



## **Buffer Bear Nursery**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	319135
<b>Inspection date</b>	09 November 2005
<b>Inspector</b>	Kathleen Snowdon
<b>Setting Address</b>	1 Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE1 5DP
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<b>Registered person</b>	Buffer Bear Childcare Ltd
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Buffer Bear Nursery was registered in 1993. It provides flexible care and education for children aged from 3 months to under 5 years. The children who attend live in the immediate and surrounding areas of Newcastle. The nursery is one of a national chain of nurseries.

The nursery is within a building adjoining the site of the central railway station in Newcastle and was formerly owned by the railway company. The nursery is on the

first floor and consists of four main play rooms in which children are accommodated according to their age and developmental stage. There are several more rooms within the building which are used for a variety of purposes. There is an enclosed, outdoor play area behind the nursery building which children reach by a short, supervised walk.

The nursery operates throughout the year from 07.30 to 18.00 Monday to Friday. There are currently 86 children on roll, 15 of whom receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 20 members of staff including the manager and deputy. Cleaning and catering staff are also employed to work on the premises. All childcare staff are appropriately qualified. The manager and deputy are supernumerary but all the other childcare staff work directly with the children. The nursery receives advice, support and training from its own company head office as well as from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

High priority is given to the children's health. Visitors to the baby room are asked to remove or wear covers over their shoes and there are highly appropriate arrangements in place to deal with children who are ill. The interesting items in the "treasure baskets" that the babies explore and scrutinise, pegs, funnels and spoons, for example, are sterilised at the end of each day. The children wash their hands before eating meals and after using the toilet and are becoming increasingly aware of the reason they do so. Effective procedures such as these help to minimise the risk of infection and common illnesses and contribute to the overall good standard of hygiene within the nursery environment.

The children are well nourished through the very good range of delicious, well balanced and appetising meals and snacks that they eat while they are in the nursery. After consultation with the chef and his assistant, the children and the nursery staff often go to the local market to buy the produce they eat. The children discuss where it came from, how it helps them to grow, how the chef will prepare it and then see and taste it at meal and snack times. This gives the children a good understanding of the food chain and teaches them to appreciate what is involved in preparing the dishes they eat. The children are encouraged to try out different tastes and textures, such as dragon fruit and pineapple in well-planned activities such as "tasting sessions". These broaden the children's experience of food and promote a healthy approach to eating.

After lunch, the older children brush their teeth to promote good dental hygiene and to encourage them to develop good habits. Good forward planning by the nursery staff ensures that water jugs are easily accessible to the children throughout the nursery session. Consequently, older children help themselves to water whenever they are thirsty to promote independence and self-help skills. The younger children

are given regular drinks by the staff to ensure their comfort and wellbeing.

The children are learning that exercise is beneficial to their good health when they take part in the many well-planned activities available to them. Lively and highly enjoyable dance sessions, for example, led by a qualified dance teacher, encourage the children to use a range of movements, such as standing on tip-toes, stretching and swaying. They move around at different speeds and change direction, sometimes walking backwards, taking care not to collide with others. This helps the children to develop good co-ordination and self-control and teaches them to respect the personal space of others. Effective teaching encourages the children to concentrate on how they feel after these sessions to help the children to understand the effect of exercise on their bodies. The babies and the very young children in the nursery have ample floor space in which to crawl, roll and shuffle to get from one place to another. They are supported by skilled staff who encourage them to try out new skills, such as standing and walking, to help them to make steady progress in their physical development.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The children are learning effective ways to stay safe through the useful guidance that they receive from staff. For example, the children know that they must not run while they are in the setting. Instead, they walk in order to move from one area to another. This helps the children to understand that sensible behaviour helps them and others to stay safe. The children are learning ways to stay safe while outside, when they talk about road safety, for example. Frequent participation in fire drills, with follow-up explanations from staff, helps the children to learn how to stay safe even in emergencies, and teaches them the importance of listening to instructions to achieve a common goal. The children are well protected through routine checks. For example, staff carry out daily risk assessments inside and outside of the nursery to establish that the children will be safe while they play there.

