

Busy Beavers Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY356267
Inspection date	04 July 2008
Inspector	Georgina Emily Hobson Matthews
Setting Address	Old Catton Village Hall, Church St, Old Catton, Norwich, Norfolk, NR6 7DR
Telephone number	01603 400326
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Registered person	Busy Beavers Playgroup
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 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?

Busy Beavers Playgroup opened in 2000 and moved to its current location in 2007. It is situated in the village of Old Catton, in Norfolk and operates from the village hall. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor area. The playgroup serves the local area. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The playgroup is registered to care for 26 children from two to under five years. There are currently 45 children on roll and this includes 42 children who receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45 and from 12:15 until 14:45 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays and from 09:15 until 11:45 on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee of parents that employs eight part-time staff members to work with the children. The supervisor has an early years qualification to Level 3 and more than half of the staff members have recognised early years qualifications and are working towards a higher level of qualification. A parent rota operates

to provide additional adult support at each session. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted and they are protected from becoming ill at the setting. They are cared for in a warm, clean environment. Staff members display good hygiene practice and effective systems are in place to prevent the spread of infection. Children actively learn the importance of personal hygiene and to take responsibility for their own personal needs. They are able to access toilets adjoining the play area and staff members encourage them to wash their hands before eating and after toileting. Procedures are planned to take appropriate measures if children are ill. Children's welfare is promoted as staff members can respond to accidents appropriately. Four staff members hold current first aid training and a first aid box is well stocked and easily accessible.

Children's special dietary requirements are identified prior to the commencement of care to ensure that parents' wishes and any religious needs are met and that no child is at risk from a reaction to food. Parents provide children with snacks and the playgroup's 'Welcome Letter' requests that parents provide them with a piece of fruit. This is not reflected in the group's practice although staff members state that they discuss the contents of snacks with parents if they have any concerns. Staff members offer additional snacks such as wholemeal toast. Children generally benefit from a healthy diet and develop an awareness of healthy eating at the setting. However, staff also supply biscuits such as custard creams. This is not recorded in the parents' information and does not provide children with healthy choices. Children are offered water or milk at playgroup although some children bring their own drinks. Drinking water is accessible to the children throughout the session, both indoors and outdoors.

Children develop a positive attitude to exercise as the playgroup operates a free-flow indoor and outdoor play system. Although the outdoor play area is accessed via the car park, the playgroup has procedures in place to ensure that the children access this area safely. Well-resourced, inviting activities are set up and children are able to explore on a pleasant, grassed area in the shade of trees. Children show an awareness of space as they move with confidence indoors and outdoors. They move with control and co-ordination as they run up and down small hills and slide onto mats at the base of a wooden slide. Children learn to throw and to catch, to ride on tricycles and scooters and to manoeuvre their way around obstacle courses. Staff members raise children's awareness of how exercise keeps them healthy. Children learn to warm up their muscles, to listen to their heartbeat after exercise and to make sure that they drink lots of water. Children learn how to manipulate small tools as they explore sand, water and dough and learn to hold pencils and paintbrushes competently during their play. Children can rest according to their individual needs in the indoor and outdoor book corners. Soft mats, beanbags and cushions provide them with a comfortable area in which to curl up.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, generally secure and safe, indoor and outdoor environment. They have sufficient space indoors and plenty of space outdoors for free movement and to spread out activities. There is ample storage space for equipment within the village hall

and in a garage. Children use a wide range of developmentally appropriate, safe and suitable equipment. Children's safety is fostered as the playgroup has carried out a risk assessment of the premises. Staff members carry out an ongoing risk assessment of the setting to reduce hazards and to minimise the risk of accidental injury to children. Outings are risk assessed prior to each event. Generally children are supervised at all times, however part of the outdoor area is not within sight of staff at all times in order to ensure children's security.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they are provided with clear explanations about safety issues at the playgroup. Staff members talk to them about why it is inappropriate to run indoors and to take care when walking on the gravel in the outdoor play area. Children learn about road and fire safety and of how to stay safe in the sun.

Children are adequately safeguarded as staff members are aware of their responsibilities. They have a secure understanding of the procedures to follow if they have child protection concerns and have systems in place to release children into the care of other adults in the event of an emergency.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The playgroup improves outcomes for children under three years. Staff members have a good understanding of the needs of younger children and provide appropriate activities and resources to support their physical and emotional development. Younger children develop independence as they choose activities and play at their own pace. They learn to express their needs and begin to access toilets and the snack bar independently. Children play individually and alongside each other. They interact and respond to each other with support from staff members.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals as staff members have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. All staff members are involved in planning the curriculum and consider the children's next steps in learning at regular meetings. However, this requires development in order to group children appropriately and to evaluate how well each activity meets with the planned learning intentions. Staff members support the children and are attentive to their needs at all times. They are gentle and caring and listen carefully to the children's news and ideas. Children receive lots of praise and as a result they persevere with activities. The setting is organised appropriately to accommodate children's play. The outdoor area is utilised very effectively, providing lots of stimulating opportunities in which children may explore and make progress. Each child is allocated a key person who identifies the next steps in their learning, maintains their individual assessment record in order to provide a picture of their progress and liaises with the child's parent.

