



Bramble Bears

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	253964
Inspection date	09 October 2006
Inspector	Andrea Caroline Snowden
Setting Address	Ashwellthorpe Village Hall, The Street, ASHWELLTHORPE, Norfolk, NR16 1AA
Telephone number	07751323991
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Registered person	Bramble Bears Committee
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Bramble Bears Pre-school was established over 25 years ago and operates from the village hall in Ashwellthorpe. A maximum of 24 children may attend each session. The pre-school is open on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings between 09:45 and 12:15. In the summer term a further session is offered on a Friday morning for those children about to start school. The children use the main hall, a side annex and there is an enclosed courtyard for outdoor play.

There are currently 10 children on roll, four of whom receive funding for nursery education. There are no children with special needs or with English as an additional language on roll at present.

The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee who employ two staff members. The supervisor is appropriately qualified, holding a level three qualification and the assistant holds an introductory level certificate.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean, appropriately maintained environment. They are beginning to learn the importance of personal hygiene as they are reminded to wash their hands prior to eating food. When asked why they must wash by a member of staff they all respond - 'because of the germs'. There are effective policies and procedures in place to maintain children's good health and welfare, for example the wearing of disposable gloves when dealing with bodily fluids. However, these are not consistently observed by staff. As a result continued good health may be compromised. The staff are trained to administer first aid and parents have given their written permission to enable them to seek emergency medical treatment. Information is sought from parents prior to care commencing to ensure staff can appropriately meet children's health needs.

The setting takes some positive steps to promote healthy eating. Children are offered a wide range of fresh fruits at snack time such as grapes, banana, orange segments and sliced apple, followed by a biscuit. Staff help the children to develop healthy eating habits by reminding them that eating the apple skins are good for you. They look at posters and discuss different types of fruit and vegetables, but sometimes miss the opportunity to discuss why some foods are not good for you. For example, when the chocolate biscuits are handed around everybody talks about loving chocolate, but staff do not use this to help children understand that chocolate is good as a treat only. Staff are aware of children's food intolerances and record these in the register to ensure no child receives food which could make them poorly.

Children have very regular access to fresh air and exercise, using the courtyard even when the weather is wet. They are therefore learning to develop a healthy, active lifestyle. Staff provide a fair range of physical activities, both indoors and outside, to encourage children to develop their skills. The children walk along the balance beam demonstrating careful movement so as not to fall off, bounce on the trampoline with confidence and move around showing good spatial awareness. Staff help them understand how exercise helps them stay fit and healthy and the effect it has on their bodies. Children use small tools, such as scissors demonstrating accuracy and confidence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children receive a warm welcome from the staff and come into the setting happily. Displays of children's work on notice boards creates a child centred environment from the village hall and helps children become emotionally secure. The security and safety of premises is maintained and they are appropriate for use by young children.

Children have free access to a suitable range of clean and well maintained resources, which they are encouraged to respect. They are learning to be responsible for their own safety as the staff encourage them to hold scissors correctly and use the trampoline safely by holding onto the hand rail. The children have also enjoyed visits from the local road safety team, helping them learn about the dangers of traffic. Although children's safety is given priority and staff are vigilant, there is no formal risk assessment of the premises and equipment to ensure children's safety. Staff practise fire drills so that they are confident with the process for evacuating children from the premises in an emergency.

Children are protected from the risk of possible harm. Staff ensure that children are never left alone with persons who have not been vetted. Furthermore, children are not allowed to leave with any other adult unless parents have given their permission. The staff demonstrate that they are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of child abuse and put procedures in place. However, they do not keep Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance to hand and the internal policy has out of date contact information. This could result in a possible delay when referring any concerns about children's welfare to the relevant authorities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing confidence as they settle to play quickly and chat to their peers throughout the morning. They eagerly wait at the kitchen door to hand out the plates and cups at snack time and show confidence in the way they move around the room, selecting resources and choosing activities for themselves. They are learning to share equipment and friendships are forming. Children are becoming independent. They access the bathroom facilities alone and manage personal tasks for themselves. They are encouraged by staff to tidy away after themselves promoting respect and care for the environment around them.

