

Little Birch Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	141119
Inspection date	04 October 2007
Inspector	Dinah Round
Setting Address	Blandford St. Mary C of E Primary School, Birch Avenue, Blandford St. Mary, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 9QD
Telephone number	07929 363291
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Registered person	The Trustees of Little Birch Pre-School
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?

Little Birch Pre-School opened in 1976 and operates from a purpose built unit in the grounds of Blandford St. Mary C of E Primary School, Blandford, in Dorset. It is a committee run group and the pre-school are the sole users of the building. The group have use of a playroom with separate entrance hall, and adjoining toilets and kitchen area. Children have access to secure fenced areas surrounding the building for outdoor play, and access to the school playground and playing field when not in use by school children.

The pre-school is registered to care for 16 children aged from two to under five years and there are currently 30 children on roll. Of these, 20 children are receiving funding for nursery education. The group is open each morning from 09:00 to 11:45, and from 12:30 to 15:05 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, during term time. The pre-school serves the local area, and welcomes children who have learning difficulties and disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs a team of four staff. Three members of staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. All staff have attended short courses relating to their roles. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in clean and well maintained premises. Their health is well protected from the risk of cross infection due to the effective routines and practices followed by staff. Surfaces are kept clean and children learn the importance of washing their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Staff talk to the children to explain that they wash their hands to get rid of the germs, which helps their understanding. Appropriate resources are provided with child height hand basins, liquid soap and paper towels. Children receive good care when they are unwell or injured, as all staff have attended training in administering first aid, and a well stocked first aid resource is easily accessible. Clear accident and medication records are maintained and shared with parents. However, written parental permission to seek emergency treatment or advice has not been obtained.

Children have opportunities to learn about a healthy lifestyle through topic work and discussion. They benefit from the provision of a good range of healthy and nutritious snacks, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, yoghurts and bread. Children enjoy a sociable snack time as they spread their own marmite on their toast and happily chat to each other about their favourite toppings. Children's individual dietary needs are clearly recorded and carefully followed by staff to ensure they remain healthy. Children are provided with drinks of water or milk at snack time and can ask for more. However, they are not able to help themselves to drinking water during the session and some children get thirsty.

Children have access to various outdoor play areas including the school's grounds. These areas are extremely well used to provide regular opportunities for physical activities and make sure children get plenty of fresh air and exercise. Children develop new skills through the good range of experiences offered by the staff. For example, children concentrate carefully as they throw and catch balls, enjoy balancing on the toadstools, and confidently pedal the various wheeled toys around the road layout. Children have access to a broad selection of tools to promote their fine motor skills, such as scissors and rollers with the play dough, Pritt Sticks, chinks, pencils and paint brushes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Their safety is well protected due to effective security procedures followed by staff to ensure children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. For example, staff carefully monitor access to the pre-school, and a password system is used when children are collected by adults unfamiliar to staff. Children benefit from good levels of supervision which ensures they are safe at all times. Visual health and safety checks are made on all areas daily, and risk assessments are used for outings to make sure any hazards are identified and minimised. Children have access to a good range of toys and resources, which are easily accessible, appropriate for their ages and in good condition.

Children learn about how they can keep themselves safe and understand the expectations within the pre-school regarding safety. For example, staff calmly explain to children not to stand on the bench but to stand safely by the fence as they watch the tractor outside. Fire drills are completed frequently to ensure that children understand the emergency evacuation procedures within the pre-school.

Staff have a good understanding of their role to safeguard children. They continue to update their knowledge through regular training, and are clear of the possible indicators of abuse and procedures to follow if they have a concern. This helps to ensure that children are protected. A child protection policy is made available to parents, and clear records are maintained of any visitors to the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled and enjoy their time at the pre-school. They are provided with a busy and stimulating environment, and quickly get involved in the activities when they arrive at the group. Children enjoy a broad range of interesting play opportunities and activities. The enthusiastic and experienced staff support children well as they dedicate their time to meeting children's needs throughout the session. Staff are warm and friendly, continually talking and listening to the children to help them progress in their learning. Children have good relationships with adults and each other which helps them feel secure. Staff know the children well and are aware when younger children need additional support, however, the 'Birth to three matters' framework is not incorporated into planning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn and progress. They plan a good variety of enjoyable and interesting activities, which cover all areas of learning and offer children an extensive range of indoor and outdoor experiences. The ongoing observations and assessments of children's development are used successfully within the flexible planning system to follow children's individual development. Staff are confident, and successfully incorporate spontaneous learning opportunities for the children. For example, when a tractor arrives to spread grass seed on the school field the children watch with great excitement. This generates lots of discussion, and staff ask open-ended questions to challenge children's thinking and support their learning and development.

Good team work ensures the room is well prepared on children's arrival and resources organised so that staff time can be spent directly working with the children. Staff regularly praise the children and value their efforts which makes children feel good about themselves. Children are gaining independence as they wash and dry their hands before snack time, and are encouraged to spread their own toppings on the toast. However, the full opportunities to maximise children's independence within the activities and routines is not always explored.

Children are confident, interested in activities and keen to learn. They enjoy being a 'helper' as they give out cups and plates at snack time, and happily take turns to be the 'Busy Bee' during the rhyme. Children speak confidently to each other and adults, and happily join in with familiar rhymes, such as 'The Wheels on the Bus'. Children have access to a welcoming book corner and handle books carefully. They listen with enjoyment to the group story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' as staff make effective use of props to bring the story to life. Children

have very good opportunities to use mark making tools within their play. For example, pens and paper are available in the role play area and chinks are provided outside, children happily make marks and write for a purpose as they pretend to take the register with the clipboard outside.

