



## **Bestfriends Childcare Centre Ltd**

Inspection report for early years provision

**Unique Reference Number** EY300900  
**Inspection date** 31 October 2005  
**Inspector** Gail Groves

**Setting Address** London Colney Village Club, St. Annes Road, London Colney,  
St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL2 1NX  
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**E-mail**  
**Registered person** Bestfriends Childcare Centre 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](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?

Best Friends Childcare Centre opened in 2005 and operates from a purpose-built building. It is situated in London Colney, near St Albans, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 24 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 28 children from six months to four years on roll. Of these, five

children receive funding for nursery education. Children mostly come from the local area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs six staff. Three of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures ensure children are mostly protected from infection. Hygiene procedures when using musical instruments which are played in the mouth need to be reviewed. Children and staff were observed to share them without cleaning the mouthpiece after each use and children are therefore open to cross infection. Nappy changing routines are well planned and consistently carried out to protect children and staff ensure the environment is very clean and well maintained. Children understand simple, good health and hygiene practices such as washing their hands before and after eating and after using the toilet and they learn to clean their teeth after lunch. Children are well nourished and are offered an imaginatively planned, varied and interesting diet which encourages them to eat healthily and to widen their tastes. Staff work well with parents to meet children's dietary needs.

Children have regular opportunities to enjoy physical activity and fresh air in the outside play area and go on outings to the local park to play on the slide, climbing frame and swings or to feed the ducks. This helps to develop their physical skills and to encourage a healthy, active lifestyle. Children learn about healthy living through planned topics, discussions and daily routines. For example, they talk about food and what is good for them to eat, they learn the importance of wearing sun hats and using sun screen in sunny weather and they use a "bug machine" borrowed from the Environmental Health Department to show how germs can be left on their hands even after they think they have washed them well. Children rest and sleep according to their needs and quiet times are built into the daily routine to prevent them becoming overtired and fractious. Babies feeding and sleeping routines are carefully met through discussions with their parents and daily charts are kept to inform parents of what they have eaten, of how many dirty nappies they have had and for how long they have slept. Staff check all sleeping children regularly.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment where they can move around independently and safely. Daily safety checks ensure any risks are identified and minimised before children arrive and regular, unannounced fire drills are carried out to enable all children and staff to

practise what they need to do in an emergency. A discussion with the staff after these drills reinforces children's understanding still further. Safety rules, such as no running within the nursery are clearly understood by the children and staff are careful to explain why children should not do something considered dangerous. When they go on outings they learn road safety and discuss issues such as not talking to strangers and finding a policeman if they become lost. This helps them begin to learn to keep themselves safe. Appropriate procedures, such as using reins for younger children and having a high staff to child ratio when going for walks also keep them safe.

Children have access to a wide range of age appropriate, good quality, stimulating play resources. They use suitable and safe equipment which is well maintained, checked regularly and replaced as necessary. The provision for physical play in the outside play area is in the process of being improved and the safety issues involved in the use of large scale climbing equipment is being given careful consideration. Children are well protected because staff understand their role in Child Protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. All the staff are vetted and most have the relevant experience, knowledge and skills to keep children safe. For example, all staff hold Basic Food Hygiene certificates and most have current first aid certificates and have attended training in child protection.

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

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem because they are carefully supported by staff who know them well and who understand their needs. They have good social skills and interact and communicate readily both with each other and with adults. They ask questions to seek information and extend their learning. For example, a child making a model of a star asks a member of staff if stars have six points. They show good levels of concentration and quickly become involved and interested in activities that provide them with challenges which extend their thinking and learning. For example, as part of a topic about life under the sea they play with model sea creatures and talk with staff about their similarities and differences. Babies play with bricks, rattles and musical toys to develop their hand and eye coordination and to extend their understanding of the world around them. Staff constantly interact with all the children and help to develop their play and learning still further through their questions and discussions. They praise and recognise children's efforts, for example, by displaying their playdough models, and this helps to develop positive attitudes to learning.

Play activities for older children are carefully prepared and they spend a lot of time in small and large groups enjoying adult lead activities. However, there are limited opportunities for them to use their initiative to select activities and resources for themselves and to develop their own free play choices. This means that they are not able to fully develop their independence or to use their play to experiment with and consolidate the new skills they are learning.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff working with funded children are experienced in working with the Foundation Stage and have high expectations of all children. They use varied teaching methods, for both three and four year olds, which include effective interaction in children's play to give clear explanations and to offer challenging questions. They manage children well and make effective use of time and resources because they work directly with the children for much of the time. Planning is topic based and clearly indicates that activities in each of the six areas of learning are provided each day. The learning intentions of these activities and how they link to the early learning goals and stepping stones are not always clear however. This means that teaching could sometimes be less focused and children's learning could be restricted. Staff observe children and record their progress but these assessments are not used to sufficiently guide and inform planning. This restricts the effectiveness of staff in helping children to move to the next stage in their learning.

Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. They concentrate well and are interested in group activities such as model making, drawing and construction and are able to sit quietly and to listen attentively to a story. They confidently offer comments and share information about what they have been doing at the week-end during circle time and work together to complete a jigsaw, asking each other to help find the missing pieces in a drawer. Their behaviour is good and they show an awareness of the needs of others. For example, they wait patiently for their turn to wash their hands at the sink. Their self-care is developing and with support from staff and they are learning to fasten their coats when they go outside to play. Sometimes opportunities to develop independence at snack time are missed. Children enjoy an environment rich in print where they are beginning to learn that writing carries meaning, for example on labels used for displays or on boxes of resources. They are encouraged to learn to write their name and to begin to recognise the initial sound of some words. Opportunities for mark making are included in creative activities such as drawing but there are limited chances available within free play.

Children's mathematical understanding is generally well developed. They count and use numbers readily and confidently and can recognise many shapes and relate them to items in their environment. They recognise patterns and are beginning to use language to describe position and size. Children join in enthusiastically with number songs and learn to count down as well as up. However, opportunities to use numbers within normal routines to calculate and problem solve, for example when ensuring that there enough snack bowls and cups for everyone, are underdeveloped. Children explore and investigate their environment through activities such as growing herbs and cress. They look at and chart the weather every day and experiment with ideas such as floating and sinking or freezing and melting. They have opportunities to think about other cultures and beliefs by learning about festivals such as Divali, Chinese New Year and Hanukah and develop understanding of the wider community through trips to the local library, the park and planned topics such as "People Who Help Us".

Children enjoy singing and music making on a regular basis, both with the staff and with a professional singer who comes to the nursery to lead music and movement sessions for all the children. They explore a wide variety of creative painting activities including fabric printing, marble rolling and printing with fruit but do not have many

chances to model on a large scale and experiment with joining and connecting. Imaginative role play is built into activities such as acting out the story of Goldilocks, pretending to go on an outing on a bus and the use of the home corner equipment. Children have a good sense of space and move confidently and with control inside and outside. They climb, run, jump, hop, throw and catch and move forward, backwards and sideways with increasing skill and use tools such as scissors, pencils, paintbrushes, cutters and rolling pins dexterously. However, activities for outside play are not included on the written plans which means that some aspects of physical development may not be practised regularly.

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

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Older children work harmoniously with others, sharing and taking turns with resources and babies are encouraged to play alongside each other with support from the staff. Children develop self-esteem and respect for others because staff discuss behavioural issues with them as they arise, praising appropriate behaviour and valuing and encouraging politeness. Children make choices and take decisions. They choose which story the group will read and which song they will sing and decide when they have eaten enough lunch. They also have some chances to select activities and resources. Children are learning to become aware of their own needs and the needs of others. Older children are encouraged to help the younger children at meal times. They take turns to be the helper and carefully support young children to feed themselves by helping them to put food onto their spoons. They are aware that after lunch some children have a sleep and they play quietly so as not to disturb them. Carefully planned topics ensure children become aware of the beliefs of others and the diversity within society is reflected well in the displays and resources provided by the nursery.

Children are confident and eager to participate in activities. They talk about home and what they have been doing and staff are interested and listen carefully to them. The nursery has recently started a scheme whereby children take it in turns to take a teddy bear home at week-ends and to write about his adventures with them in a diary. Parents are closely involved with this and many have included photographs and memorabilia, such as tickets, in the diary. Consequently, links between home and nursery are developed and children feel a sense of belonging.

The partnership with parents is good. Staff welcome parents into the setting and have a structured settling in policy and routine for new children. They ask parents about their child's routines and individual needs and are careful to ensure that they provide appropriate support so that these are met. Parents receive copies of all the group's policies and procedures and are kept updated of any changes. A recent parent questionnaire sought their views regarding the nursery and their comments were used to inform and improve the provision. Information for parents regarding the Foundation Stage and how the nursery's curriculum ensures children make progress towards the early learning goals is limited. This means that they are not fully involved in their child's learning and so opportunities to reinforce new skills are lost. However,

regular parents' evenings are in the process of being organised at which they will be invited to discuss their child's progress with his or her key worker. A portfolio containing photographs and samples of their child's work with written explanations of each activity is collected over time and given to parents when their child leaves the nursery.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Well organised, comprehensive documentation is in place which enables the safe and efficient running of the setting and maintains children's welfare. All necessary records are kept and the nursery's policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development and who have a high regard for the well-being of all children. Both the manager and the staff regularly attend training to update and increase their knowledge and understanding still further. This means that they can continually support and improve the quality of care and education they provide for children.

Leadership and management is good. The manager is highly supportive of her staff and has a clear vision of the nursery's aims. She is committed to providing quality care and education for all children and to this end has built up a strong staff team who share her aim and who work very well together. Regular staff meetings and staff appraisals enable ongoing assessments of the setting's strengths and weaknesses and help to support improvement. Monitoring and evaluation of the group's provision for nursery education is in the process of further development.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 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.

## **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):

- increase the amount of free play available within the timetable in order to develop children's independence and choice.

### 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):

- ensure planning clearly links with the early learning goals and stepping stones to show the learning intention of activities
- ensure the observation and assessment of children's progress is used to inform planning and to help children move to the next stage of their learning
- improve parents' awareness of the Foundation Stage and the group's curriculum in order to increase their involvement in children's learning.

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