

Buffer Bear Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	116788
Inspection date	30 November 2007
Inspector	Sheila Collins
Setting Address	1 Valpy Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1AR
Telephone number	0118 9560341
E-mail	bbmgr@bbreading.co.uk
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 Bears Nursery is part of chain of nurseries nationwide. It opened in 1996 and operates from converted premises in a listed building in central Reading in Berkshire. The nursery provision is set over two floors of the building and the children share a small enclosed garden for outside play.

A maximum of 78 children may attend the setting at any one time; of these no more than 30 may be under two years. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 all year with the exception of public holidays.

There are currently 64 children on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 20 staff. Of these staff the manager and 13 other staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are three staff working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are developing an understanding of the need to follow good hygiene practices, such as washing their hands after using the toilet or before snack and blowing noses. The older, more able children are independent in their self-care skills, for example taking themselves to the toilet. However, staff do not always remind the older children to wash their hands before snack, particularly if they have been to French lessons. Children's health is promoted because staff follow effective health and hygiene procedures to minimise the spread of infection, and have good hygiene practice when changing and feeding babies and younger children. Staff have good knowledge of the children's health and dietary needs. There are staff trained in first aid on duty at all times. All the relevant documentation is in place to support the children's well-being. Accidents and medication are dealt with and recorded appropriately.

Staff discuss with parents of babies, their individual routines for eating and sleeping which are followed until a child reaches the age of one year. This reassures the babies and makes them feel secure.

Children enjoy their meals and snacks. Both the staff and the cook are aware of children's individual dietary needs. Meals are prepared daily on site using guidelines from the Head Office and the menu is available for parents to see. The children learn to feed themselves from an early age, with varying levels of appropriate support from the room staff. The oldest children are encouraged to serve themselves vegetables at lunch time but this takes time as they sit at three different tables. When staff are busy at other tables, some children take advantage of this and encourage each other to misbehave. Staff sometimes have to leave the rooms to get extra bowls or to fetch items from the kitchen which is disruptive. Drinks are available at all times throughout the nursery and staff offer these to the children at regular intervals or on request.

The older children have opportunities to play outside during the day. However, the size of the area available restricts some activities. Fixed equipment is limited and there are few opportunities for climbing. However, staff in the older children's room lay out obstacle courses where the children can practise balancing, climbing through hoops, throwing and sliding which they enjoy. Babies are learning about their own bodies and what they can do. They crawl, sit and practise standing, gradually developing new skills as they play in their base room. Staff are very supportive, but, although babies have a sensory area to play in indoors, they have very few opportunities for outside play or daily walks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe as there are effective systems in place to monitor the arrival and departure of the children. An intercom system is in place, and parents and visitors are let in and out. They are challenged if staff do not know them. Visitors are required to sign in the book and are accompanied at all times. Children's safety is maintained as staff have a good awareness of safety issues. Staff conduct risk assessments daily, which ensure that any potential hazards for the children are identified and minimised. Staff are vigilant in all areas and make sure that safety gates are secured. The children in the upstairs rooms are encouraged to hold the low level handrail when negotiating the stairs and know the rules in place for their safety, for

example 'we do not push our friends'. However, there are times when staff are left alone in rooms when others go to collect items from the kitchen or laundry.

The staff have made all the rooms welcoming with displays of the children's art work and favourite rhymes, and pictures of the changing seasons on the walls and glass windows. Overall the cleanliness of the nursery is satisfactory, however, not all areas, for example the area above the baby room, some of the bathrooms and areas of the kitchen are monitored closely enough to ensure their ongoing upkeep. In other areas, such as Big Bears, a chair is showing signs of wear and tear and some toys, for example the rocking horses in Koalas are not included in the cleaning routines.

