



Beachley Barracks (Little Scamps)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101857
Inspection date	21 October 2006
Inspector	Karen Elizabeth Screen
Setting Address	Families Office, Beachley,, Chepstow, Gloucestershire, NP16 7YG
Telephone number	01291 645 381
E-mail	
Registered person	Beachley Barracks (Little Scamps)
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Scamps opened in 2000 and is situated within the confines of the army barracks in Beachley near Chepstow. The single storey building consists of two main play areas, an office, kitchen and toilets. A maximum of 40 children may attend at any one time. The group provides sessional day care and is open each school term from Monday to Friday between 09.15 and 12.15. All children share access to an enclosed outside play area.

There are currently 32 children on roll aged between nine months and four years old; of these, 12 receive funding for nursery education. Children are divided into two main groups known as the Crèche and the Playgroup. Children aged approximately three years and above attend the playgroup. Children attend for a variety of sessions and are drawn from families of army personnel and the local community. The setting currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

Little Scamps employs seven members of staff; five hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Older children are very independent in their personal care. They are aware of the importance of personal hygiene and wash their hands after visiting the toilets independently. Staff act as good role models and encourage children to practice good hygiene. They also ensure that nappy changes are carried out following good practice guidelines. Younger children, who need assistance in completing personal tasks, receive a high level of support.

Good records are kept of children with particular health requirements in order to safeguard their welfare. All staff members hold valid first aid certificates and demonstrate a clear understanding in the treatment of minor accidents. However, they do not usually ask parents to sign medication records for 'inhalers', administered as regular medication.

Children enjoy the range and variety of snacks provided. They understand which foods are good for them but staff do not enlist children's interest and support in preparing the snacks. Drinking water is always available but younger children in the Crèche are not encouraged to pour their own, in order to promote and develop confidence in their physical capabilities.

Work is underway to improve the versatility of the outside play area; such as through the introduction of permanent large-scale play apparatus, to enable older children to enjoy regular energetic exercise. Babies and very young children's physical development is sufficiently well-fostered. They enjoy playing on the floor exploring their environment inside but do not enjoy the full benefit of outside play on a daily basis, such as on the semi-covered raised wooden surface.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are interested and want to play with the available toys and resources; which are safe, in good condition and well-organised with appropriate labels. Many items are kept in useful storage solutions, displaying resources in a way that enables children to easily select items for themselves; although, in practice, they do not often choose items for themselves.

Generally, children are able to move safely around the well-maintained building because they are carefully supervised. Staff take prompt action to address any identified risks but do not always notice potential dangers to children; for example, cleaning fluid left on the windowsill in the crèche toilets. Risks to children from fire has been substantially reduced through well thought-out emergency evacuation procedures. These are practiced weekly, by staff and children, using different site scenarios resulting in quick and calm evacuations of the building. Children's safety and welfare is also promoted by enlisting parent's support in following relevant

procedures when collecting their children; for example, through appropriate use of the security doors.

Children are well protected by staff who are clear about child protection procedures. Established staff are aware of the possible signs of children at risk and their responsibility to report their concerns without delay, according to local child protection procedures. Newer members of staff are less confident but are clear that they should speak to a senior member of staff if they have cause for concern.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and keen to attend; for example, a three-year-old bounds into the room and announces in a loud voice to all present "I'm here!" They make friends with their peers and develop good relationships with the staff team. Children benefit from staff who are interested in what they say and do. They learn to take turns and cooperate well with others. Babies make their needs known, for example, indicating whether they want more milk by either pulling the bottle closer or by pushing it away. Staff are warm and attentive and the babies respond by smiling when they make eye contact. Babies demonstrate that they know how to gain attention and make contact, listening and paying attention to the staff. In turn staff are alert to their attempts to communicate, for example, by moving a toy a little closer when a baby tries to reach it.

