforts at all times and are careful to offer praise and encouragement to all children so that they develop self-esteem and confidence. For example, staff working with the youngest age group use a star chart to reward children for helping or being kind and all groups display children's art work and models around the room. Staff listen carefully to children and are interested in what they do and say. They interact with children's play and extend their language throughout their discussions with them. As a result, children relate well to others and are developing good communication and social skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included and therefore develop confidence and self-esteem. For example, weekly questionnaires are given to children to complete, which ask them for their thoughts on the activities that have been provided and whether they have enjoyed them or not. Also they are asked if they have any suggestions for future activities. This feedback is then used to influence the planning for the following week. Within the camp children operate in small groups organised by age, which are named after sea creatures. They learn their particular group's marching songs and sing these with gusto and enjoyment as they move from area to area of the site. As a result, they develop a strong sense of belonging to their own group and are therefore confident to take part in all the activities that are on offer to them. They respond well to appropriate expectations for their behaviour and staff ensure that they have children's full attention before giving them important information. Consequently, they understand what is required of them and inappropriate behaviour is minimised.

Children are aware of their own needs and are learning to respect the needs of others as they share, take turns and look out for each other's safety during activities. For example, children understand that they can only use the trampoline one at a time and that whilst they are waiting for their turns they must keep watch that the child using it does not bounce too near the edge. They learn to work harmoniously with others as they help each other to tidy away resources before moving on to another activity and are encouraged to work together during competitive team games in order to win. As a result, they are developing good social skills. Chances to make choices and take decisions are built into the daily routine so that children develop independence. For example, they choose what they wish to buy in the tuck shop and decide which items in their lunch box they will eat at snack time. Children benefit from some activities and resources, such as music and games from different countries, which help them to value diversity and become aware of the differences between people.

Children have their individual needs met because the group works in partnership with parents and carers. Information is sought regarding children's particular needs before they begin to attend and close liaison with parents ensures that these are discussed and fully understood. Detailed information is provided for parents about the camp and how it operates and policies and procedures can be accessed by parents if they wish to do so. Consequently, children's welfare can be fully supported.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Comprehensive record keeping systems are generally used well to meet children's needs and all of the necessary documentation for the efficient and safe management of the camp is in place. Staff have regard for the well-being of all children and the company's detailed induction training programme ensures that they have a clear sense of purpose and an appropriate understanding of their roles. Recruitment and vetting procedures contribute to children being protected and cared for by staff with appropriate knowledge and understanding of child development and as a result, children's well-being and progress is fostered. However, staff deployment sometimes

results in untrained or inexperienced staff being left in charge of children without sufficient support and guidance from more experienced, qualified staff. Consequently, during these periods, the quality of the care, learning and play offered to children is compromised.

Some policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. However, the registration system for the AM club does not show children's time of arrival at the club, although their time of arrival in their base room is recorded. Consequently, children's welfare cannot be fully monitored. Also, all staff are made aware of the regulatory adult to child ratio which must be met when working with children under eight as well as the increased ratios the group imposes for certain higher risk activities, such as swimming. Staff rotas reflect these requirements and group sizes are regulated accordingly. However, staff do not sufficiently monitor that these are maintained at all times. As a result, the outcomes for children are sometimes insufficiently supported.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group agreed to ensure that effective staff induction was maintained. There is a comprehensive two day staff induction programme in place which is revised annually to reflect any changes in operating systems or legislation. Videos have been introduced to supplement and improve this training still further. As a result, staff are helped to understand and comply with the policies and procedures which the group have in place to support children's well-being, safety and development. The group also agreed to ensure that sufficient ratios were maintained. However, this remains an issue following this inspection.

The group was asked to improve the range of resources available to children during registration periods and within their group rooms. New age-appropriate resources have been provided and are available for the children to use whenever they are in their base rooms. These include books, puzzles, games and colouring activities. As a result, children are able to enjoy a wider variety of opportunities for quiet play.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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):

- review the hygiene routines in place for snack and lunch times as well as for cooking activities and ensure that these are consistently carried out
- ensure consistent hygiene practices are in place for children eating food when seated on the floor
- ensure the times of arrival and departure are always recorded for children attending the AM and PM clubs
- ensure that the correct adult to child ratio is maintained at all times
- ensure staff deployment allows untrained or inexperienced staff to be fully supported by more experienced or trained staff.

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