All of the required procedures and documents are in place, and understood by staff, to ensure that children's health, safety and welfare are promoted. For example, there are clear fire procedures and regular fire drills. Staff members are aware of their duty to protect children and there are clear routes of referral and procedures to be followed if staff have concerns about a child, which ensures the children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children under three years enjoy planned activities as well as free play. Each child is able to choose activities that they would like to take part in and staff are sensitive to the children's individual needs. Babies enjoy a variety of activities and receive a lot of one-to-one support, which helps them to achieve. For example, a baby enjoys playing peek-a-boo with a staff member and others explore treasure baskets and a range of toys put out for them to choose from. Staff offer continuous praise and encouragement and are attentive to individual needs. Babies communication skills are promoted as staff talk, interact and respond to them. Babies are happy, settled and have a positive sense of well-being.

Older children are able to explore activities and staff are supportive of child initiated play. For example, a child in Koalas enjoys playing and exploring during the gluing activity. He finds that the tissue paper shapes stick to the glue on his fingers. Other children involve staff in their free play, for example playing with the cars and the mat, dressing up in different hats, dancing and playing with the sand.

Children in both Koalas and Paddingtons enjoy a wide range of activities which support their all round development. An interesting variety of activities are available for the children to choose from including focussed activities. Children in all areas particularly enjoy story, music and rhyme times, with staff ensuring that the children play an interactive part within these activities. The children in Paddingtons enjoyed a session using the musical instruments and then dancing to favourites, such as the Hokey Cokey. All the children observed in all areas were interested in the activities on offer and were well occupied throughout.

Children in both Paddingtons and Koalas enjoy daily outdoor recreational play. However, babies do not have outings daily.

The children are benefiting from the staff's awareness of Birth to three matters, which they use as a planning and assessment tool, so ensuring that the children have suitable stage appropriate experiences. Staff know the children's individual needs and achievements. However, the nursery does not have a system to record the starting points for children joining the nursery.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. At group times, the children sit and listen well. They are becoming confident at speaking in a group, for example when taking part in the memory game. They initiate conversations with adults, asking questions of visitors. They enjoy role play and use appropriate language to discuss events, for example, when going shopping, making meals in the home corner or queuing to make purchases at the post office. The children have access to paper, pens and pencils on a daily basis and can mark-make freely in their play, for example when playing at the post office. They are encouraged to try and write their names on their work and have opportunities to see their names in print during the day. They understand how to use books and read to each other and adults. However, resources in the book corner, such as the large chair do not make this an inviting area for them.

The children count confidently when taking part in activities. They understand simple calculations, and adding and subtracting. They count the children in the group and work out how many more boys there are than girls. They enjoy games, such as the memory game where they have to identify the missing objects by shape, for example the round shape was sticky tape. They use a good range of mathematical language appropriately, for example positional language, such as in front and at the back when lining up to go outside, first and last, and over and under when negotiating the obstacle course.

The children enjoy investigating, exploring and experimenting, for example mixing the chalks together outside to make different colours and finding out what happens when they add water. They find out what happens when ice begins to melt. They build complex structures enlisting the help of staff. They talk with confidence about when they were smaller and can identify themselves in photographs. They initiate topics for discussion, for example asking visitors why they are in the room and show interest in the computer. They are beginning to understand technology when they use the telephones and the till. They enjoy weekly French lessons and can count, name colours and answer basic questions in French.

The children have opportunities to be creative everyday. They confidently paint, draw, colour and make collages. They use a wide range of different materials and media, such as paint and sand. They create their own works of art using handprints. They are confident when describing their colouring to adults. They play imaginatively when using small world play, the home corner and the post office. They take part in singing sessions and can sing songs from memory.

The children engage happily in physical activities, for example in the outside play area. They balance on beams, climb and slide, and go over and through obstacles, and enjoy outdoor play. However, there are limited opportunities for the planned use of the outdoors as a learning environment.

The staff have good knowledge of the way children learn and are developing their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and early learning goals. Although staff have good knowledge of each child's individual learning needs, planning and evaluations do not show how these different needs will be met. Staff undertake observations on the children which are used to update the children's development records. However, because of staff changes within the room, these are not all up-to-date and the format is under review.

