



Buffer Bear Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130628
Inspection date	11 January 2007
Inspector	Maura Pigram
Setting Address	Watford Junction Station, Station Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD17 1AB
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Registered person	Buffer Bear Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Buffer Bear Nursery is one of 38 nurseries operated by Buffer Bear Nurseries. This provision opened in May 1994. It operates from five rooms within a purpose built unit, which is situated at Watford Junction Station and serves the local community. There is an enclosed outdoor play area.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 55 children from birth to under five years. There are currently 48 children on roll and 15 children receive funded nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The group opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 07:00 - 19:00, Monday to Friday. There are currently 48 children age from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early education. The nursery supports children with

learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery has a hamster and fish as pets.

The nursery employs 19 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from a mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. An advisory teacher for Buffer Bears visits the nursery to offer support.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally clean and hygienic environment. Some parts of the premises and equipment used are not clean. As a result of this, there is not a consistent hygienic environment provided for children. They are learning personal care as they wash their hands after snack and meal times at the sink within the rooms. Older children and those been potty trained are encouraged to wash their hands in the bathroom. There is a sickness policy in place and notices displayed about recent outbreaks of illness. This informs parents and minimises the risks of cross- infection. Staff wear disposable gloves when changing nappies and clean the changing area afterwards, therefore reducing the spread of infection.

Procedures are in place to assist staff to care for children should they require medical attention. All required documentation, including written parental consents and contact details, are in place. Consequently, staff are able to act quickly if children become ill or if there is a medical emergency. There is an effective system to record accident and medication requirements which supports children's good health.

Children are provided with a range of healthy snacks including fresh fruit, cherry tomatoes, bread sticks, cheese and raisins. Staff talk to the children about what they are eating and the benefits to them. Consequently, children learn about healthy eating. They drink water at snack time and older children are encouraged to pour their own drinks. Water is not freely available in all rooms therefore children cannot access this if they are thirsty during the day. Meals such as, shepherds pie and chicken casseroles are freshly prepared on site by the cook. She works closely with the staff to ensure dietary needs are met. Consequently, children's health is effectively promoted. Children routinely rest and sleep according to their needs using mats and individual bedding. The staff are careful to meet parental wishes regarding sleeping patterns and routines. As a result, children settle quickly and easily when they are put down to rest.

Children enjoy outdoor physical exercise. They pedal tricycles well and confidently using scooters. They skilfully control cars and tricycles and can stop avoiding collisions. Children use a variety of tools such as chinks, pens, pencils, cutters and scissors. Older children are able to use a computer mouse. Younger children learn to develop hand eye co-ordination as they explore easily accessible resources. Children participate in regular physical exercise sessions provided by an outside company, this includes music and movement sessions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally play in a safe environment because the premises are kept secure and most safety precautions are in place, for example, safety gates and socket covers. However, the supervision of some activities by inexperienced staff potentially pose a risk to children. For example, children carrying out a cutting activity are able to walk or run around the room due to inappropriate supervision. Risk assessments and accident reports are carried out in each playroom. Consequently, any identified hazards are minimised so that children can play safely.

Younger children are cared for in a clean, safe and inviting environment and have access to stimulating play areas as well comfortable areas for quieter activities. Some staff are dedicated to the children's welfare and safety and take measures such as ensuring old or broken equipment is not used. However, not all staff are as vigilant. Some of the recourses in the Panda and Paddington rooms are unkempt and are in a poor state of repair, for example dirty dolls and the dolls' high chair. This is a potential risk to children. Staff make use of the local community to extend children's experiences of keeping safe when on outings. Buggies with safety straps are used and older children are encouraged to hold a staff members hand. Children regularly explore road safety as a topic. This means that children are learning to keep themselves safe.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of child protection procedures. They are clear about their roles in recording and referring concerns if necessary, this includes how to deal with an allegation being made against a staff member. Therefore children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally enjoy their time at the nursery. They settle well into their environment because there is an effective key worker system in place. Staff mainly interact with the children to promote their self-esteem and confidence. Children are developing a satisfactory range of knowledge and skills because staff generally plan and provide appropriate activities. Room leaders implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework very well to ensure that children's abilities and independence skills are fostered. Babies and toddlers in particular love exploring sensory resources such as paint with their feet and hands. However, some staff are inexperienced and do not plan the children's activities effectively. This means that older children are not able to access the necessary resources and have to wait for a long period of time for their activity to begin. Children begin to distinguish right from wrong and form positive relationships through the staff setting consistent boundaries and supporting the child appropriately to develop these skills. Children help to tidy up after playing with construction toys and therefore learn to work co-operatively.

