

Building Blocks Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402923
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Inspector	Linda Close
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Registered person	Building Blocks Child Care 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?

Building Blocks Day Nursery is one of three nurseries. It opened in 2001 and is located in premises which have been effectively purpose built. The nursery is located close to Dundonald Park, in the Wimbledon area of southwest London. The local authority is Merton. A maximum of 78 children under five years of age may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open every weekday from 07:30 to 18:30 throughout the year, closing only for bank holidays and for one week between Christmas and New Year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. A small number of older siblings come to the setting at the beginning of the day before travelling to school. These older children also meet at this setting before going to a sister setting in the nursery mini-bus for holiday playscheme activities during school holidays.

There are currently 123 children aged from two to under five years of age on roll. There are 48 children who are three or four years old and in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with identified learning difficulties and a small number of children who are learning English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 32 members of staff and more than half of them hold relevant qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3. The majority of the unqualified members of staff are actively working towards appropriate qualifications in childcare and early years education. There are four visiting specialist teachers who come to the nursery to lead sporting activities and lessons in French, Spanish, ballet, drama and music. Children visit local swimming pools each week where they learn to swim with qualified swimming teachers.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is safeguarded in the setting because good forward planning ensures that first aiders who have relevant training are on the premises at all times. Medication is only given with the written permission of parents and appropriate records are kept. Nappies are changed according to a routine, which staff know well and they are changed at other times according to children's individual needs. This means that the children are kept clean, dry and comfortable throughout the day. Children do not attend the nursery if they are unwell which helps to prevent the unnecessary spread of infection. Adults do not wear outdoor shoes in the rooms for the youngest children, although sometimes toddlers wear outdoor shoes, which is a little inconsistent.

Very good standards of hygiene are maintained for the children in all matters connected with food and drink. Healthy food is freshly prepared on the premises in a clean, orderly kitchen and the cook has attended food hygiene training. Children thoroughly enjoy their food and many eat second helpings with relish. Their meals are carefully selected to be nutritionally balanced, tasty and varied. The nursery provides a vegetarian menu daily and food is thoughtfully prepared for children who need a special diet. Children have ready access to fresh drinking water throughout the day. Staff maintain good standards of hygiene at meals times by wearing hairnets for serving food and by ensuring that children wash their hands before and after meals and after messy play or using the toilet. Children have a freshly laundered damp facecloth for their hands and faces and older children wash their own hands with supervision. Children are encouraged to clean their teeth after meals which teaches them good dental hygiene.

Children go to local swimming pools every week during school term times to gain confidence in water and to learn to swim. They enjoy energetic play in the outdoor area at the nursery. They pedal and steer wheeled toys with confidence and growing skill. Children make good use of the tunnel and the climbing frame and they are gaining competence in climbing and scrambling. Children often visit the park nearby to run about in the fresh air and to take part in sports and games. Specialist teachers visit the setting weekly to lead groups of children in ballet and sports.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a secure building where strangers cannot gain access. The children's rooms are light and attractively decorated. All playrooms and toilet areas are kept clean and fresh throughout the day by conscientious staff who work well as a team. They have well defined roles and responsibilities and all staff take turns with routine tasks. The outdoor area is securely fenced to keep children safe. New impact absorbing floor covering outside contributes to

children's safety when they are using the climbing apparatus. The new artificial grass laid under the covered section of the outdoor play area is bright and clean for the children to play on.

The furniture in all rooms is the correct height for children to sit, eat and play in comfort. Children in every group have easy access to a very good range of toys and resources that are carefully chosen to meet their needs. Children's ICT resources are of good quality and they are set out in an attractive pod area on the ground floor where they make good use of them.

Staff conduct risk assessments throughout the building which effectively promotes children's safety in most respects, although two safety issues have not been noted. A low gate between two areas of the room for the youngest children is a little hazardous. It is not secured when open and children sometimes play at swinging it back and forth, which occasionally causes other children to lose their balance. Parents use a key fob when they enter the building which helps to keep the building secure and causes the office computer to record their child's arrival for printing out at 09:30 each day. Parents and children who arrive after this time sign a book in the reception area. Staff also maintain a handwritten register, but in the baby room on the first floor this is not always updated promptly when children arrive. This means that in the event of a fire, or other emergency evacuation, staff are not completely sure of the numbers of children in their group, which risks unnecessary delay.