The staff praise and encourage the children in their efforts and achievements, so boosting their self-esteem and confidence. They extend the children's knowledge and understanding by effective use of open ended questions. They ensure that they are level with the children, either

by sitting at the tables or on the floor so that they can join in with work and play, and hold conversations with the children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children arrive happily, separate from their parents with confidence and settle quickly. Staff meet and greet the parents and children individually, which gives them a sense of belonging. Staff know children's individual needs and routines, and are aware of those children who need support to settle. Children with learning difficulties and with English as an additional language are receiving appropriate support. The staff know the routes of referral should they have concerns about a child in their care.

Children in all rooms have equal access to all activities and to a range of resources which reflect diversity. They are encouraged to take turns and share. The children help to clear away toys and receive praise from staff for helping. The younger children are beginning to understand adults' expectations of their behaviour. They behave well, and respond to praise and encouragement from staff, which promotes their self-esteem and self-confidence. The older children in Big Bears are reasonably well behaved and understand right from wrong. However, some children are disruptive particularly at lunch time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive limited information of how best to help their child learn at home. A key worker system is in place and parents can talk to staff whenever they have a concern or wish to see their child's records. However, the nursery does not have a starting points profile, so although staff discuss with parents at visits, there is no paperwork to support this. Parents receive copies of the policies and procedures, and a comprehensive prospectus when their child starts.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Good procedures are in place for appointing new staff, which ensures that the staff working with the children are appropriately vetted, so safeguarding the children. The staff have a comprehensive induction process and are given copies of the nursery policies to read. Staff are clear about their responsibilities within the nursery for the children's well-being and those working with the under threes are developing their knowledge of Birth to three matters. Staff with an extra, specific responsibility, for example the special educational needs coordinator, have a good knowledge of their roles.

The children are grouped mainly according to age but this also depends on their stage of development. The staff are well deployed within the nursery and the organisation of the rooms mean that the children have a quiet area in which to relax, for example to read books, an active area and a messy play area.

There are comprehensive policies and procedures in place which cover all the required areas. All documentation is in place. Policies, procedures and other information is available for parents. The registration certificate and the insurance are displayed on the parents' notice board. This ensures that parents are aware of how the nursery is run.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The management has a clear vision for the nursery and steps are being made to achieve the targets set. Planning for the nursery education and for those under three is carried out by room leaders who are confident and enthusiastic in their approach. Staff get on well with one another and work effectively as a team. The manager is aware of the strengths of the nursery and equally aware of the areas for improvement, for example systems for monitoring the cleaning and maintenance in the nursery and evaluating the provision of nursery education. The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last education inspection, three recommendations were made. These were to

extend opportunities for children to explore and experiment with length, weight and capacity in every day situations; to extend children's opportunities to explore and investigate, to ask questions and find out how things work, and to develop opportunities for children to recognise initial sounds, and experiment with sounds and words.

The nursery has implemented these recommendations. More resources have been purchased for the science area which include measuring equipment and weighing scales. The children have further opportunities to find out how things work during science experiments, such as the melting of ice cubes and mixing colours with chalks during outside play. They also have access to resources, such as old telephones which they can take apart if they choose. Work is ongoing to develop opportunities for the children to recognise sounds at the beginning and end of words, and a system for teaching phonics is being introduced.

At the last care inspection, two recommendations were made. These were to ensure that the operational plan includes staff deployment and grouping of children and that the behaviour policy includes procedures for recording incidents of physical intervention. Both these recommendations have been put into place.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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 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):

- devise and implement a system to ensure that all areas of the nursery are regularly assessed for cleanliness and maintenance
- devise and implement a starting points profile for all children entering the nursery [also applies to nursery education]
- review the arrangements in place for snack and lunch time
- review the strategies in place to manage the behaviour in the older children's room

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):

- continue to build on the children's knowledge and understanding of letter sounds
- continue to review the systems in place for planning, evaluating and recording children's progress and development.

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