

St Stephen's Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	135099
Inspection date	05 December 2007
Inspector	Helen Maria Steven
Setting Address	Essendine Road, London, W9 2LR
Telephone number	0207 641 4346
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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 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?

St Stephen's Nursery has been run by Buffer Bears Limited since January 2000. It is located in the Maida Vale area in the City of Westminster. The nursery premises is arranged over two floors and consists of a hall area, four rooms on the ground floor for children under two years, two playrooms on the first floor for children aged two to four years, combined office and waiting area, kitchen, parent's room, laundry room, toilets with nappy changing area and staff toilets. There is also an undercover enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery serves the local and wider communities.

The nursery is registered to care for 109 children in total. Currently there are 77 children on roll. This includes 15 children who receive nursery education funding. The nursery support children who have English as an additional language.

The nursery opens 8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday all year round with exception of Bank Holidays. The nursery offers full-time and part-time places.

There are 22 staff who work directly with the children; of which 17 hold Early Years qualifications. The manager is supernumerary. In addition there are admin, catering and cleaning staff. The nursery receives support from the Early Years Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn to follow good hygiene routines by hand washing after using the toilet and before sitting down to meals. Practitioners wear gloves when changing babies' nappies and use anti-bacterial spray to cleanse the changing mats after use. Outdoor shoes are not permitted in the baby rooms to ensure that non-mobile babies have clean floors to crawl on. Children's health is promoted well as most practitioners hold relevant first aid certificates to know how to deal with accidents effectively in the event of an emergency. Written information is obtained relating to children's medical history and parents provide written consent for their children to receive emergency medical treatment.

Children gain a good understanding of healthy eating because staff talk to children about the benefits of nutritious food. Meals are cooked freshly on the premises and children benefit from the nutritious food. Meals are planned on a rota basis and menus are displayed for parents to view. Children's specific individual dietary needs are known and catered for by the staff, for example, halal food is provided. They implement a colour coded system for the crockery, for example, vegetarian children have green plates and cups. Children are aware of their own dietary needs and remind their friends of this information when sitting down for lunch. Practitioners encourage children to try different foods, suggesting that they sample a little and leave it if they don't like it. Children choose from a healthy range of fruits at snack time and can access water throughout the day.

Babies are held close when bottle fed making them feel secure. They are given the opportunity to develop their independence by feeding themselves with support from the practitioners. Mealtimes are generally used to promote children's social skills to enable children to sit with their keyworkers in small groups. Practitioners present as good role models as they eat their food with the children.

Older children are developing a positive attitude to physical exercise as they enjoy it on a daily basis both inside and out. Funded children are able to use the garden at set times during the day to develop their skills in riding wheeled toys and climbing. They have many opportunities to use scissors and tools to develop their fine motor skills. For example, children use a spatula to divide and lift a pretend pizza in the home corner, they balance and skilfully transport the food onto a plate. Planning for outdoor experiences and physical play is limited. Although each room has an allocated time to use the undercover outdoor area, not all practitioners make use of this time, for example, because the weather is 'drizzly'. Therefore some babies and children have limited opportunities to support their large motor skills and do not benefit from being regularly outside in the fresh air.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe as practitioners give appropriate explanations. For example, reminding children not to run in the nursery as they may injure

themselves or hurt their friends. They gain an understanding of how to keep themselves safe in an emergency by practising regular fire drills with practitioners. These drills are recorded although the process to evaluate these are not fully developed. Risk assessments are carried out and monitored regularly. Separate risk assessments for each area is displayed on the room notice boards. The health and safety officer reports issues to the management to be addressed. There are ongoing issues waiting to be resolved, for example, the broken fire door adjacent to the pre-school room can be accessed to enable an emergency exit, cannot then be closed to afford appropriate security. The entrance passageway to the nursery between the main intercom and the building is not well lit which is hazardous when it is dark at the start and end of the day, negotiations are ongoing to resolve this issue. During inspection some additional hazards were observed, for example, notice boards containing drawing pins are positioned above children's cots and the fire door leading to the stairs is propped open thus potentially giving users of the training rooms access to the nursery.

Children have access to a wide array of play resources. Furniture, equipment and play resources are clean and well maintained and suitable procedures are in place to ensure they are kept safe. The premises are arranged over two floors, younger children are in rooms on the ground floor and children over two on the upper floor. Children are accompanied when using the stairs to access the garden area. The garden space is limited and is brimming with outdoor equipment and resources. There is a rota for use to ensure that the area is not too overcrowded.

