



Busy Beavers Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203476
Inspection date	30 January 2007
Inspector	Barbara Ann Bush
Setting Address	Marks Farm Community Centre, Dunstable Drive, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3LT
Telephone number	07986 919707 or 077650 28577
E-mail	
Registered person	Janette Threadgold
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 good. 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?

Busy Beavers Pre-School registered in 2000 and operates from rooms in a community centre on the outskirts of the town of Braintree, Essex. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09.15 until 12.45 on Mondays, 09.15 until 12.15 on Tuesdays and 09.15 until 12.15 and 13.00 until 15.30 on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays during term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 40 children aged 2 years to under 5 years on roll. Of these 34 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local community. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The nursery employs seven members of staff. All of the staff, including the manager hold an appropriate early years qualification. The nursery is supported by the Pre-School learning Alliance (PSLA), the Local Authority and the area Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing sufficient understanding about the need to stay healthy. They are following a basic routine that is meaningful to them assisted by explanatory pictures to show them what to do. They know that they must wash their hands after using the toilet or before eating, staff are on hand to give help where required and ensure that hands are washed properly. Older children are given more independence to use the toilets and basins. The standard of cleanliness throughout the building is maintained to a satisfactory standard by the staff for example, tables are cleaned regularly and floors are swept or dried after messy play. Therefore children are playing in a clean environment.

Accident and medication records are accurately recorded. The first aid box is on hand should it be required. A member of staff, trained in first aid is always on duty. Children who need to sleep or who become poorly during a session can rest until parents come to collect them. Parents are alerted if a child becomes ill and staff understand and implement the group's policy to prevent the spread of illness. These serviceable measures ensure that children's health issues are responded to in an appropriate way.

Children have regular snacks and drinks throughout the day. Staff provide snack food and drinks and parents provide lunch boxes for the children. The setting provides extra drinks should the children become thirsty during the session and these are freely available for the children to access independently. All allergies and dietary requirements are documented and staff are alert to ensure children do not share their food and eat anything unsuitable for them. Staff talk with the children about healthy eating and have recently started a topic on fresh foods with an emphasis on fruit. Children have also been able to experience new tastes by trying foods from other cultures. This means that children are beginning to learn about nutrition and the effect food has on their bodies. Snack time provides the opportunity to sit together and share their news. They enjoy helping each other and this aids promotion of their self-esteem. Children are learning effective table manners as the staff sit with them and act as good role models.

Children have some opportunity to exercise during the day however the outside area is used infrequently. Children are able to move freely within the play room and thoroughly enjoyed a dancing session. They also have some time in the main hall where they can play with bikes and larger equipment. Children are practising eye and hand coordination and how to manipulate tools and materials. Children are showing signs that they have skill when model making.

Funded children are learning how to participate in group games and work together to construct larger models with the train set or bricks. Children are given the opportunity to use real tools and practise to tighten and undo screws and nuts. Children enjoy walks to the local shops and

the library. They are provided with resources such as threading, posting toys, scissors and pencils to encourage confident handling of smaller objects. Children thoroughly enjoyed a short session outside where they played a ring game and took part in a 'Bear Hunt'. However, children are not given sufficient opportunities to improve skills such as hopping, skipping, running and tumbling as the outside area is not being used to its full potential and alternative sessions inside the hall with large scale equipment is not in place on a daily basis. Children are therefore not recognising the importance of physical play and the impact exercise has on their overall well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and secure in premises that are suitable for their purpose. They are based in a community centre that is clean, brightly decorated and well maintained. There is ample space for the children to move around freely. The walls are decorated with children's artwork, these displays value their creativity and promotes their self-esteem. Children can access an enclosed outside play area and indoor hall that is equipped with resources for physical play.

The group has a wide range of good quality toys that provide interest and challenge. Children use furniture that is suitable for their age and development. Toys are stored at child height for easy access and resources are clean and in good condition. This welcoming environment assists children to feel secure and relaxed.

Children's safety is effectively promoted and staff have completed detailed risk assessments to ensure that accidents are minimised. Fire drill is practised regularly and children understand the need to evacuate the building quickly. Children can easily move around the room freely as staff are alert to any possible dangers, such as children tripping on carpets or removing water on the floor that has the potential to cause a slip. Children are given detailed information about keeping safe when using the larger pieces of equipment and safety tips when using scissors or tools. This term, the children are talking to visitors such as, a policeman, paramedic and the lollipop lady. All people who keep us safe. The wide range of procedures and information assists children to be aware of personal safety issues.

