

Toybox Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	142865
Inspection date	13 July 2007
Inspector	Carole Argles
Setting Address	8 Linden Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2BH
Telephone number	(01935) 428244
E-mail	toy.nursery@btinternet.com
Registered person	Toybox Yeovil 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?

Toy Box Day Nursery was registered in 1991. It is privately owned and operates from a converted three bedroom house, situated near to the town centre of Yeovil, Somerset. Children have use of two main play rooms, toilets and changing facilities downstairs, and an upstairs room for sleeping. An office and staff facilities are situated upstairs. An enclosed garden is available at the rear of the premises for outside play. The nursery is open from 08.00 to 18.00, Monday to Friday, all year round, except for two weeks over the Christmas period.

The setting is registered to care for a maximum of 18 children at any one time. There are currently 27 children under the age of five years on roll. Of these, 16 are funded for early education.

The nursery employs five members of staff to work with the children. This includes an overall manager who holds an NVQ 3 qualification. The rest of the team either hold or are working towards relevant early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

There are satisfactory procedures in place to minimise the spread of infection between the children. Children are not cared for if they are ill or infectious; staff wear disposable protective gloves during nappy changing; separate bedding is supplied for each child. However, staff do not ensure that all toys and equipment, for example, some baby toys, are kept suitably clean for the children to use and the nappy changing mat is split. The water tray is grimy and the sand, although kept covered when not in use, is not kept clean and hygienic. These are used by children of all ages and, as they do not wash their hands promptly afterwards, this poses a risk to their health. Children are protected from the harmful effects of the sun. They wear hats and sun cream which is provided by their parents. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that any medication is administered safely to children. Accidents are recorded and their parents informed. Most staff hold a current first aid certificate and suitable consents for seeking emergency medical treatment are maintained. This contributes well towards ensuring that children's first aid needs are met.

The children receive a nutritious diet. Cooked meals are freshly prepared on the premises. The children were enjoying healthy snacks, choosing from a wide variety of fruit including cherry tomatoes, melon and pear. Snacks and meals are always accompanied by drinks of milk or water but drinking water is not always readily available for children to take themselves if they are thirsty. Some members of staff hold a food hygiene certificate and they ensure that the meals are prepared appropriately for the children, for example, by using a probe to check the temperature of cooked food. Any specific dietary requirements are met well and the nursery provides soya milk for children when required.

The children frequently play outside in the enclosed garden where they have space to run freely. They use a range of age appropriate larger equipment including a climbing frame, wheeled toys and slides. With support from the staff, they learn new skills, for example, throwing and catching balls and pedalling tricycles. Many children take part in weekly 'Jumping Beans' activity sessions which are run by an outside trainer. They are developing good control and coordination of their movements and enjoy moving in a variety of ways, for example, spontaneously jumping across the lawn.

The children begin to learn about the importance of looking after their own health. They know that they should wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet. They talk about which foods are healthy and take part in cooking and food tasting activities. The children have boots available so that they can still go outside when the weather is damp and they often go for local walks. This promotes a healthy lifestyle and helps to keep the children fit.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are generally well maintained and made welcoming to children and their families. The walls are decorated with posters and examples of the children's artwork. There are informative notice boards for parents. There are two ground floor rooms one of which is used to accommodate children aged under two years and a quiet first floor room where young children can sleep undisturbed. Older children have direct access to the outside area and to the cloakrooms and this allows them to manage their personal care without assistance.

Suitable child-size furniture is available and there are adequate cushioned areas for the children to relax or look at books. There is a suitable range of toys and equipment to support the children's developmental needs. Many items stored in low units and shelves and this gives children the opportunity to select items independently. However, the book units are high and arranged so that is difficult for children to see and select books of their choice.

The staff have a sound knowledge of safety issues and take suitable precautions to prevent the likelihood of accidental injury to the children. The premises are kept secure and entry is monitored by the staff. Suitable safety equipment is in place to prevent the children accessing potentially hazardous areas such as the stairs or electrical sockets. However, the kitchen door is not always kept secured and some items, such as high chairs, are stored where they may pose a risk to the children. There are appropriate fire safety measures in place and the children regularly practise the evacuation drill so they understand how to act in an emergency. Sleeping babies are monitored and the staff check them visually at regular intervals. Staff ensure that there is a good ratio of adults to children when they are out of the premises and this ensures that they are well supervised. Most staff have a sound understanding of how to safeguard the children from harm and understand the action they must take if they are concerned about the welfare of a child in their care. There are secure procedures to ensure that children are only collected by authorised adults. This promotes their safety and welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are happy and settled and have a relaxed relationship with the staff. The babies' individual sleeping and eating routines are respected so they are comfortable and secure. However, the babies and youngest children are not always cared for by the same staff and some are not fully aware of their developmental needs. The staff have begun to use the Birth to three matters framework to inform their planning and the children take part in a suitable range of age-appropriate activities. For example, the younger children were exploring sand, water, playdough and cornflour, and using sorting and stacking toys. They were enjoying walking on a musical mat to find out what sounds it made. However, some of the staff working with this age group do not have a clear appreciation of their ability and understanding; for example, sometimes they read stories that are too long and complex for them so they lose interest. There is a satisfactory range of toys and equipment to support the children's development and which provide interest and suitable challenge for children of all ages.