Children are safeguarded and protected from harm because practitioners recognise their role in protecting children in their care. Suitable procedures are in place to discuss and record concerns and staff demonstrate their ability to implement the organisation's child protection policy. There is a rolling child protection training programme monitored by the practitioner with specific responsibility for organising the training for staff. Children are protected because they are never left unsupervised with anyone who has not been vetted

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well into the session and are confident in the routine. They enjoy their activities and interact well with practitioners and their peers. Children play independently and with their peers as well as enjoying opportunities to work more directly with practitioners through activities, such as cookery. Currently children do not get regular opportunities to observe their neighbourhood as local outings tend to be arranged only in the summer.

Independence is promoted well through enabling children to use the bathroom by themselves and scraping their leftover food from lunch. Babies are given the opportunity to feed themselves. Babies enjoy the good range of resources in their room, they explore toys with their mouths and skilfully post shapes into sorters. They are fascinated by their reflection in the mirror and look at themselves from all angles.

Children benefit from an environment which is bright and stimulating, staff plan interesting activities for children under three based on the Birth to three matters framework. However, there are times in the day where some children are offered very limited choice due to the organisation in their specific room. Children develop relationships with practitioners throughout the nursery as staff cover in different rooms to maintain ratios.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and children have a positive attitude to learning. Practitioners have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and as a team competently put this into practice. Planning is flexible, clear and covers all areas of learning in the curriculum. There are assessment records for each child, which show children's achievements, these assessments include some planning for the next steps in children's learning. However the current process for monitoring that these records are up to date is not effective. Practitioners are actively involved in children's activities, they ask questions and are interested in the children's play; however they sometimes miss opportunities to promote problem solving or challenge thinking for more able children.

Children enjoy opportunities for mark making, for example, pens and pencils are available around the room and marker pens are set up on the easel. Children are keen to show their ability to make representative marks for their names. They are skilful at recognising their own and others' names and are very interested in phonics, they identify the sounds of the starts of words. A high emphasis is placed on meaningful role-play situations which encourage children to mark make in situations familiar to them. Children chat to each other in small groups and engage others in activities such as finding letters and name labels. Regular circle time is in place, but is not well organised. Initially it is set up as a large group activity and children lose interest as the story and singing are interrupted constantly by the practitioner managing behaviour. The book area is not a cosy inviting space and as a result it does not entice children to independently enjoy books.

Children make good progress in maths; there are opportunities for children to recognise numbers throughout the nursery, count objects, weigh and measure when cooking. Children are encouraged to sort beads and play games such as dominos. They problem solve with number puzzles. They are asked to assist with setting up at lunch time, but are not encouraged to use this time to develop their understanding of calculating.

Children explore items from the environment such as conkers, shells, cocoa pods and pine cones on the nature shelf. Practitioners record that children understand that caterpillars turn into butterflies and the snail, which lives in the nursery, gives them an opportunity to gain knowledge of living things. They have opportunities to investigate how things work by accessing electronic toys, a computer is available, but is not always switched on ready for use during the morning free play sessions. However, children have few opportunities to visit the local community as regular outings are not planned.

Children's creativity is well supported; they have access to a wide range of media and materials that enable them to make constructions, collages, paintings and drawings. Children explore the consistency of paint as they slosh it onto the paper with a brush and create patterns. A high emphasis is placed on role-play with a number of areas dedicated to engaging children in imaginative role-play based on their first hand experiences. Children involve adults and other children in their play, for example they become shopkeepers and customers asking for items from the shelves.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children behave well and are confident and self assured. Practitioners ask 'What are we here?' the children reply that they are part of a team. The practitioners confirm that they are part of a caring and sharing team to gently remind them to monitor their own behaviour. Children work together, they politely ask for items and their peers graciously meet their requests. Generally

staff apply positive behaviour management techniques; however some staff's practice does not constantly match the organisation's behaviour management policy. For example, by using negative sentences and comments such as 'Do not correct me, I am the adult here'.

Children thrive and are happy and secure because they are valued as individuals by practitioners. There is an effective key worker system in place and practitioners are aware of their key children's needs. Babies' individual sleep and feeding patterns are maintained by practitioners. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported by the nursery and a coordinator is in place to assist staff in meeting children's specific needs. They have good links with outside agencies, for example, to support children with speech delay.