Staff are aware of the group's child protection policy and information is given to them on their induction course. However, not all members of staff could confidently discuss the referral process or the agencies involved in safeguarding children, therefore potentially compromising their ability to fully protect children in the event of a concern.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are busy and play happily together. They enjoy participating in games, table top activities and using floor toys. The home corner is very popular and this term it has been turned into a café. Children discuss what to buy, how much items cost and how meals could be cooked. Staff have provided them with a variety of packages and bottles for them to open and smell. There is a wide range of the dressing up clothes that assist the children in their games.

Younger children can communicate easily and readily ask staff for assistance. Children demonstrate that they can share, take turns and cooperate when playing games or playing with the same toy. They can express their own ideas and challenge staff if they think a mistake has been made. During circle time, the staff member in charge deliberately uses the wrong numbers and invites the children to correct her. This they can do with confidence. Children respond to the recognition of their achievements and are motivated to continue an activity to its conclusion. A group of children played continuously with the garage, cars and floor mat during free play time. They cooperated together, negotiating who had what form of transport, where they parked and who was using the garage. Play was sustained and the children clearly enjoyed the activity.

Younger children are benefiting from the staff's growing understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Activities are being modified to ensure that the children can derive the maximum interest and enjoyment. They are learning to concentrate for longer periods, respond to instructions and become more independent in their self-care. They are getting used to unfamiliar toys and materials, participating in group activities and mastering their listening skills.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children follow a programme of activities designed to help them progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, based on the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff have a good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. However, staff have not completed any formal training on teaching the Foundation Stage and this has some impact on the methods they use to assist the children. Activities are planned to promote the stepping stones and these are evaluated and assessed. Staff also observe and record what the children are doing, how they learn and what interests them. The observations are collated and used to plan the next stages of the children's learning programme.

Children are taught in a variety of ways such as large and small group work and one-to-one teaching. Adults tend to take the lead and instruct the children which means that some children are inhibited from expressing their opinions. Key workers have detailed knowledge of the children in their groups but all staff respond to the children. Children behave very well in response to staff's consistent approach which is based on praise and encouragement. Children are kept busy and their energies channelled into their work. The days are organised efficiently to make the most of the time available and staff spend most of the session working directly with the children. Staff are able to be flexible and adapt if a change benefits a child.

Children's mathematical skills are promoted through the recognition of numbers around the room and counting in everyday activities, such as sharing out the cups at snack time. Children are using numbers confidently in rhymes for example, 'Five current buns'. The older children count beyond ten and could easily state the day of the month, adding on the additional number. They use computer programmes successfully and are rewarded with a printed certificate on completion of an activity. Children are using comparative language such as 'short' and 'tall' and can look and compare their heights on a chart. Children are able to listen and respond to stories presented in an interesting and lively way by the staff.

Children are enjoying books and handle them with confidence. The wide variety of books are stored at child height and easily accessed. They are able to concentrate as they sit and listen to stories, anticipating the sequence of events. Children see labels all around the room and recognise their names on their coat pegs and on their table mats. They are sounding out letters and know their own initials. More able children are writing themselves and attempting bigger words such as 'banana'. Children are not always given the opportunity to write spontaneously as they do not have access to a well equipped writing table.

Children are learning about the world around them. They are given many opportunities to examine and use everyday technology such as the computer. They are also using tools to take apart equipment for example, a vacuum cleaner. The children eagerly used screwdrivers to loosen screws and see how the object was assembled. They also look at materials through magnifying glasses and this extends their language when they talk about how things look larger and smaller. The group has photographs of past events that happened at the group and children enjoy picking out pictures of their older siblings. Visitors are invited into the group to talk about their work and teachers visit from the local schools. Children are learning about other cultures through topic work, celebrating festivals and tasting new foods.

Children's creative development is fostered by the range of art and craft activities. Children can choose to paint and draw, however they are not always allowed the freedom to express their own ideas as they do not mix their own paints and are colouring in pre-printed sheets. They play with dough and make their own models. Children are looking more and more at photographs to show them real people and objects. This is assisting them in their familiarity with plants and food. They enjoy dancing and listening to music. Staff have identified the need for additional musical instruments to enhance the sessions.