The children's risk of injury is minimised in the well-organised setting, which has good safety and security precautions in place; the secure external door, for example, prevents unsupervised exit from and unauthorised entry to the nursery. The very well defined area within the baby room, where non-mobile children are placed, ensures their safety while allowing the mobile children in the room to move around unhindered. The children are encouraged to tidy up at set times during the session and they do so happily. This helps them to understand that they can contribute to the safety of their environment. The children's accidents are recorded by staff to ensure that their parents are made aware of the mishap. This enables parents to take further action should they need to. All staff hold current first aid certificates which ensures that the children receive appropriate treatment in the immediate aftermath of an accident. The children's welfare is further protected by clear and detailed child protection procedures, of which staff have a good understanding.

Children choose from an interesting range of very good quality resources that are judiciously placed to allow them safe and independent access. They play with toys

and equipment which are very well maintained through routine checking by staff for breakages and other potential problems. Giving the children easy access to clean and well-maintained equipment minimises the risk posed to them from having to reach too far for items of interest and from minor injuries caused by damaged toys. Staff ensure that the children are safely and securely strapped in to low chairs and buggies. This keeps the children safe during meal times and outings.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The children enter nursery happily and enthusiastically and settle quickly to self-chosen tasks. They have easy access to a very good range of stimulating and good quality resources which help them to make sound progress in all areas of their development. The well organised nursery environment makes this possible and encourages the children to make independent choices. This helps the children's play to evolve naturally, enabling them to learn and experience things at their own rate, such as when the very youngest children explore "treasure baskets" and scrutinise the contents with wonder.

Staff plan exciting activities, such as hand and foot painting, which is a favourite with the very young children. These activities are based on the children's individual needs, preferences and abilities. During activities, the children experience a range of sensations as they paint and print, often using edible "paint" such as custard. This stimulates their senses and provide them with opportunities to vocalise and gesture. Highly skilled and enthusiastic staff encourage the children to take the next step and help them to see ways to extend their play, to help the children to grow in confidence and to keep them engaged. Children and staff form very good relationships with each other. Staff are focused completely on the children who are happy, confident and secure as a result. Efficient staff deployment means that staff are on hand to reassure the youngest children to ensure that they feel safe and secure.

The children have ample opportunity to represent and experiment, using a very good range of media, such as paint, play dough and clay. This introduces them to the concepts of colour, texture, form and balance. They play with gusto in the stimulating "outdoors" room and thoroughly enjoy the planned activities that take place there, dance sessions, for example. Here, the children demonstrate clearly how well their sense of humour is developing. For example, they laugh heartily when they and others make mistakes, such as making a wrong move during a Scottish dance. Opportunities like these give the children plenty of scope in which to enjoy themselves and have fun. Elsewhere in the nursery, the children play with water and sand with great enthusiasm. They pour, sieve, weigh and balance using a range of items, such as sieves and scales, with growing skill and dexterity. This introduces the children to basic mathematical concepts and helps to improve their hand-eye co-ordination.

Nursery Education.

The children are highly motivated and keen to take part in the very interesting range of activities available to them. This enables them to spend their time in the nursery in

a productive and enjoyable way. For example, they mix flour, food colouring and water to make play dough that they squash, roll, knead and cut. This teaches them about texture and consistency. There are ample opportunities for the children to use pens, pencils, paintbrushes, computers and other items that encourage the development of good hand-eye co-ordination and fine motor skills. The children use these tools with growing competence, spontaneously and in planned activities, such as when they practice writing in their "news books" and draw pictures with charcoal.

The children handle books competently and with respect. They turn the pages one by one, for example, and look at illustrations with interest and amusement. The children love story time. They listen attentively to favourites like "The Big Hungry Bear" and become engrossed in the progress and antics of the characters, asking relevant questions and making insightful observations. This helps the children to understand that reading is fun, inspiring, enjoyable and entertaining.