Younger children are encouraged well to become vocal through, for example, imitation and they begin to use appropriate language and gestures to communicate their needs. They are provided with a wide range of activities and resources. Babies and toddlers have regular opportunities to visit local parks and visit the local pond to feed the ducks. The equipment is attractively set out and allow children to make choices and access a broad range of age-appropriate resources. They enjoy exploring attractive bottles filled with various objects

and materials such as glitter and sand. They play harmoniously together and their self-esteem and confidence is encouraged by the staff.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

The children are progressing generally well, supported by staff who have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children develop. Planning covers all six areas of learning. This is linked to an assessment procedure which is ongoing, evaluative and shared with parents. Staff know the children's starting points and are aware of the need to extend more able children's learning. This means that children make sufficient progress along the stepping stones to the early learning goals. Structured and adult-led activities take place during the morning with free play taking place in the afternoon. The structured sessions are explained well. However, they are not always adapted to ensure younger children do not lose interest.

Children arrive happy, quickly settle and engage in activities. There is an appropriate awareness of boundaries and behavioural expectations, for example, sharing and taking turns. However, the organisation of the routine occasionally leads to disruptive behaviour. Children's independence is adequately fostered. Children, for example, are able to use their initiative and choose toys or resources to play with during the afternoon session. During this time children are engrossed in their chosen activities, such as painting and role play, and are eager to learn.

Children respond with enjoyment when listening to stories, songs and rhymes. They are generally able to concentrate well during story time as staff engage all the children to ensure they can take an active part in the story. Children self select and use books for pleasure, although children who are learning English have limited resources to support this. Children requiring a nap sleep by the book area. This layout means that there is no suitable area for the children to quietly sit and share their chosen books together. Children are given sufficient opportunities to develop early writing skills and many children can write their own names. They have daily access to a variety of resources so that children can mark make or develop their writing skills.

Children routinely use numbers in their play, their understanding of mathematical language is effectively promoted because the staff use relevant language. For example, children use their fingers to help them with nursery rhymes. Some children can confidently count to 10 and beyond. They eagerly take turns to help with the laying of the tables for their lunch counting as they give out the utensils. Children use the computer with confidence and enjoy the interactive games provided. They are able to control the computer mouse and negotiate turn taking in this activity. Children learn about the environment through the regular use of the weather board. During this time they talk eagerly about the day of the week and the weather outside. They take part in the meaningful celebration of festivals. The nursery teacher uses her personal experience to develop the children's knowledge of how different people live. As a result of this, they develop a curiosity about the world around them.

All children are encouraged to take part in outdoor sessions. Here, the children enjoy playing in the play house or riding their wheeled toys. They are able to move with control and co-ordination. However, this is restricted to use during fine weather. In addition, outside

activities on offer, during the inspection period, were limited. This means that children are unable to gain full advantage of being out of doors.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued. They receive a warm welcome and are helped to feel part of the nursery. Children's individual care needs are met as the staff know the children well. Detailed information sheets completed by parents on registration ensure that each child is well known. Children's activities are displayed in their play rooms along with information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children develop an understanding of the differences in the society in which they live by celebrating festivals throughout the year. They also have the opportunity to learn the French language which is delivered in a fun and interactive way by an outside company. Children generally interact well with their peers and are learning to take turns and share. However, at times older children display negative behaviour and can become disruptive. This mainly occurs when they are less busy such as waiting on the carpet to wash their hands prior to lunch.

Children with special educational needs are welcome at the nursery. There is a designated person who monitors their needs. Activities are generally provided to ensure an inclusive practice. However, there are limited resources to support children who speak English as an additional language. As a result these children take longer to feel settled and secure at the nursery.

There is a close partnership with the parents and many children attending have been doing so since they were babies. Parents are supplied with daily logs diary showing their children's daily activities and newsletters are issued regularly. Consequently there is a continuation of care between the staff and the children's parents. There is a complaints procedure for parents and carers to use should it be necessary. This means that parents are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns regarding the welfare of their children.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory.

Documentation such as routines, policies and planning displayed on the notice board provides parents with detailed information on the education provision. Children's progress is well monitored. The nursery teacher maintains a detailed file on each child showing their progression through the Foundation Stage. This is shared with parents during informal meetings. In addition, parents are able to discuss their child's progress on a daily basis. This means that parents are effectively informed about their children's achievements. Children regularly take home their individual pieces of work. They are encouraged to bring in items from home including books to share and items for their interest table. Consequently, there is an appropriate partnership between the children's home and the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are generally comfortable and settled within the environment. Younger children's rooms are well organised. However, some of the older children do not benefit from an organised and effective environment. Most staff are suitably qualified and therefore have a satisfactory knowledge of child development. They attend relevant training and implement new ideas into the nursery, which aids children's learning opportunities, for example the 'Birth to three matters' framework. The organisation of staff deployment means that the staff are not always best placed to ensure children in the Panda Bears room benefit from their knowledge and experience. There are suitable systems in place to ensure the adults working with children are suitable to do so. The required documentation is present including policies and procedures which generally work in practice to promote children's health, safety and enjoyment.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory.