Children make confident choices from the activities provided and are interested and enjoy their play. A playroom wall in the crèche has a variety of different types of materials attached to a display, which is located low on the wall to enable children to see and touch. However, these materials are not readily available for children to select to play with, in order to investigate more closely for themselves. The plans and patterns within the day are well established. Children are beginning to predict what will happen next and to extend their skills in a secure environment. Plans are used as a basis for the day but they are not rigid and are subject to change, according to the babies and young children's interests, needs and other variables such as the weather. Staff are using the Birth to Three matters framework to support their work with young children but their knowledge and understanding is variable. Although they recognise that it is a useful tool, in planning appropriate experiences and tracking their progress, they do not use it to its best advantage as a tool for planning individual children's development.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals is variable. Similarly they have variable expertise in the use of effective questioning and prompting to reinforce children's learning. Plans do not clearly show how the children will be grouped or how staff are to be deployed. Staff make some adaptations to short-term-planning but do not systematically plan how activities can be adapted to suit all ages, abilities and learning styles. They make regular observations and assessments but these are not linked effectively to planning, to help children to build on what they already know. Staff plan the environment well, to enable children to independently select and use appropriate resources and materials; such as for building and construction. However, this is

not carried through to the organisation of resources for craft activities. The balance between opportunities for children to initiate and plan activities is weighted in favour of an adult-planned programme.

Children show a strong sense of self as a member of the group and as part of their families. They respond well in a caring environment where they learn to consider other people's needs, as well as their own. For example, an older child helps a younger child to put their 'apple' with their name on it, onto the self registration 'tree'. Children show good levels of concentration; they listen intently to stories and answer related questions posed by staff. Children are encouraged to be independent and to persist with difficult tasks, such as persevering to finish a jigsaw without help. Children show increasing independence in carrying out activities; however, some opportunities for developing children's independence further, such as encouraging children to initiate their own plans, are not sufficiently fostered.

Children confidently participate in discussions, for example, a child volunteers "frogs eat ladybirds" whilst listening to the story about the wide mouth frog. Although supportive staff take time to listen to children, they do not always take opportunities to extend children's learning, by asking challenging questions to help make them think. Children demonstrate good speaking skills, for example, describing in circle time what they are intending to do on holiday. They talk activities through; reflecting and modifying what they are doing and using talk well to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what is happening next. Resources for role-play often include materials to promote writing such as pencils, paper and envelopes. However, activities such as painting are not sufficiently exploited to promote writing for a purpose; for example encouraging children to add their names to their own work.

Children's understanding of numbers is reinforced as they take part in everyday tasks, such as working out the date. Many children confidently say and use numbers up to five and some are able to count a little beyond. They use number names spontaneously, for example, "this is Thomas (the Tank Engine), look you can see the number one here". Children enjoy singing nursery rhymes, learning to subtract by one as they sing 'Five Little Men In A Flying Saucer'. They solve mathematical problems of shape and size as they dress dolls; however, the potential to develop their awareness of shape and size, as they construct, is not fully exploited through the use of effective questioning and prompting. Opportunities to develop children's understanding of calculations through practical activities, such as finding out if they have enough seats for the adults, are insufficiently fostered.

Children benefit from good opportunities to learn about past and present through everyday examples, such as discussing what they have eaten for breakfast. Children's awareness of features of the local environment is raised through long walks along the isolated peninsular. However, opportunities to encourage children to find out more about the natural world are not fully exploited in the group's outdoor area, such as looking under stones for worms, woodlice and other insects. Similarly chances for children to investigate the fine detail of leaves they have collected, using the microscope on display, are not sufficiently fostered. In addition, although the setting own a computer and printer, they do not make good use of information and communication technology to aid children's learning. Children are given little support to develop their knowledge and understanding of how the computer works, either through imitating adults or through explicit teaching.

Children respond enthusiastically to rhythm, music and stories. They enjoy singing simple songs from memory and matching movements to music. They enjoy moving in a variety of ways and observe the effects of activity on their bodies. For example, a child remarks she is hot and removes her jumper after helping to rise and lower the parachute, during energetic whole group games inside. However, current planned use of the outside area results in fewer opportunities for children to take part in energetic physical activities involving large-scale movement, such as running, swinging and pulling. Children are taught to handle and control small objects such as pencils and scissors.

Children are supported to develop their own ideas as they draw on their personal experiences and imagination. They play alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme, such as one child telling another that she is “just going to the shop to buy something for tea”. Children enjoy singing simple songs from memory and matching movements to music. They respond positively to what they see, hear, taste, touch and feel; such as the smell of lavender oil added to the playdough. They enjoy combining different media and materials, however, the organisation of craft resources does not encourage children to extend creative activities for themselves. In addition, children are not always given sufficient opportunity to explore and research their own ideas, such as making witches hats to their own design.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to learn about the different activities and the people involved in their Armed Forces community. Children’s awareness of features within their local environment is raised through a number of planned and impromptu outings. Children learn to value and appreciate each other’s similarities and differences. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered through books and resources especially chosen to reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural differences.