Children are safeguarded in relation to child protection issues. The child protection officer has attended recent training and she is well informed. She has shared her learning with the staff team so that they know what indicators to look out for. The child protection officer has also ensured that the staff know they must share any concerns with her without delay. She has prepared appropriate forms to be kept in each room for easy access and to serve as a reminder for the staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff in all rooms plan ahead to provide all of the children with interesting activities and experiences. Children's individual needs are carefully considered when decisions are made about moving on to the next group in the nursery. They move when staff and parents judge that they are ready to do so and not according to their date of birth. Staff in all rooms are very attentive to the children in their care. They respond to the sounds and actions of the youngest babies very well. They help the toddlers to manage their own feelings, showing calmness and understanding. The children in the baby and toddler rooms enjoy their play. They handle and explore wet and dry materials including flour, pasta, cereals, water and sand. Children enjoy spending time sharing books with the staff and on their own in comfortable, well stocked reading areas in each room. Children are surrounded by resources that appeal to their senses. Story time is a time for laughter and enjoyment. They sit together and listen very well. 'Top toddlers' is a very happy room where children are making good progress in language development and in developing good relationships with others. The children are fully involved in matching games, role play and other purposeful play activities and the hardworking staff relate very well to the children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are very responsive to their teachers and they show an interest in visitors. Children ask questions confidently and they explain their drawings and models in great detail. The staff judge children's attention span well. They ensure

that activities are well timed so that children can maintain their interest throughout. Resources are well prepared so that children do not have to waste any time waiting for activities to begin. They are content to take turns in games of fishing with magnets and they listen politely when other children are relating their news. Children are given good emotional support in relation to preparing for their move to primary schools. They talk with staff about their new schools and what they will do when they go there. The children are busy and very well behaved.

The children are making good progress with their oral communication skills. They express themselves fluently and with a growing vocabulary. Staff quickly identify any difficulties that children may be experiencing with speech or hearing and they work closely with parents and therapists to help the children make progress. Children show a love of books. They often visit the reading areas and they handle the books correctly. They hold the books the right way up and turn the pages in order, showing that they know how books work. Children have easy access to a good range of mark making materials in several different areas of their rooms. They enjoy drawing and some children label their own work with their names. However, there are few examples of their mark making or emergent writing on display to show them that their first attempts at writing are valued. Staff focus very well on the development of children's spoken language. However, there is rather less emphasis on helping children to make early steps in letter recognition, particularly for those children who are more able or more mature.

Past activity plans and children's records show that they learn all about shape, length, size and capacity.

They learn to count and calculate through well planned play and counting in daily routines. Children use information and communication technology (ICT) resources to play games that help them to count accurately and to recognise shapes. Staff seize learning opportunities as they arise in daily routines. They help the children to apply their early mathematical skills when selecting the correct number of objects for a group of children to have one each.

Children benefit from going on a very worthwhile range of outings in the local area and further afield. They have visited museums in London and enjoyed fun and games with fire officers at the local fire station. They make particularly good use of the local park for nature walks, bark rubbing expeditions and hunting for insects. Children learn about life in other parts of the world through special events when they dress-up and taste different foods. These stimulating activities help to expand children's knowledge of the world outside the nursery. They show growing confidence in the way they use computers and tape recorders. Children record their own voices and laugh out loud when they play the tape back and listen to themselves.

Children are gaining control over their hands. They are developing good cutting skills and they use construction toys every day, which helps to increase their dexterity. They put together puzzles with growing competence. The development of children's creativity is a strong aspect of the nursery's provision. Pictures and collages are children's own work and they are beautifully displayed all around their classrooms. Staff have made the learning environment very colourful and welcoming.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Equality of access and opportunity is very actively promoted in the setting. Staff go to great lengths to find out about each child and their individual needs. Valuable home visits are arranged before children join the nursery, which helps the parents, the staff and the children to get to

know one another. A settling-in procedure is tailor made for every child and their parents are warmly welcomed into the playrooms. Parents spend varying lengths of time with their children in the playrooms, which enables them to gain confidence in the staff. They can see for themselves that the children are happy and secure before they leave the children in the nursery. Children make posters at home with their parents, which they bring to the nursery to display in their playroom. This gives each child a special link with their home and family. Health issues and dietary needs are discussed at length and staff make sure that every adult is aware of each child's requirements.