Children are given lots of opportunities to explore the activities at their own pace. They search the rice in the water tray looking for dinosaurs, running their hands through the grains. They are encouraged in problem solving by staff who ask open ended questions about activities. For example a child is putting together the road track and has a problem because part of it is on the wooden floor and the other on a raised mat. Realising that they cannot be joined the child looks at the member of staff quizzically. The member of staff asks 'what can we do?', the child thinks for a moment and replies 'we can build a bridge'. The member of staff extends the child's thinking further by asking 'how could we do that?'

Children enjoy a good balance of activities and free play which is planned to meet their developmental needs. Funded three and four year olds follow the Curriculum for the Foundation Stage which meets their learning needs. Planning for the two year old children attending the setting is based on a watered down version of what the three and four year olds are doing and sometimes has the impact of activities not meeting their developmental needs effectively.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are excited to learn and eager to try new experiences and build on skills already attained. They are making good progress towards the

early learning goals in all areas of their learning. Staff meet regularly to plan the curriculum and evaluate their observations of children. They provide a varied play programme and topics, such as 'where I live' are very well developed to capture children's interest. For instance, they make maps of their village, talk about farming in their rural community, conduct traffic surveys and go for walks to the local woods to look at the flowers and mushrooms which grow there. The staff consult with parents and observe the new children to discover their starting point and plan activities to help them progress. Children get on well together and staff are developing a warm rapport with them. Their confidence is well promoted by staff who use their names, maintain eye contact and use intonation in their voices to show that they are interested in what the children say or do.

Children show a positive approach to new experiences, for example as a new song and actions are introduced they excitedly join in building up the tower and then knocking it down again. They play alongside their peers at activities and show self-control, for example when sharing toys. Children speak out confidently, initiate conversations and are able to make their needs known as they play. There is a range of materials available for mark-making and as a result older children are able to practise forming letters. Older children are beginning to label their work with their name confidently. Children have access to a well stocked bookcase, although this is usually only used at specific times of the day. They join in with stories such as 'The Gingerbread Man' and enjoy the refrain. Older children count reliably because the staff take opportunities to encourage them to count within activities. Some routine activities such as handing out plates or biscuits at snack time present children with number problems and simple calculations helping to develop their mathematical thinking. Children demonstrate their ability to recreate patterns competently as they focus on shapes and colour and they enjoy measuring the ingredients when they cook. A child demonstrates that they know how many sides a triangle has and so staff try to extend this with questions about how many sides a square has.

Children's creative development is well fostered because the role play area changes from a home to a shop or alternative setting according to the topic. They use their imagination well and they use the apparatus as props. A child uses the area underneath the climbing frame as an animal pen and acts as a lamb and small groups of children have enjoyed 'bus rides' to Majorca. Children enjoy exploration of sound when they use the musical instruments to tap out rhythms and play loudly or softly. Children express themselves through art work and explore the mixing of colours at the easel. A child explains how by using red and yellow a bonfire has been painted. Children investigate equipment to find out how things work. They use tape recorders and electronic games to begin to learn about technology. They have investigated shadows made by the sun and used torches to create their own shadows in a darkened room. Topics such as minibeasts have helped them gain an understanding of nature and their environment and children have been introduced to different cultures and ways of life, for example when the Traveller Service visited with role play equipment and books to help children understand how Travellers live.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel a sense of belonging to the setting. There are few children on roll at present and as a result the staff get to know them very well indeed. Children's individual needs are therefore effectively met and daily discussion takes place between staff to ensure the day's provision meets the needs of specific children. Children are developing an understanding of the wider society because the setting introduces them to some resources and activities which promote discussion about different cultures, religions and abilities. Children have celebrated festivals from around the world such as Chinese New Year and dress up to explore the national dress of other countries. They have discussed wheelchair users when out on trips and have been introduced to sign language, helping raise awareness of disability issues.