There is a suitable routine for the children's day which includes periods of exercise and a balance of adult-led and freely chosen activities, and usually the children are well occupied. The communication and interaction between the staff and children supports their language development well. When the children are cared for as one large group, some children's needs are not met effectively. For example, the youngest children are not always encouraged to participate fully and sometimes watch from a distance. However, at other times, for example, during circle times, the children are grouped by ability and this allows staff to provide activities such as songs, stories, musical and counting activities, matched to their needs. The children receive praise and encouragement for their achievements and this helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. They are encouraged to be independent, for example, washing their own hands before eating and helping to tidy away the toys. Although the staff sometimes observe what the children can do, there are often long intervals between the entries their developmental records and some records have not been updated for several months. As a result, the staff cannot be sure that all children are making good progress or use the information to help them plan their future learning.

Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory and the children are making suitable progress towards the early learning goals. Most staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation stage curriculum and they plan a wide variety of activities which cover all areas of the children's learning. However, records of their progress towards the early learning goals are not always kept up to date. Therefore the staff cannot use this information when planning the next steps in their learning or be sure that they are providing the correct challenges for each child. The staff work directly with the children talking with them, asking questions and giving help with the activities when required. They encourage the children to be independent, for example, by fetching their aprons or putting on dressing up clothes. Usually the children are grouped appropriately to support their learning. However, when there is a mixed age group of children, the staff do not work as effectively with the older and more able children because their attention is distracted to supervising the younger ones.

The children are interested in what is provided for them and many show good levels of concentration on self-chosen and adult-led activities. They understand that there are times when they should sit quietly and listen to others. They play cooperatively together and are learning to share fairly and take turns, for example, when playing a card game or using an electronic toy. Most children speak clearly and confidently and they are developing a wide vocabulary. They talk about real and imaginary events and about what they are doing. The children are beginning to recognise familiar words such as their names on their place cards at lunch time or by their coat pegs. The children enjoy stories and sometimes ask staff to share a book with them. There are many activities which help the children develop good hand-eye coordination and the skills required for writing. They handle small objects, use tools and their hands to mould shapes with playdough, and many can cut out shapes skilfully with scissors. They have access to a suitable range of mark making materials and enjoy using large chalk boards in the garden. Some children can form letters and write their names.

The children are interested in numbers and staff take many opportunities to encourage them to count. For example, asking them how many legs there are on a toy octopus or how many forks they need for the children sitting at their table at lunchtime. However, few of the questions encourage the more able children to think or extend their problem solving skills. The children enjoy matching activities and are beginning to compare objects, using the correct words to describe the size and shape. They copy sequences using bears of varying sizes. They use construction toys to make models and complete jigsaw puzzles, showing developing spatial awareness. There are suitable art and creative activities for the children and they use their imaginations well in pretend play activities.

The children have opportunities to find out how things work and change. They frequently cook and they enjoy looking at objects in the garden with magnifying glasses. They were busy rolling balls down lengths of plastic guttering. However, the staff did not give them the opportunity to solve problems themselves, for example, by allowing them to arrange the pipes or to experiment and find out how to make the balls go faster or slower. The staff provide many outings and experiences for the children to increase their knowledge of the local community and the wider world. There are many visitors to the nursery, including fire officers, a hairdresser and a nurse, who talk with the children about what they do. There are other visitors who help the children find out about the natural world, sometimes bringing in a variety of unusual animals. They have helped the children use nets to hunt for insects and other mini-beasts in the garden and nearby park. The children begin to find out about their own and other cultures and traditions, through stories, cooking, food tasting and music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The children behave well and are learning to share fairly and take turns. Generally, staff use positive methods to help the children learn to manage their own behaviour. They use distraction to good effect with the younger children and give explanations to older ones so that they begin to think about the effect of their behaviour on others. The children receive frequent praise so they understand when they have done well. However, at times, some less experienced staff have unrealistic expectations for youngest children and of what they understand.

