

The Forum Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY280060
Inspection date	12 May 2008
Inspector	Joan Isabel Madden / Janice Linsdell
Setting Address	The Forum Centre, Forum Square, Civic Centre, Wythenshawe, Manchester, Lancashire, M22 5RX
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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 inadequate - enforcement action. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Forum Nursery opened in 2004 and is one of several nurseries run by Buffer Bear Limited. It operates from four rooms in a purpose-built building. It is situated in Wythenshawe, Manchester. A maximum of 100 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 and closes on bank holidays. All children share access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 71 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 10 children are in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 17 members of staff. Of these, nine hold appropriate early years qualifications and five staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

The nursery is kept sufficiently clean and tidy, and staff follow some hygienic practices to promote children's health. For example, they wear aprons and gloves when changing children's nappies and request visitors to wear protective shoe covers before entering the baby room. There is a clear policy in place to protect children from illness and the daily hand washing routines enable children to develop some awareness of hygiene. However, children and staff cannot wash their hands properly because there is no soap available in some areas. Also potties are rinsed in the children's bathroom where children wash their hands. This increases the risk of cross infection. A high number of staff are trained in first aid and basic food hygiene, but good practice in relation to food hygiene is not always implemented. As a result, staff use the surface of the toy cupboard to prepare bread and butter, and then hand this out to the children which is unhygienic.

Children have access to a spacious outdoor area with some good play equipment, such as wheeled toys, balancing beams and climbing frames. There is also a covered area to protect children from the sun. However, outdoor play is not planned into the children's routine. As a result, younger children do not always have the opportunity to play outside, which limits their access to fresh air and exercise. Large play equipment is available within the rooms to encourage children's physical development and babies can practice their walking skills as they balance using the push-a-long toys.

Children benefit from eating a varied diet to promote their growth and development. In the main meals are freshly prepared and include vegetarian options. All staff and the cook are aware of children's specific dietary requirements and some clear systems help to remind staff of children's needs, such as photographic labels around highchairs. Generally, fresh drinking water is available for children in the rooms, except for the babies. Some of the children's beakers are placed out of their reach and staff do not always remind children to take drinks at frequent intervals, particularly during hot weather. As a result, to satisfy their thirst some children drink from the toys in the water tray, which compromises their health and well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The nursery is spacious and welcoming, with playrooms organised appropriately to enable children to take part in different activities. In the main children use an adequate range of resources to support their play, most of which are suitable and accessible. Staff use safety checklists to monitor equipment and as a result resources are safe, clean and adequately maintained. The intercom system at main entrance provides some security to the building, but this is compromised when parents hold the door open for visitors. Visitors are not always requested to sign the visitor's book on arrival. This poses risks to the safety of children and staff.

Frequent checks are carried out on sleeping children to ensure their safety and comfort, and the comprehensive risk assessments in place go some way in helping to reduce hazards to children. However, reported ongoing maintenance issues are not always acted upon and a number of these remain outstanding. For example, one of the windows cannot be opened and there is a crack in the low level glass. The sink in one of the nappy change areas is broken,

which means staff have to go elsewhere to wash their hands. Children's safety is compromised because the kitchen fire door is propped open and not all fire doors are kept free from obstruction. Also, the low level playroom handles are accessible to children, which means they can enter unsupervised areas. This was raised at the last inspection and has still not been addressed.

There is a detailed safeguarding policy in place to help keep children safe from harm. Staff understand their role in protecting children and some staff have attended training in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally happy and engage in a suitable range of activities, such as painting, construction, stories, singing and role play. Most of the staff interact positively with the children to support their play. Babies enjoy exploring interesting items in the treasure basket as they reach for the wooden spoon or feel the texture of the feathers. They enjoy recognising themselves in the low level mirrors as they smile and babble at their own reflection. Young children enjoy playing in the sand and water trays, becoming excited as they show adults the bubbles on the hands. Staff plan a new experience for the children each week, including sensory activities, for example, fruit tasting, hand printing and exploring with 'gloop'.

Overall, there are some reasonable systems in place to help promote the development of young children using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff take turns in planning activities to promote children's learning and enjoyment. They maintain individual files for the children, which includes observations of their play and examples of their work. In the main, information gathered is used appropriately to evaluate what young children can do, and includes how staff intend to further support their development. However, there are some inconsistencies across the nursery, for example, some records lack evaluation and the weekly plan is not available in all rooms.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. The staff are kind and caring and genuinely fond of the children. They encourage the children as they play and sit with them over lunchtime to foster interaction and conversation. However, overall the staff lack knowledge and confidence in delivering the Foundation Stage. There are no current plans in place and previous scant planning reveals some areas or aspects of the curriculum are rarely considered. These plans do not identify learning outcomes or differentiation in the children's learning. Nor have they been evaluated to inform future planning. The staff do not refer to any guidance for promoting early learning goals during everyday provision. As a result although children take part in activities, the staff merely supervise or service activities rather than teach. The same activities and resources appear frequently but without any variation in their intended outcomes, for example, home corner, maths area, writing area and sand. There is little evidence to suggest staff are aware of how different activities contribute towards an area of learning and fit in with the stepping stones. Children's observations are not consistently completed and analysed or progress records maintained. This results in assessments not informing future plans to move the children's learning on.