Children's individual needs are identified with parents before care is provided and the setting is suitably prepared to accommodate those having learning difficulties or disabilities. Although they are not currently caring for children with identified special needs, staff are able to recognise possible developmental delay and there are appropriate procedures in place to guide them if children appear not to be making progress. They are able to work with parents, carers and other agencies to provide appropriate care and learning and can access support from the area co-ordinator to develop individual educational plans so that children of all abilities can reach their full potential.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They behave considerately to one another and are learning to share resources. They are effectively supported to help manage their own behaviour because staff set clear boundaries and have high expectations for their behaviour to be good. Staff present as positive role models to the children because they are calm, polite and friendly. Children's self-esteem is promoted and initiatives such as the 'helping hand tree' encourages children to contribute in a positive manner to the setting.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are warmly welcomed into the setting and provided with a brochure explaining useful information and policies which enable them to understand how the setting works. There is a good verbal exchange of information as parents drop off and collect their children to ensure that everyone remains informed about the child's welfare, achievements or any incidents. Parents are pleased with the individual attention their children receive whilst numbers are low and speak of the staff as friendly and approachable. They are less informed about the early education that is provided for their children and as a result are not as able to be involved with their child's learning at home. Information on the notice board is difficult to access and information regarding children's individual 'learning stories' is scant.

Parents of younger children also enjoy positive relationships with the staff. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children to settle them in and as a result children build confidence in the setting whilst their parents are still present. Parents are informed about how to raise concerns through the setting's complaints procedure, however there is no system for monitoring and recording written complaints which are made. Parents do not have easy access to the regulators details meaning that they may not be able to escalate concerns if necessary. There

is no system for recording incidents in the setting, resulting in the possibility of parents not being informed of issues or a record being available for future reference and action.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care and learning is supported by a qualified and experienced supervisor, supported by an assistant who is also experienced in childcare work. They understand how young children develop and attend some short courses to ensure their knowledge and understanding is up to date. Policies and procedures mostly protect children and are effectively implemented to promote all the outcomes for children. The management committee of the setting is interested in ensuring that the practice of all staff contributes positively to children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting.

Most of the required documentation is in place and maintained to an acceptable standard. The accurate record of attendance ensures that staff always know who is present to support children's welfare and care.

The leadership and management of the provision is good. The setting is guided by clear aims that help the staff to provide a happy, safe and friendly learning environment as evidenced by the good progress that children are making towards the early learning goals. The small management committee supports the staff in meeting the children's needs through regular committee meetings which enables discussion to assess the setting's performance. Weaknesses which are identified are acted upon, but no formal action plan is developed to ensure the issues are addressed in a timely and satisfactory fashion. The appraisal system ensures staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in delivering care and education of a suitable standard. Staff work well as a team and are deployed effectively to ensure children's learning needs are promoted well. The setting is committed to improvement and seeks parental views through questionnaires to enable them to assess their practice further. Plans are also in place to create a vegetable garden for children to plant and nurture their own produce.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children attending.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to carry out a number of recommendations relating to the policies and procedures, safety of children and to give consideration to the layout and availability of resources. The setting has made progress in all of these areas. The policies and procedures have been updated, but are again under review as a working document, ensuring that the information contained is accurate and helps parents understand how the setting works for them and their child. Children's safety has been improved as fire drills are now practised at least once a term. The availability of resources and displays to help children learn about diversity has been greatly improved and children's awareness is raised on a number of issues including different cultures, religions and disabilities. The layout of the playroom has been considered and this is an area of the setting which is reviewed periodically to ensure children's access all the resources available to them.

Furthermore, at the last inspection the setting was asked to consider children's assessments and curriculum planning and to ensure children had sufficient time to explore and investigate activities at their own pace. Children's assessments now identify the next steps for children's learning and these in turn inform the curriculum planning. This now ensures that children's individual learning requirements are considered and that they are provided for. In addition to this all aspects of learning in the Foundation Stage are now covered throughout the year ensuring children access a broad and varied curriculum. Staff are able to give children the time they need to investigate and explore for themselves, move onto different activities at their own pace and therefore absorb more learning through their play.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. 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 the hygiene procedures are consistently adhered to in order to maintain children's welfare
- conduct a risk assessment of the premises and equipment and review this as necessary in order to minimise risks to children's safety. In addition set up a system for recording incidents
- update the child protection policy to ensure contact information for the social services departments are correct and familiarise staff with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures
- plan and provide activities using the 'Birth to three matters' framework which are aimed at the very youngest children in the setting
- develop a system to record complaints and ensure all parents are aware of how to contact Ofsted should the need arise.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve communication with parents to ensure they are informed of the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and to encourage them to contribute to their children's learning stories.

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