There is an acting manager in place. She has recently joined the setting having come from another of the chain's nurseries. She is working closely with the deputy to ensure standards are raised. In addition a new quality assurance system ensure room leaders are fully aware of procedures to follow to ensure children's welfare and safety are always maintained. Regular staff meetings are held where information is shared and training is continually offered to staff. An induction system is in place and new staff are familiar with procedures such as emergency evacuation and child protection procedures. Monitoring and evaluating of the nursery education currently takes place by the staff working in this area. Staff work together to plan activities and play to ensure children make progress through the stepping stones. Children's observations are carried out and individual strengths are known. This means that children's assessment records are relevant and can be used by staff to plan the next steps of children's learning. Good use is made of the qualified teacher support to review ways of working. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the provider was asked to: ensure minimum ratios are adhered to at all times and ensure staff deployment is effective for all children; ensure staff take positive steps to prevent accidents; ensure that adults are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour that is consistent and developmentally appropriate; ensure all staff have effective induction training and ensure children are learning about healthy eating and drinking water is available at all times.

Some of these issues have been address satisfactorily. The acting manager ensures minimum ratios are adhered to at all times although staff deployment at times is not effective. Therefore this has been raised as a recommendation during this inspection. Staff are more vigilant in taking positive steps to prevent accidents. There is a Health and Safety officer now in place who liaises with head office about all safety issues. Staff have attended behaviour management training and use suitable strategies such as explanations and distraction to manage any negative issues. New members of staff now have an effective induction programme. At the time of inspection new members of staff were able to discuss safety procedures with confidence. Staff

sit with the children so that they learn about healthy eating. Drinking water is not available in all rooms, therefore has been raised as a recommendation in this inspection.

At the previous education inspection the provider was asked to: further develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals to ensure planning shows learning intentions; show how activities can be adapted to meet different children's needs; use assessments to plan the children's next steps and improve partnership with parents to ensure they are involved in their children's learning.

Staff have a clear understanding of the early learning goals. The planning has been adapted to show learning intentions. Some suggestions are included on the plans on how to meet children's different needs but these are not effective. As a result this has been raised as a recommendation in this inspection. Sufficient strategies have been raised to ensure parents are involved in their children's learning. There is now a parent representation system in place where views can be shared.

Complaints since the last inspection

On 29 August 2006 Ofsted received a letter of complaint in relation to National Standard 2: Suitable person, National Standard 11: Behaviour management, National Standard 12: Working in partnership with parents, National Standard 13: Child protection. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit on 31/08/2006 and a follow up visit on 01/09/06. As a result the inspectors found evidence that National Standards 12 and 13 had not been met and actions were raised. A response to these actions was received on 27 September confirming the actions were addressed. The provision has reviewed their procedures for working in partnership with parents and has implemented a complaints procedure which all staff are aware of. Child protection training has been carried out and all staff have been made aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. The provider remained qualified for registration.

On 19 April 2005 concerns were raised about some aspects of safety at the provision. These concerns related to National Standard 3: Care, learning and play, National Standard 6: Safety, National Standard 7: Health, National Standard 12: Working in partnership with parents and carers and National Standard 14: Documentation. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit in order to investigate these concerns. The outcome of the visit was that four actions and one recommendation were raised. These were National Standard 5 regarding the baby change mat, National Standard 6 conducting risk assessments referring to closing doors and storage units used by children, and the entrance lobby ensuring fire extinguishers are not obstructed, National Standard 7 ensure premises are clean and appropriate procedures are in place for monitoring and dealing with biting incidents, and a recommendation to regularly review accident records. A further visit took place on 20 April 2005 and all actions had been addressed. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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 premises and equipment are clean and ensure fresh drinking water is available to all children
- ensure toys and equipment are in good repair and conform to BS EN safety standards or the Toys (Safety) Regulations (1995) where applicable
- ensure resources and activities are organised so that they are readily accessible to children and deploy staff to support children's play and learning.

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 plans clearly show how the same learning objective can be achieved to accommodate the different needs of children
- develop resources so that children who are learning to speak English are supported and ensure the book area is in a quiet and designated space
- extend the range of experiences and planned activities for children outdoors (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