Frequent outings to fascinating places in the local and surrounding communities build on the children's interest in the world in which they live. The children visit museums, parks, local markets and restaurants and see what happens there. In the restaurant, for example, the children work with the chefs to make their own pizzas. This gives the children an insight in to what happens behind the scenes in these places and extends their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. To supplement this, the children talk to each other and to staff about cultures in this country and others. They celebrate festivals such as Yom Kippur, Divali and Easter. In addition, the very good range of resources available to the children, books and dressing up clothes for instance, show positive pictures and images of culture, disability, gender and ethnicity, which helps the children to form positive views of diversity. The children take delight in French lessons which introduce them to the basics of a foreign language and encourages them to experiment with pronunciation.

The children sing with gusto as a group and softly, to themselves, often when busy with other activities. A wide range of musical instruments is readily available to them to give them the chance to appreciate a variety of sounds. The children construct models with growing dexterity and collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal, such as when they play with building blocks to build a "castle" for example. This teaches the children that working in harmony with others gets good results and gives them the opportunity to use mathematical language correctly, when they describe the size and shape of their project, for example. Some of the children count accurately and confidently up to 10, such as when they carry out a head count of their peers to establish how many beakers will be required at snack time. Opportunities like this give children the chance to use mathematics in a practical situations.

Overall, the children make good progress towards the early learning goals given their capability and starting points.

The quality of teaching is good so the children make good progress. It motivates the children who are eager to learn new ideas and skills. The development of the children's personal and social skills permeates the entire curriculum and underpins the work of the whole nursery. Staff build very secure relationships with the children and understand their needs and preferences. The staff have high expectations of the children and use consistent, sensitive and effective methods to manage their

behaviour, which is very good. Staff promote good manners and are good role models to the children. They encourage the children to help others, when they tidy up, for example, and provide good opportunities for the children to develop positive personal qualities, such as consideration. The children observe the life cycle of plants and shrubs that they have planted in the outdoor area but they have limited opportunities to care and look after living creatures, though there is a goldfish in a neighbouring room.

The staff make regular observations and use these when planning interesting and stimulating activities which offer sufficient challenge to children of varying abilities. Staff use a range of teaching methods to keep the children interested and engaged. Good staff deployment ensures that the children receive help, support and guidance when it is needed. Staff are very enthusiastic about their work and show a strong awareness of how children learn. They monitor the quality of their teaching when they meet to discuss issues and strive to improve their practice by attending relevant training courses and seeking the views of parents. Very well defined play areas encourage the children to focus fully on their chosen tasks. The staff ensure that the children's lovely art work is displayed on the walls which helps the children to feel valued and gives them a sense of pride. Resources are used well and are organised in a way that gives the children easy access to them. This directs the children towards independent learning.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children's behaviour is very good. Children learn that negative behaviour brings no reward through the effective behaviour management techniques used by the highly skilled staff. Staff explain to the children why certain actions, such as squabbling, are unacceptable. This sets the scene for the development of the children's understanding of right from wrong. Staff are very quick to praise the children when they act positively, such as when they help to set the tables before lunch. This gives a huge boost to the children's self-esteem and teaches them that helping others is rewarding and important. On "toy days" the children are encouraged to bring a toy from home to show to and share with other children. Excellent opportunities like these help the children to develop positive personal qualities, such as unselfishness and kindness. Strategies such as this help to ensure that the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately. Good reminders from staff encourage the children to practice good manners, which teaches them effective ways of behaving acceptably around others.

A very good range of resources, including books, dressing up clothes and bright wall posters, is readily available to the children. These encourage the children to form positive views of culture, ethnicity, disability and gender. Many of the resources, some music cassettes for example, reflect the cultural background of some of the children who attend, which helps them to develop a pride in their heritage. The children watch the world go by when they enjoy the excellent views of the city from the nursery windows. This stimulates lively conversation with other children and adults and fosters a strong sense of community and belonging.