Children are introduced to a range of customs and beliefs and traditions through stories and discussions and engage in planned experiences linked to special events and festivals. For example, children enjoy a fun packed party to encapsulate the excitement of carnival. They listen to steel pans, dress up and taste a variety of foods. Children are told the story and significance of Christmas for families that are Christian; staff also ensure that children are aware that not all of their peers within the nursery have the same beliefs. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with detailed information about the group before their child starts. Practitioners confer with parents to gather information about the children's individual needs at the start of placements to enable them to settle well. Policies are easily accessible as many are on display for parents. Notice boards throughout the nursery keep parents informed of a range of relevant issues and whiteboards give them up to the minute information. Parents have access to weekly planning and information on the Foundation Stage. Parents are aware of their child's key worker and meetings are arranged to keep them informed of their child's progress. Profiles are in place, although the monitoring to ensure that they are up to date is not fully effective. There is a complaints procedure in place in line with regulation; however the old policy has yet to be replaced on the notice board. Regular parents' meetings are held at the nursery to keep them informed and involved with the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children develop a secure sense of belonging because the nursery is well organised and practitioners work with parents to ensure they have a good knowledge of children's individual circumstances. Practitioners are supported by management through meetings and appraisal, although one to one meetings have not happened as regularly as intended. The practitioners and deputy ensure that ratios are maintained by covering where needed throughout the nursery. Staff plan the curriculum together in their group rooms and discuss how activities went. There is a large area on the ground floor which is well resourced and divided into sections. The space was organised to enable an increase in overall numbers of children that the group is registered for; however this area is not currently well used.

There are robust recruitment procedures in place to ensure that children are cared for by suitable adults. An induction process is in place to ensure that new practitioners are supported in settling into their role in the nursery. There are a good range of policies and procedures available, which have been developed by the organisation, to promote the welfare of the children. Children's attendance is recorded in each of the rooms and most staff are vigilant in ensuring that the records are correct. The group is currently undertaking a quality assurance programme to

continue to develop their practice. Records are kept up to date and management is supported in this task by a dedicated administrator.

Children's learning is promoted through good leadership and management of nursery education. Management is committed to the improvement and development of practitioners. Staff are encouraged to update and extend their knowledge through training thus benefiting the children. The majority of the staff team have undertaken a qualification in childcare. The organisation offers their practitioners a wide range of in-house training on core topics such as child protection, first aid and food hygiene. The managers have devolved responsibility for some areas to practitioners, for example one has specific responsibility to organise and monitor the training of the staff team and another reviews health and safety. Practitioners complete assessments on the children, however these are not monitored effectively to ensure that they are all up to date. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to ensure that toilet areas are safe and the floor surface in the pre-school area is hygienic and does not pose a tripping hazard. Both areas are hygienic and have been made safe to protect children.

Nursery education

They were asked to provide more opportunities for developing skills in calculating in mathematics and reading for more able children. They were asked to continue to develop the planning of the curriculum and to use a monitoring and assessment system to show children's individual progress towards the early learning goals. The action plan identifies ways in which the routines can enable children to calculate, but staff do not always implement this effectively to challenge more able children. The planning of the curriculum and monitoring and assessment of children's individual progress towards the early learning goals is still being developed.

At a visit since the last inspection the provider agreed to develop and review the operational plan and ensure the rooms are adequately ventilated. They were asked to ensure that an emergency evacuation procedure is in place for the baby room and undertake a risk assessment on the outdoor area. In addition they were asked to set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of significant events.

Management reports that staff ratios are maintained by the deployment of staff around the nursery. The deputy is part of the overall ratio and covers when needed, the manager is supernumerary. Bank and agency staff are used when needed to maintain required ratios. Fire evacuation procedures are in place throughout the nursery and room temperatures are monitored and rooms ventilated as necessary. There is a system in place to notify Ofsted of significant events.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take action in order to meet the National Standards. Concerns related to National Standard 2 - Organisation, National Standard 6 - Safety and National Standard 12 - Working in partnership with parents and carers. Concerns raised were regarding inadequate staff to child ratios, the possibility that unchecked adults may have access to the premises and relationships with parents.

A visit was undertaken and five actions were raised under National Standard 2, National Standard 4 - physical environment, National Standard 6 and National Standard 14 - Documentation. Ofsted was satisfied with the action the provider took to address the concerns raised. The provider remained 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.

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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):

- devise and implement an action plan to identify how the following hazards can be reduced; security via the 'middle' door and the location of notice boards above babies' cots.
- ensure that the organisation's positive behaviour management policy is understood and implemented by all 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):

- develop the planning of the curriculum and improve the monitoring of the assessment system to support children's individual progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas

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