Children and adults who have disabilities or learning difficulties are assured of a very warm welcome in the nursery. Staff provide excellent support for them based on information gained from parents and specialists. An individual education plan is devised for the children by all of the adults involved. Meetings are held at regular intervals to assess progress and to agree new targets for the children. All staff working with the children are confident in their knowledge and understanding of targets and next steps, which ensures that the children are supported throughout the day. The nursery has developed strong links with special needs support staff who work with the local authority. These staff give good advice to the staff at the setting, which in turn benefits the children.

Staff successfully promote good behaviour in the nursery. They are calm, firm and very effective. Staff explain what is right and what is wrong in terms that the children understand. Older children have a short 'time out' if they are upset and need to calm down. Staff base their work with the children on a positive approach, which includes praise and reward for children when they are helpful. They learn to gain attention for good reasons rather than for unwelcome behaviour. Staff work very well with parents if children experience any behavioural difficulties. They find out if there are any events at home that may have upset the children so that their work with the children is fully informed. The children in all rooms get along very well with each other. They are polite and very well behaved and they are learning to consider the needs and feelings of others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The provider has a clear understanding that the relationship between the nursery and the parents and carers of each child is crucial to their wellbeing, development and progress. From the moment that parents take up a place for their child they are assured of a two-way flow of information between the setting and themselves. A webcam has been installed in each playroom which enables parents to look in on their children throughout the day from their own home computers or at their place of work. The provider seeks parental views of the setting twice a year via an appraisal form, on which they can give their ideas about what they would like to see in the nursery. The provider then devises an action plan based on what parents say. She organises events in the nursery for parents to learn about activities in the setting and to find out about various types of school where the children can go next. Social events organised by the parents and teachers association are very popular. Parents help to select extra-curricular activities such as French and Spanish lessons and these have been added to the provision for the children. Parents are very well informed about their child's progress and they are empowered to assist their children in their learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

All members of staff are checked for their suitability to work with children at the time of their employment. The nursery recruitment programme is thorough. References are taken up and a

probationary period is agreed. The process of induction is well planned to assist new staff in gaining familiarity with the day-to-day running of the nursery. As soon as they join the setting staff learn the policies and procedures that tell them the most important aspects of caring for the children well and keeping them safe. They gain further information about working in this setting in succeeding months. Well documented appraisals are carried out with all members of staff on a regular basis. This work helps staff to identify areas of strength in their work and at the same time helps them to select suitable training needs. The manager observes in each room and she sometimes works beside the staff in the playrooms to see at first hand that good standards are maintained for the children.

The provider and manager plan staffing rotas carefully to ensure that there are sufficient staff working with the children every day. They have effective systems in place to cover staff holidays or unforeseen staff absences. Medication and accident records are maintained correctly. Information about children's names, addresses and dates of birth, as well as other personal information, is kept in locked filing cabinets in the office to ensure confidentiality. Attendance records are maintained well in most respects and regularly conducted risk assessments identify most hazards.

Leadership and management in relation to Nursery Education is good. A qualified teacher is employed to lead the staff in planning and providing a balanced range of activities, which promote all six areas of learning well in most respects. Planning systems and content are constantly reviewed and improved to match current developments in early years education. Plans are clearly differentiated with colour coding to make them easy to follow. The groups of three and four-year-old children are led by a committed team of staff who are able to seize learning opportunities as they arise throughout the day. The provider is dedicated to promoting an inclusive environment in which every child matters. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

One recommendation for improvement was made at the time of the last care inspection. The provider agreed to make sure that parents sign children's medication records. Records are now signed, which promotes children's health and safety.

Following the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to consolidate systems for assessing children's progress, in order to identify their next steps in learning. Documents and records are now in place which show children's achievements and staff make use of observation notes to identify the next steps in children's learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required either 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 that 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):

- ensure that the attendance register kept in the room shared by babies and toddlers is updated as soon as each child arrives or leaves
- ensure that the gate dividing two areas of the playroom for babies and toddlers does not pose a hazard to children

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):

- place greater emphasis on the development of children's emerging literacy skills with particular reference to the older and more mature children in the group.

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