Children are very willing learners, they try new activities with assurance knowing that staff will praise their achievements. The staff and children have established a good rapport and this means that the children can approach them when they need assistance. They have formed firm friendships and are able to wait their turn and be patient. They show their feelings easily, disappointment at not being chosen for a task, excitement at the prospect of play in the hall and contentment as they read and talk quietly. Children's personal, social and emotional development is well promoted and this contributes to children being happy and confident. Overall, children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are developing excellent relationships with adults and other children. They are aware of respecting each others choices and can work together when completing tasks. Children access a broad range of equipment that reflects diversity in the community; dressing up clothes, cooking utensils, books, games and jigsaws. Children are learning about the wider world, customs and life styles. Discriminatory remarks are challenged through discussion. Boys and girls are able to have equal access to resources. The group has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy in place that is consistently applied by the staff.

There is an awareness of the needs of children who require additional support and the designated member of staff has completed training. There is liaison with the area special needs coordinator and other outside agencies. Children are helped with any exercises they need for example, speech therapy. Staff have an understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Children can access the building easily and staff are able to adapt resources to meet their requirements. Children are successfully included in all activities and enjoy attending the group.

Children understand the boundaries set by the staff and behave very well. Staff members are calm and consistent in their approach and their firm manner commands respect from the children. Parents are aware of the group's behaviour management policy and the methods that are employed by the staff.

Children and parents are welcomed by the staff members at the start and end of each day. Time is made to chat with parents should they wish to have additional information about their child's day. Key workers discuss children's progress and any concerns that may arise. Parents are aware of the group's aims and receive information about the daily routine through the policies and procedures, the notice board and talks.

Partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is good. Parents and carers have ample opportunity to be involved with their child's learning, either by informal chats with key workers, management and other staff and occasionally by helping their children with work sent home from the group. Parents can view and discuss children's developmental records and receive regular written updates. Clear information about the curriculum and the six areas of learning is available and parents are encouraged to read and understand the aims. Children benefit from this coordinated approach to their learning and know that their efforts and achievements are valued by their parents and the staff.

Children are learning to respect one another, celebrating differences and similarities. They are becoming aware of the consequences of their actions and how these affect others. They can express their own needs and feelings. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The manager has 20 years experience in childcare and has a Level 3 early year's qualification. She has also completed a range of courses to increase her knowledge. The group has a robust recruitment policy in place ensuring that children are safeguarded.

The team are working well together to ensure that children have a happy and interesting time with them. Monitoring and assessment of staff members is used to highlight their training and development needs. Ratios are met and exceeded each day and this gives the staff time to spend with individual children settling them, giving advice and talking about the activities. Tasks are delegated and the sessions are very well organised. Children benefit with contact with familiar adults each day and this builds the rapport to create a supportive learning environment.

A great deal of work has been done to produce a comprehensive operational plan that both parents and staff can access. Policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure that staff understand the need to keep children healthy and protected when they attend the setting. Paperwork is in good order and kept confidential. Documentation is in good order and easily accessible however, the daily register does not accurately record the times of arrival and departure of the children or staff. This means that any query regarding children's whereabouts could not be traced with confidence and potentially compromises their safety.

The leadership and management of nursery education are good. There is strong leadership with a common aim amongst the team which is 'to ensure that every child's needs are met'. All staff members share the ethos to provide a happy, play-based setting where children can develop and learn in a friendly and safe environment.

Activities are monitored and evaluated and links are made to ensure that learning intentions are being achieved. Two members of staff are involved in planning and delivering activities but all staff contribute. Planning meetings are scheduled at regular intervals to ensure that resources are in place to meet the children's needs across the curriculum.

Training is valued. Staff members needs are assessed through regular monitoring and the manager facilitates time for them to attend courses. Plans for nursery education are regularly updated and improvements are identified and put into place as soon as possible. Weaknesses identified at previous inspections have been addressed and the staff reflect on their own practice to identify areas for improvement.

The support and input of outside agencies are welcomed and encouraged. Strong links are in place with the Pre-School Learning Alliance, the local schools and the local authority.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the provider was required to ensure that medication records were up to date and accurate. Since the inspection the records have been re-designed to include all the relevant information required. This assists the staff to accurately record any medication administered to the children and relay information to parents. This system ensures that children's health and well-being is safeguarded.

The provider was also required to develop a collection policy. A comprehensive collection policy is now in place, with a password system that is now part of the everyday routine. This procedure ensures that children are safe and only allowed to leave the premises with authorised persons.

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

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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 that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the child protection procedures into practice
- ensure that the daily register accurately records the times of arrival and departure of children and staff.

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 opportunities for children to experience exercise, indoors and outdoors; to feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active (this also applies to the Care Standards)
- develop a plan to ensure that staff extend their knowledge and understanding of how to teach the Foundation Stage.

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