The room is bright and airy with plenty of natural light and displays around the room. However, staff have identified a lack of resources in the Foundation Stage room, particularly in the areas of knowledge and understanding of the world and mathematics. In some cases they are unsure

of how some existing resources could be utilised to promote aspects of learning. Some areas of the room are not sufficiently organised to make them inviting to the children.

For the first part of the morning the funded children are in with the younger children and this room was found to be understaffed. As a result the children are left very much to their own devices with little or no emphasis on teaching and learning. Once they move into the 'Paddington Bear' room there is a good staff to child ratio and plenty of space for them. The children play quietly and access activities for themselves. They are happy and settled but merely occupied rather than being questioned and challenged. Very little emphasis is paid to the social and learning needs of children. Children's self esteem is fostered as they choose stories for the staff to read to them and find their birthdays on wall chart. They help set the table for lunch; however their independence is not fully fostered as staff serve the lunch and butter the bread. The children only use forks to eat with for their main course.

Generally the children's language is very limited and insufficient attention is put upon developing listening and speaking skills. Through displays and named coat pegs and place mats the children are learning that print carries meaning. As part of the routine children listen to stories, however the children leave the story one by one to wash their hands. This interrupts the flow and lessens the value of story time. Children take an interest in books though the reading area is uninspiring. They gain very little from the role play areas as the home corner is disorganised and the 'Travel Agents' has very limited resources. There is generally a restricted range of media and materials for the children to express themselves creatively and in mark making. The funded children enjoy playing out in the large outdoor play area. They take ropes out with them to practise skipping and make use of outdoor equipment to promote other skills such as balancing, moving in different ways over the bridge and swinging on bars. Children are supported by staff as they complete programmes on the computer that support their literacy and number skills. They enjoy an impromptu baking session and practise their counting skills as they put out the cake cases. As they bake they learn the names of the ingredients and about concepts associated with baking. However there is generally insufficient attention given to different strands of learning in mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff obtain relevant information about the children to assist them in meeting their individual needs. The 'family boards' with photographs of important people in children's lives are used appropriately to help children feel settled and secure. There are some good quality posters around the nursery showing positive images of people from different cultures and children use some resources to raise their awareness of diversity. Staff are aware that some of the children have learning difficulties and disabilities and external agencies do support children in nursery. However very little monitoring or follow up work is done by the staff in order for children to gain full value from the individual educational plans.

Children's behaviour is generally good. They are learning to be polite and to share resources with one another. Staff use praise sufficiently well to reinforce positive behaviour and help children to learn the difference between right and wrong.

The partnership with parent and carers for nursery education is inadequate. The parents receive some useful information about the children and the nursery through the brochure, informative displays and daily sheets about the children's day. Relevant information about the 'Foundation Stage' and the new 'Early Years Foundation Stage' is displayed for the parents. However, there

are no procedures in place to keep parents informed of their children's progress and achievements. Staff have not yet developed useful ways to encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning or extend activities at home. Parents have mixed views on the nursery. They spoke of the staff being kind and caring but that the education provision is weak. They would like more information on their children's progress. Overall the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Evidence is available to confirm staff have completed appropriate checks to ensure their suitability to care for the children. However, the acting manager has not completed the necessary checks to ensure her suitability for the post. On arrival, inspectors observed there were insufficient adults on duty to care for the children. These are breaches in regulations and compromise the children's safety. Ofsted are generally kept informed of significant events. Minimum requirements regarding qualified staff are adequately met. However, staff are not always deployed effectively so that sufficient staff are working directly with the children.

Most legal documentation to promote the children's care and welfare is in place and appropriately maintained. An extensive range of policies and procedures are available to support practice, which are read by staff and regularly updated. Accident and medication records meet requirements, however attendance records are confusing and some staff forget to record their attendance on the room registers. This makes it difficult to assess whether minimum adult-child ratios are consistently maintained.

Leadership and management of the nursery education are inadequate. Staff at all levels of the nursery have identified that the nursery lacks direction, support systems, resources and a commitment to professional development for staff. This has caused staff to become despondent. As a result the provision has suffered and there has been no progress made in rectifying previous weaknesses. The nursery has however received support from Sure Start.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the staff were required to improve safety, the deployment of staff and documentation. There is now a detailed complaints procedure, a system in place for recording complaints and a risk assessment for the outdoor area. The inner fencing that was an issue has been removed leaving the secure fencing around the perimeter of the play area and staff ensure children are supervised on the play equipment. The electrical sockets and radiator covers are now safe. However a safety issue relating to the interior doors and the deployment of staff are still outstanding.

At the last education inspection the staff were required to use observations to inform future planning and keep parents informed about their children's progress and work in partnership with them to extend children's learning at home. No progress has been made with these recommendations.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action in order to meet the National Standards. Ofsted received concerns regarding National Standard 2 (Organisation) in relation to staff ratios. A childcare inspector visited the

provision on 09 October 2007. An action was raised and satisfactorily met by the registered provider. The provider remains 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

Ofsted is taking **enforcement action** to safeguard the welfare of children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop planning and assessments to ensure all aspects of the six areas are covered and clear learning outcomes are identified for the children (applies to care)
- replenish and reorganise resources for the Foundation Stage to ensure the provision is fully equipped to promote all aspects of the six areas of learning
- develop procedures for keeping parents informed about their children's progress and work in partnership with parents to extend children's learning at home (also applies to care)
- develop procedures to effectively monitor and evaluate the provision (this applies to care).

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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