There is a suitable process to help new children become familiar with staff and their surroundings so they settle quickly. The staff and parents share information frequently to ensure that there is continuity in the children's care. Staff complete a daily sheet detailing the times that babies have slept and what they have eaten. Staff respect parents' wishes for their child and appropriate written consents are maintained, for example, so staff can take the children on outings. Parents understand what is provided for their child because they receive suitable information about the nursery and have access to copies of the policy and procedure documents. Flexible care arrangements are available to meet parents' working patterns. There are satisfactory strategies in place to support any children who are identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities. Staff bring any concerns about a child's development to the attention of their parents. However, as some children's development records are incomplete, there is a risk that staff do not identify any children who require additional support promptly.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are polite and show care and consideration for others. The older children enjoy being given responsibilities and helping, for example, collecting the cutlery or giving the meals at lunchtime. The children begin to find out about their own community and the wider world and this helps them become accepting of others. There are many visitors to the nursery and the children frequently visit shops and the library in the nearby town centre. There is a satisfactory range of resources, including books and puzzles, which show positive images of diversity. Activities, such as celebrating festivals, help the children gain an awareness of their own culture and traditions and those of others at the nursery.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory and this benefits the children. Parents receive suitable information about the Foundation Stage curriculum so they understand what their children will be learning. The daily plans are displayed and a whiteboard is used to keep parents informed about any special activities the children have taken part in during the day. This allows them to talk with their child about what they have been doing. There are twice yearly pre-arranged meetings between staff and parents to discuss the children's progress and they take other informal opportunities to share information. Parents are encouraged to become involved with their child's learning by helping them find items, such as photographs, related to the activity theme. They are invited or to spend time at the nursery to share any special knowledge or skills with the children, for example, by playing a musical instrument or talking about their job.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. There are suitable policies and procedures in place to promote the children's welfare and care. This includes a sound recruitment procedure to ensure that staff are suitable to work with the children. Regular

appraisals are carried out to identify the staff's training and development needs. They have attended courses, for example, on the Birth to three matters framework, and the provider receives support from the Early Years team. New initiatives are being established to enhance the children's care and learning. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities but systems to monitor that they always carry them out are not fully effective.

Suitable ratios of adults to children are maintained and staff qualification requirements are met. The staff are deployed appropriately to ensure that the children are well supervised, and this promotes their safety. However, at times, some staff do not have a clear understanding of the developmental stage of the children they are working with and this impacts on their care.

The leadership and management are satisfactory, and this contributes towards supporting the children's development. The staff work well together to ensure that the sessions run smoothly for the children. They plan a suitable range of activities and have systems in place to ensure that they cover all areas of the children's learning. Staff have a positive attitude towards development of the nursery education and have identified areas for further improvement. For example, they intend to introduce individual learning plans for each child. However, at present their systems for evaluating activities and monitoring the children's progress are not consistently implemented, and as a result, staff do not always plan or take advantage of opportunities to extend their thinking and learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the provider agreed to take action to develop staff' knowledge and understanding of how to provide suitable activities for children aged under three years; to review the arrangement of the play areas to allow the children to make choices about what they do; to review the grouping of children and staff deployment to ensure that all children's needs are supported; and to develop consistency amongst staff in helping children practise skills and solve problems.

Subsequently the provider and the senior members of staff have undertaken training to extend their knowledge and understanding of how to provide a suitable range of activities for the youngest children at the nursery. They now provide varied experiences for them making use of the Birth to three matters framework to inform their planning. This includes opportunities for the children to explore a range of materials and to use construction, sorting and stacking toys, books and crayons. They sing and enjoy action rhymes. The baby room has been rearranged to allow the children more opportunity to select some items independently from shelves in the low cupboards and units. This increases their ability to make choices about what they do. The older children can also access more items independently; for example, they have more access to mark making materials. At times, particularly when using the outside area, the children are cared for in a mixed age group. While this allows the younger children access to a wider range of activities, the individual needs all children are not always fully supported. A senior member of staff plans a suitable variety of activities for the youngest children. However, in her absence, the children are cared for by less experienced members of staff who do not fully understand how to put these into practice or what is appropriate for children of this age.

The staff use practical activities to ask the children to solve problems, for example, asking them to compare two groups of objects and saying whether they are the same. The children practise skills during planned activities. For example, they were spooning dried pasta into bowls to promote their small muscle movements and their writing skills. However, staff do not consistently take advantage of planned or unplanned opportunities as they arise in the children's play to

challenge the more able. Nevertheless, overall the action taken by the provider has significantly enhanced the children's care, learning and enjoyment.

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 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):

- ensure that good hygiene is maintained in all areas of the nursery to minimise the risk of infection spreading between children
- ensure that there are consistent staff working with children aged under 3 years who have a good understanding of how to meet their developmental needs

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):

- develop consistency amongst staff in monitoring and recording the children' progress and evaluating the effectiveness of activities to help them plan the next steps in each child's learning [also applies to Childcare]
- review the grouping of children and ensure that staff provide suitable levels of challenge for each children to ensure they make good progress

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