Partnership with parents is very good. Very good quality information is given to parents before the children start nursery. This includes details about opening times, nursery routines and policies and procedures to ensure that parents are as fully informed as possible. Parents are welcome to make suggestions about how their child is looked after and to share their first-hand knowledge of their child so that nursery staff can continue any good practice initiated at home. Parents and extended family participate with enthusiasm in various aspects of nursery life. They collect items of interest, such as pine cones and pegs, for instance, for nursery staff to include in the treasure baskets which the babies and youngest children enjoy exploring. One parent performed an expert Elvis Presley impersonation recently to entertain the children and the staff, and a grandmother visits regularly to play the piano as the children sing along.

Very good means of communication, such as information sheets, provide parents with important information about significant things that their child has experienced during their time at the setting; nappy changes and sleeping times, for instance. As well as this, a dedicated parents' notice board displays helpful leaflets related to child care as well as information about forthcoming events. A very comfortable training room in the building enables parents to take part in useful courses, such as first-aid. Parents have very positive views about the staff. They find them friendly, approachable, very supportive and highly skilled. They particularly value the effective key worker system, the range and frequency of outings that the children take part in and the way that the children learn about other cultures and countries.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The children's needs are met well through the nursery staff's experience and their very good knowledge of child development. This is consolidated by frequent attendance at relevant training courses, such as the Jabadeo course which staff participated in recently to help them to reflect on how very young children perceive the world. This ensures that staff keep abreast of current issues and trends in childcare. Child protection training should be updated to build on the staff's existing knowledge to help them to further protect the children that they care for.

A very good range of delicious, well balanced and appetising meals and snacks are prepared for the children while they are in the nursery. These are prepared on site by skilled and appropriately qualified staff who collaborate with dieticians from a local hospital to determine the nutritional value of the food. Excellent links with other organisations within the local community have resulted in exciting visits from the police and fire departments and a professional story teller. Staff seize opportunities to make the children's time at nursery as rewarding as possible, such as persuading a construction worker involved in the recent nursery extension to show the children what a real-life "Bob the builder" does.

Staff have a sound understanding of child development and how children learn. Staff who work with the youngest age groups make very good use of the Birth to three matters framework. Similarly, staff working with children who are 3-years-old and



over have sound knowledge of the foundation stage. The key worker system works effectively throughout the nursery. It ensures that staff provide for the children's individual needs and preferences to help them to develop well in all areas and to make sound progress towards the early learning goals.

Leadership and management is good. It underpins the effectiveness of the nursery and is demonstrated in the regularity of staff meetings and staff appraisals. These opportunities offer staff the chance to discuss and resolve issues concerning individual children and any other business which affects and influences their practice. A thorough and effective induction programme ensures that new staff become familiar with, and are enabled to put into practice, the effective written policies that are in place.

The nursery is well lit, well ventilated and thoughtfully furnished to ensure the comfort and relaxation of both the children and the staff. Staff are effectively deployed in the stimulating nursery environment which has very well defined play areas. This enables the staff to work directly with the children most of the time to ensure that the children remain well supported in their chosen activity. Children access resources easily to direct them towards independent learning. The well-balanced daily routine, with a good mix of quiet and busy times, child-initiated and adult-directed activities, helps to ensure that children of all abilities are sufficiently challenged.

Essential documentation is kept securely on site. It is highly organised and monitored effectively, to preserve confidentiality and to ensure that information remains accurate and up-to-date. The staff work well as a team and are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. This ensures that the nursery runs smoothly and efficiently on a day-to-day basis and produces a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.

Overall, the provision meets very well the needs of the children who attend.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection the nursery has made good improvements. Equipment is kept in good condition through the routine checks and cleaning that the conscientious staff carry out. The range of toys throughout the nursery is very good. It contains effective items such as: books, wall posters, role play props and small world equipment which promote positive images of all aspects of diversity. Child protection procedures are clear, relevant and effective in helping to protect the children who attend the nursery.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There are no complaints to report. 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**

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):

- ensure that staff receive regular training in child protection to consolidate and increase their knowledge and awareness of relevant issues

##### **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):

- increase opportunities for the children to care and look after living creatures

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)