Children use language to communicate with staff members and with each other. They interact, take turns and negotiate with language. They enjoy listening to stories and join in with familiar songs and rhymes. Children speak clearly and audibly at group times and during their play. They recreate and imagine roles during their imaginary play. For example, they talk on the telephone to mum and warn other children to 'Swim for your life, it's a shark.' Children link sounds to letters as they use an alphabet puzzle. They recognise their names and labels such as 'water' within the play area. Children have opportunities to practise their emergent writing in an 'office' and as they record events in their diaries. They recognise numbers in puzzles and

count the days of the week, the number of children present and the number of steps needed to reach 'Mr Wolf'. They are able to find three big eggs and three little eggs during a treasure hunt and to sort items into different criteria. Children begin to calculate as they add latecomers to the total of children present and think about one more and one less. They explore their different heights and record this on a chart with stickers. Children recognise squares, circles and triangles and make patterns using pegboards.

Children have opportunities to investigate using different senses as they manipulate dough, print with their hands, taste different foods and smell lemons and fennel. They find out about living things as they observe tadpoles in the playgroup and in the pond of a local school. Children use everyday technology such as tape recorders and operate simple computer programmes. They build and construct large structures and incorporate these within their imaginary play. Children develop a sense of time as they talk about past events and about their forthcoming trip to a farm. They develop their imagination as they recreate experiences and feelings using paint, dough and collage materials. Children throw themselves into imaginary play in the 'office' and are very busy writing, answering the telephone, posting notes on the wall for each other and posting letters. They shriek with glee as the imaginary shark approaches in the sea. Children move to music, join in circle games such as 'The farmer's in his den' and make sounds on different instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy and at ease and feel a sense of belonging at the playgroup. Staff members greet the children affectionately on their arrival. Children hang their outdoor clothing on named coat pegs and settle down in a corner for registration. Familiar activities are set up for them prior to their arrival and their creative work is displayed in the 'Gallery'. Children's individual needs are identified prior to the commencement of care and each child is valued and treated with equal concern. Children become aware of their local area on a visit to school and on an outing to a nearby farm. They are developing positive attitudes to diversity as the playgroup includes images of the different people that make up our society within its resources and celebrates festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Staff members have an awareness of caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They understand responsible behaviour and can distinguish between right and wrong. Children generally behave well. Staff members use positive behaviour management strategies that are appropriate to each child's level of understanding and maturity for most of the session. However, at times noise levels rise within the play areas as children and staff raise their voices to make themselves heard. Staff members do not always manage the situation effectively. Children are able to take turns, to share and to negotiate and co-operate with each other in their play. For example, a group of boys independently initiate a game of 'Mr Wolf'. A discussion takes place as to how many wolves there should be, who will take on these roles and how many steps there should be between the wolves and the starting point.

Children are supported well in the transition between home and the playgroup in order that they are secure and make good progress. Parents are encouraged to visit the playgroup with their child and they are able to settle them each day. Children's ongoing progress is promoted as the staff members work closely with parents and provide opportunities at the beginning and end of each day to share information regarding the children. A notice board displays the playgroup's policies and information about the setting for parents. The playgroup has a strong

partnership with parents as they form the management committee and accept roles on a parent rota. Their satisfaction is reflected in their positive feedback.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning, however, they are provided with little information about the Foundation Stage. Recently, they have been invited to access and contribute to their child's assessment record but some parents are not aware of this opportunity. Although observations of each child's progress are recorded within their assessment records, the playgroup does not gather information about children's starting points from parents. As a result, parents and staff members do not work together to build on what children know from the outset and to provide a clear picture of their progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the care of an appropriately vetted and experienced staff. They are never left alone with anyone who is not vetted. The playgroup is managed by a conscientious committee of parents who have evaluated the playgroup's strengths and weaknesses in conjunction with the early years support teacher and staff members. Systems are in place for the recruitment of staff and an induction programme is currently being devised. However, staff members do not give a high priority at all times to children's supervision in one section of the outdoor area. As a result, children's security could be put at risk. Regular appraisals identify staff training needs and ensure the ongoing suitability of staff. Children's progress is enhanced as staff members are committed to improvement. Training plans are in place for several members to gain further childcare qualifications in order to enhance their confidence and their practice.

The playgroup organises the setting effectively to accommodate children's play. Children are able to move around easily and safely and to access equipment in a well-prepared environment. Overall children's needs are met. Documentation to promote the welfare and care of the children is well organised and stored securely to ensure confidentiality.

Leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. Children receive a balanced curriculum that covers the six areas of learning. The supervisors have identified gaps within their planning and assessment with the early years support teacher and alternative systems are being considered in order to promote each child's learning more effectively.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the playgroup was asked to improve staff deployment at the end of each session. Systems are in place for more staff members to support the children at this time. In addition, the playgroup was asked to improve the use of the assessment process to plan for the next steps in each child's development. At the same time, they were asked to provide opportunities for children to explore musical instruments and to develop their physical skills within every day activities. Key persons identify the next steps required within each child's learning and discuss these at regular meetings to inform future planning. The exploration of musical instruments and the development of physical skills are incorporated within children's play.

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.

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):

- review the playgroup's policy on diet in order to reflect current practice and to provide children with healthy options
- re-assess the risks to children in the outdoor area and take action to minimise these
- develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour with regard to noise levels.

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):

- plan for the differentiation in children's learning and evaluate the success of activities in order to inform future planning
- provide parents with information about the Foundation Stage and identify their child's starting points with them.

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