Children count regularly within the daily routines, such as the number of children present during circle time and choosing five grapes for their snack. Staff use opportunities to spontaneously incorporate counting with children, such as the '10 Fat Sausages' number rhyme during outside play. Children are gaining a good awareness of size as they listen to the story, and staff talk about the 'big', 'medium' and 'small' size bowls. Children's natural curiosity is developed well as they use the large magnet to investigate where the objects are hidden in the sand. They gain awareness of their own community through planned topics, such as 'People who are important to us' when a police officer and a nurse visited the group. Children enjoy sensory play as they explore sand, water, and dough, and learn about colours as they roll the painted marbles and watch the blue and yellow paint turn into green. Children have good opportunities to use their imagination through the wide range of role play experiences organised through the different topics, such as a 'laundrette', a 'baker's shop', and a 'potting shed'. They enjoy pretending to go to the beach on the train outside and negotiate who will be the driver.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as staff have a good understanding of their individual needs. Staff offer support for new and less confident children and make successful use of a 'time line' with pictures of the daily routine, to help the children settle and feel secure. Children see their artwork displayed around the room and have their own pegs and drawers, which promotes a strong sense of belonging to the group. Children's awareness of the wider world is raised through different topics, resources and discussion. For example, they made lanterns, explored noodles and listened to Chinese music during Chinese New Year. The group have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) who attends regular training, and links with staff, parents and other professionals to provide a consistent approach for the children's care. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's behaviour is good. They find a mat and quickly settle down on the carpet at registration time, and listen carefully to the group story. Staff provide good role models for children by being calm and polite, and children are helpful and co-operative towards others. For example, during tidy-up time they help each other carry the box of toys across the room, and two children work together to push the lever and press out the dough. Children benefit from the effective strategies used by staff, such as the use of 'Charlie' the puppet to help children learn to listen, and the timer to develop their understanding about taking turns. Children show high levels of confidence and self-esteem, as they receive regular praise and encouragement from staff.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents play an active role in the organisation of the pre-school with many on the committee. Parents receive clear, detailed information about the provision, through the pre-school information folders, regular newsletters, and displays on the notice board and white board. This makes sure parents are kept well informed and up to date of any changes. New parents are invited to 'Open Days' to familiarise the children with the setting and ease the settling-in process. Children's individual needs are continually discussed with parents at the beginning and end of the session, to ensure details about children's welfare are regularly shared. Information about planned topics is shared with parents via newsletters,

with weekly activities displayed within the room. When children leave for school parents receive records of their children's time at pre-school which include photos and collections of their artwork. Parents are able to look at their children's progress records on request, however, records are not regularly shared to provide parents with a full picture of their children's development, and little information is provided on how to further support their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are provided with a bright and welcoming child-orientated environment. The premises are used effectively, with well laid out play areas providing easily accessible resources, and colourful displays of children's artwork. Children benefit from the flexible routine which allows them to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities during free-play, successfully extending their learning. Children are well supported by the team of qualified and experienced staff, with key workers to ensure their individual needs are followed. Detailed planning incorporates daily outdoor play experiences, although, it does not include the 'Birth to three matters' framework for the younger children. Clear systems are in place to promote children's health and safety, although, drinks are not always easily accessible for children. The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

Leadership and management are good. Children are cared for by a small team of enthusiastic staff who work together very well. They have clear roles and responsibilities, and communicate constantly to ensure the smooth running of the sessions. This contributes towards the children's care and well-being. Staff meet weekly to evaluate activities and discuss children's progress, linking this with the next week's planning. Staff have yearly appraisals to support their ongoing development, and regularly attend training events. The committee and staff work together closely and are proactive in looking at ways to improve the provision. The pre-school have good links with the school which helps the children's transition as they move on to school. For example, the pre-school children attend the school's Harvest Festival and Christmas production.

Documentation is well organised, kept confidential and secure. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes. Detailed recruitment and vetting procedures are followed to ensure staff are suitable to work with children. Records are clearly recorded, although not all written parental consents are in place.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to conduct a risk assessment to identify and minimise risks in the garden, and ensure the equal opportunities policy is consistent with legislation. A clear risk assessment has now been completed for all outdoor areas used by the children, and more storage space has been provided to ensure that children can play safely outdoors. The equal opportunities policy has been updated.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to review the organisation of resources so children could access appropriate tools; increase opportunities for children to develop mark making skills; and to continue to develop planning and assessment systems. Children are now able to freely access a wide range of resources as these are well positioned on low units, such as scissors, pens, Pritt Stick, and sellotape. Children have good opportunities to use mark making tools

within their play, as they are readily available during outdoor play and in the different role play scenarios. Staff are continuing to evaluate and develop their planning and assessment systems. They now clearly link to the different areas of learning with separate planning to focus on the outdoor play environment.

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 to 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

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 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):

- make resources more accessible so children can easily have a drink when they are thirsty, and obtain written parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment or advice
- continue to enhance younger children's development by incorporating the 'Birth to three matters' framework within the planning

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 develop opportunities to further promote children's independence and maximise their learning
- extend opportunities to share children's progress records with parents, and consider ways to actively involve parents in their child's learning.

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