Children are well behaved. Staff provide good role models through their calm and polite manner and have reasonable and realistic expectations of children’s behaviour. They set and maintain clear and consistent limits, using positive behaviour strategies. Staff have built very good relationships with children and have high expectations of their behaviour.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Children are developing a sense of belonging through the warm welcome extended to their whole families. Positive relationships between staff and parents contribute to children’s confidence in the staff. Parents speak positively about the settling in procedures and the very good relationships enjoyed between staff, parents and children. Parents report that they are invited to make suggestions for improvements at any time.

Parents receive general information about the setting when they register their children. They also receive regular newsletters and prior information about planned activities and suggestions for items to bring from home in order to support the activities. The corridor walls have many recent annotated photographs of the children, explaining how the children are learning through the Birth to three matters framework. However, parents are provided with little information about the Foundation Stage of learning and how this helps children to learn.

There are effective informal channels of communication but few opportunities for formal feedback on children's individual learning. Parents feel able and welcome to discuss their observations of their children's learning at any time but some are unaware that they can add their own comments and observations to their children's files. This means that the records are not as full and accurate as they might be and that parents' knowledge of their children is not fully exploited, to support and develop the learning opportunities provided by the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Personal information is obtained before the children attend; this is regularly up-dated and filed securely for each child. Good organisation of staff rotas and supply cover helps to ensure that qualified, familiar and trusted adults care for the children in the event of staff holidays or sickness. Records and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the provision are not always maintained; for example, children's attendance records do not accurately reflect their hours of attendance.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff, children and parents have high expectations of the care and education provided in the setting. Although the management review the quality of their practice and provision, they are less successful in addressing areas identified for improvement through inspection. Children profit from the management's distinct commitment to staff training and development; staff are committed to undertaking any relevant training needed in order to support children's individual needs. Children also benefit from staff who feel valued, recognised and respected. Effective links with the management, such as through staff meetings, help to ensure the smooth running of the setting. The manager seeks and receives very good support from the committee to make improvements to the setting.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care and nursery education inspections recommended that: the setting developed an operational plan; procedures for lost or uncollected children; and procedures for recording children's existing injuries and their parent's explanations. Also, that they ensure confidentiality is maintained when parents sign any records. The operational plan consists of a combination of all the policies and procedures adopted by the setting, helping to maintain the smooth operation of the provision. The development of the procedures helps to focus adult attention and so promote children's safety and wellbeing. Staff maintain confidentiality and protect the interests of the children, by obscuring previous entries when parents are asked to sign any records.

The setting were also asked to ensure that: planning covers all aspects of learning within the Foundation Stage and is based on what the children need to learn next; and to provide resources and activities for children to investigate and explore, either independently or as part of an adult-led activity. The setting has made some progress. Planning satisfactorily covers all aspects over time but is not founded on what the children need to learn next. This is because observations and assessments are not effectively linked to planning, to help children to build

on what they already know. Similarly, although there are opportunities for children to explore and investigate, these are more often adult-led than arising directly from children's curiosity.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action to meet the National Standards. The complaint related to National Standard 2: Organisation; National Standard 3: Care, Learning and Play; and National Standard 11: Behaviour. Concerns were raised over the number of suitably qualified staff; the provision of appropriate and sufficient activities and experiences; and the employment of appropriate and consistent behaviour management techniques.

Ofsted required the provider to investigate. As a result: the provider devised an action plan detailing the training needed in order to meet qualification requirements within an appropriate timescale; sought the help and advice of the local authority to support the development and delivery of a range of activities and play opportunities to help children to make progress in all areas of their development; and organised appropriate training and mentoring for staff to develop a consistent and positive approach to managing children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

The childminder met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- consider the benefits of asking parents to sign all medication records
- conduct daily risk assessments of the premises
- Ensure accurate daily records of attendance are maintained.

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):

- Ensure all staff have a secure understanding of the curriculum used to support children's learning (also applies to care)
- Maximise the benefits of the enclosed outside area to enhance and increase the variety learning opportunities for children (also applies to care)
- Continue to develop links between observations, assessment and planning, in order to support individual children to build on what they already know (also applies to care)

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