



Benton Hall Creche

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY335858
Inspection date	17 October 2006
Inspector	Anita Bartram
Setting Address	Benton Hall, Wickham Hill, WITHAM, Essex, CM8 3LH
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Registered person	The Club Company
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Crèche

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Benton Hall Crèche was registered in 2006 and is one of seven crèches run by The Club Company plc. It operates from a room within Benton Hall. It is situated on the outskirts of Witham, Essex. All children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the crèche at any one time. The facility currently opens seven days a week from 09.30 until 14.30 for 52 weeks of the year. Children come from the local and wider community. The setting employs four staff, including the manager who holds an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children and babies are able to enjoy some physical play indoors. The outdoor play area is not always sufficiently used which means children cannot enjoy fresh air and exercise in a wider, less restricting environment. Overall, staff are warm and responsive to babies' and children's needs. However, the current organisation of staff ratios means staff are not consistently able to give children sufficient emotional support to either settle them into the crèche or when they become upset.

Staff follow satisfactory hygiene procedures and cleaning routines. However, bottled milk is not always stored in compliance with regulations relating to food safety and hygiene. For example, when babies arrive in the crèche staff do not consistently put their milk in the fridge and then re-heat it when it is needed. As a result, children are at risk of illness. Drinks are readily available to babies and children throughout their time in the crèche. Parents are able to provide food and drink for babies and children to eat, either as snacks or for light meals. However, staff are not currently able to heat babies' solid foods up. This means babies who are just being weaned onto semi-solid foods cannot always have their dietary needs fully met. Staff hold babies in their arms as they bottle feed them and sit with older children whilst they eat. This creates an appropriate social experience for the children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The premises is fit for purpose. It is warm and welcoming to children through the bright décor, mobiles and appropriately sized furniture. However, standard space requirements are not currently being adhered to. Consequently, babies are being cared for in space not sufficient for them to have free movement and this has a detrimental effect on staff's ability to provide quality of care.

Staff follow vigilant security procedures which mean children are secure and unable to leave the premises without an appropriate adult. The children's play space, toys and equipment are appropriately risk assessed by staff. As a result, all hazards have been minimised and children are suitably protected from accidents.

Staff have a sound understanding of child protection and all have attended recent distance learning. The manager is aware of her responsibilities should concerns be raised about a child. Staff do not yet have access to the current written publication 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused – Summary'. This means staff cannot readily refer to up to date guidance on what steps to take if they have concerns about a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

The current staffing levels, particularly when numbers of children attending are high, means children are not always given sufficient support whilst they play. This has a significant effect on their emotional well-being. For example, older toddlers and children are consistently left to play alone or wander as staff are engaged in administrative work. Children who need support to leave their parents or to feel settled in the group are not always adequately supported and on some occasions cry for extended periods of time.

When staff ratios are met, on days when the number of children is lower, staff are able to sit with children whilst they play and interact warmly and responsively. At these times, children show confidence, enjoy their time in the crèche and build appropriate relationships with staff. Overall, children and babies have ready access to a wide range of resources that are of good quality and offer a range of sensory experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

The working partnership between staff and parents is not always effective. As a result, parental wishes on how their babies and children are cared for are not always fully considered. For example, staff cannot always recall when parents have said babies need their milk, so babies become distressed as they become hungry. Older babies are not offered their semi-solid foods parents have provided because of the lack of equipment to heat it up. Staff discuss parental wishes to be contacted if their child becomes too distressed but take no action when appropriate to do so.

Staff have an adequate understanding of the needs of children who attend who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and aim to provide some activities they enjoy such as dressing up clothes. There is a suitable range of resources reflecting positive images of diversity. Consequently, babies and children can begin to form a balanced view of their wider world around them. Staff are aware that each child has individual needs although weaknesses in the organisation and care practice means children's individual needs are not always adequately met.

Overall, staff manage children's behaviour calmly. However, when the number of children attending the crèche is high, staff are unable to provide rules and boundaries to help children learn right from wrong. For example, as the noise level increases and staff attention decreases toddlers resort to pushing others over or hitting to get toys they want. Staff are too busy to see this happen and therefore do nothing to challenge the behaviour they display.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Staff ratios for children over two do not always meet the minimum required levels that are stipulated in the 'National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding'. This has a significantly negative impact on the consistency of the quality of care the babies and children

receive. Staff who are allocated to work directly with the children are also required to complete administrative duties such as booking children in and out of the crèche. This impinges on their ability to provide children with sufficient consistent support and attention.

Recruitment and vetting procedures are firmly in place and all staff are qualified to level three in childcare. This ensures children are well protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development. Policies and procedures are fully accessible and generally refer appropriately to the National Standards. However, the checking-in procedure states that when a child is left in the crèche '... it would be better for everyone if the parent waves goodbye and simply leaves...'. This guidance does not empower staff to take more sensitive measures to consider the impact on individual children's emotional needs.

Overall, children's needs are not met.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since registration.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure staffing ratios are met at all times
- ensure staff are able to consistently support children's emotional well-being
- ensure that food and drink is stored according to regulations relating to food safety and hygiene

- ensure an effective system is in place for the exchange of information between parents and staff members to meet the needs of the babies and children, both individually and as a group
- ensure the play space for babies meets minimum space requirements to enable free movement
- provide sufficient equipment to enable babies to be fed according to their age or stage of development.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk