



Buffer Bear Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130628
Inspection date	30 November 2005
Inspector	Lindsey Wright / Anneliese Fox-Jones
Setting Address	Watford Junction Station, Station Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD17 1AB
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Registered person	Buffer Bear Limited
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 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?

Buffer Bear Day nursery opened in May 1994. It operates from 5 rooms within a purpose built unit, which is situated at Watford junction station. The nursery serves the local area.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 55 children from birth to 5 years. There are currently 74 children on roll and 15 children receive funded nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Although there are no children

currently attending with special needs or children whom English is an additional language, these are welcomed.

The group opens 5 days a week all year round. Sessions are from 07:00 - 19:00 hours, Monday to Friday.

There are 6 part-time and 14 full-time staff who work with the children. A total of 15 staff members have early years qualifications. There are 3 staff members currently on training programmes. The setting receives support from a mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. An advisory teacher for Buffer Bears visits the nursery to offer support.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally clean and hygienic environment. They are learning personal care as they wash their hands after snack and meal times at the sink within the rooms. Children have some opportunities to visit the bathroom as part of their daily routine to wash their hands, however this does not sufficiently develop children's independence. Children are confident to request assistance from staff to wipe their noses. Therefore they are developing an awareness of their own needs. There is a sickness policy in place and notices displayed about recent outbreaks of illness, this informs parents and minimises the risks of cross infection. There are effective systems to record accident and medication requirements which supports children's good health. Staff wear disposable gloves when changing nappies and clean the changing area afterwards, therefore reducing the spread of infection. Children are provided with bedding on their sleep mats, however staff were observed walking over them wearing outdoor footwear, therefore not consistently providing a hygienic environment for children.

Children enjoy a range of healthy snacks including bread sticks, crackers and cheese and raisins, however biscuits are also offered as a frequent alternative, therefore children do not consistently learn about healthy eating. They have a choice of water and juice to drink at snack time. Water is not currently freely available if children are thirsty during the day. Older and younger children learn to wait for long periods when having lunch, this results in children becoming bored and disruptive.

Children enjoy outdoor physical exercise. They are pedalling tricycles well, and are able to climb the small climbing frame with confidence. Children skilfully control cars and tricycles and can stop avoiding collisions. Older children are offered the same toys and equipment each day, therefore this does not offer a variety of interest to children as there are limited opportunities for using a range of equipment to challenge and extend their existing skills. Children participate in regular physical exercise sessions provided by an outside company, this includes hockey and football. Older children's fine motor skills are encouraged through exploring construction resources and use of the computer mouse. Younger children learn to develop hand

eye co-ordination as they independently manipulate objects in the sand and play with cornflakes as part of sensory play, however the cutlery used during lunch time in the toddler room was not appropriate and therefore limits children's independence and learning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally play in a safe environment because the premises are kept secure and most safety precautions are in place, for example, stair gates and socket covers. However, there are hazards in some rooms which could potentially pose a risk to children. For example, a sand tray filled with dirty water is present in the outdoor area and chairs are stacked high in the older children's room. Older children access a basic range of equipment and resources, some of these items are unkempt and are in a poor state of repair, for example dirty cushions and torn books. A risk assessment for the building has been carried out, however, this is not effective to safeguard children's welfare. Younger children are cared for in a clean, safe and inviting environment and have access to stimulating play areas as well comfortable areas for quieter activities. Staff ensure toys and resources are rotated regularly to attract children's interest.

Children are cared for by adults who have been through appropriate vetting procedures, and therefore deemed suitable to work with children. However, care is not always taken to ensure un-vetted staffing procedures are implemented effectively to protect children. The majority of staff have current first aid training, which ensure children are well protected in the event of an accident. Children learn safety issues as they evacuate the building through regular fire drills. Most staff are clear about their roles in the event of evacuation, although a new staff member did not have any knowledge of the fire evacuation procedure.

Staff are generally on hand to supervise children and protect them from potential hazards, however this is not consistent throughout the nursery, therefore children do experience minor accidents, for example, falling off chairs. Staff make use of the local community to extend children's experiences of keeping safe when on outings, children are encouraged to hold a staff members hand when outside. Children have explored road safety as a topic.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of child protection procedures, and they are clear about their roles in recording and referring concerns if necessary, this includes how to deal with an allegation being made against a staff member. Therefore children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally enjoy their time at the nursery. On the whole children arrive

happily and are eager to participate. Children settle well into their environment. Staff sit with the older children at their level and interact and support children's play periodically, however this is frequently interrupted with other tasks taking priority such as to mix paint. Children enjoy socialising with their peers, for example, as they play hide and seek outdoors, they learn how to relate to each other.

Younger children are provided with a broad range of activities and resources. They are attractively set out and allow children to make choices and access a range of age-appropriate resources, for example, as they choose musical instruments and farm animals on the floor. They play harmoniously. Children are learning about the wider world within their French lessons. Staff working with the younger age group have regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and plan accordingly to meet the needs of individual children. Children help to tidy up after playing in the sand and therefore learn to work co-operatively. They are growing in confidence and self-esteem through the encouragement of the staff team. Older children however are provided with a basic range of activities and resources and are limited to access these independently. They are keen to learn, however the activities offered provide inadequate interest or challenge to children therefore inhibits their learning overall. Children are at times able to concentrate, for example, when using the computer. However this is inconsistent, for example, at story time, children become distracted and unable to listen. They are merely occupied with activities for long periods such as outside recreational play, however this is not planned for and does not offer challenge or extension.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making adequate progress towards the early learning goals. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of the Foundation Stage, however there are areas of weakness, which limits children's progression. The curriculum planning is in place and includes the six areas of learning, however plans are not consistently followed therefore gaps are evident in children's learning. At present staff cover one area of learning each day. There is little evidence of incorporating the six areas of learning in the daily routine and during both adult led and child initiated activities. Staff do not ask children open ended questions to help extend their understanding. Staff working with the older children have limited skills to challenge children within their play, which impedes on children's learning opportunities within all areas of the curriculum.

Observations of children's abilities take place and progress records are completed and used to inform future planning. However these are not routinely recorded, which means children's progress cannot be sufficiently monitored to identify gaps in their learning. Planning identifies differentiation between younger and older and less and more able children, although this is not apparent in the daily routine. Older children's activities and resources are limited in range, variation and stimulation, they are not included in the planning to reinforce aspects of learning. Therefore overall children's learning abilities are inhibited. Activities are not sufficiently adapted to suit the individual developmental stages of some children. They find it difficult to persevere with tasks and receive very little support from staff. For example, story time is too long for the younger age children, they find it difficult to concentrate. Older children are offered few activities and resources to occupy them sufficiently, as a result

children's behaviour becomes disruptive and this has an affect on other children's learning. Children participate in a flexible routine with a focus on free play and some adult led group activities.

Children are developing some independence, they help themselves to aprons when they paint and give out plates at snack time, and access the limited range of resources available to them. Children enjoy being the helper at snack time, and to pour their own drinks. However there are missed opportunities for children to give out the cups and count the children to see how many cups they will need. Children explore the wider world through topic work and celebrating festivals of other cultures. They make models using construction resources which helps them to build and assemble materials. Children enjoy listening to stories and looking at books, however some children become distracted and restless during story time. They can see the written word and learn to write their name on their pictures and draw using crayons. Children enjoy imitating animal sounds such as a cat, sheep and cow when waiting for their snack. Children observe numbers and shapes through displays in the room, they explore numbers counting to ten and are able to draw a circle.

Children's larger physical skills are promoted on a daily basis. However, children are offered a limited range of equipment and experiences to explore all aspects of their physical development which inhibits their learning overall. Older children are confident to use paint brushes, pencils and eat their lunch using cutlery competently. Children's creative development is limited due to the lack of resources made available to them. The provision for role play and malleable materials are insufficient.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and parents are warmly welcomed in to the provision. Information regarding children's individual needs as well as likes and dislikes are discussed and implemented prior to their joining the pre-school, this ensures a smooth settling in process. Children have a sense of belonging due to the daily sharing of information about their needs and routines which is shared between parents and staff.

Older children's well being is not consistently met due to the staff not fully promoting an inclusive and stimulating environment for all children. They access their environment independently, however the range of resources and experiences on offer are of a basic level. Children celebrate festivals from around the world and learn the French language, however resources to reflect positive images of other cultures and diversity are not fully utilised in most rooms. Children are learning to share and take turns sometimes with support from staff, for example they share use of the mouse when using the computer. Younger children behave well, however, at times older children display negative behaviour and can become disruptive, such as breaking a model another child has made. Staff do not always fully explain to children as to why their behaviour is unacceptable. Some children become distracted appearing to be bored. As a result the remainder of the children's learning is at times affected.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff inform parents through

regular verbal and written feedback which includes daily written sheets and newsletters. Parents have access to a notice board within each room including information about children's activities, 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff meet the individual needs of the children and work in partnership with parents when helping to settle new children. Parents evenings are held regularly and progress records are shared. Parents express satisfaction with the care their children receive, however they do not feel involved in their children's education.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children's basic individual needs are known and acknowledged within their enrolment form, for example information is shared about children's allergies. Children who have special needs are welcomed and monitored by a co-ordinator, who would liaise with parents and outside agencies to meet the individual needs of the child .

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Most staff are suitably qualified and therefore have a satisfactory knowledge of child development. There are adequate vetting procedures in place to protect children, however these are not always fully monitored. Staff have sufficient regard for the well-being of all children. Younger children's rooms are well organised, however older children do not benefit from an organised and effective environment. Staff ratios are not always met appropriately which has an impact on children's care, learning and play, children play outside for long periods of time with no focus.

The required documentation is present including policies and procedures which generally work in practice to promote children's health, safety and enjoyment. All staff and parents have access to copies of these.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager shares information with staff through regular staff meetings and supervision which support staff in their roles. Staff have opportunities to further develop their knowledge and understanding of child care practice. Some staff have developed sound relationships with children and parents. However, the manager is currently not effective of the nursery's monitoring and evaluation of the nursery education programme. She does not currently have an action plan in place for areas of improvement, although some areas are in need of attention including the induction process for new staff, which has an impact on the welfare and care of children.

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 setting was asked to extend the range of toys and

resources for the under 2's, in particular for the more mobile babies. This has been addressed, a range of toys and resources are now available for the mobile babies including baby walkers. Therefore babies have opportunities to access equipment which will enhance their physical skills. The external doors in each play room are no longer propped open and kept closed at all times, hooks have been fitted to hold each door in place if need be, therefore reducing safety hazards to the children. Previously there was little shade available to the children in the outside play area. The manager addressed this issue by purchasing gazebos. However, these did not prove to be secure, further solutions are being explored.

Complaints since the last inspection

Concerns were raised about some aspects of safety at the provision. These concerns related to Standard 3 Care, learning and play, Standard 6 Safety, Standard 7 Health, Standard 12 Working in partnership with parents and carers and Standard 14 Documentation. Ofsted carried out an unannounced visit in order to investigate these concerns. The outcome of the visit was that four actions and one recommendation were raised. These were Standard 5 regarding the baby change mat, Standard 6 conducting risk assessments referring to closing doors and storage units used by children, and the entrance lobby ensuring fire extinguishers are not obstructed, Standard 7 ensure premises are clean and appropriate procedures are in place for monitoring and dealing with biting incidents, and a recommendation to regularly review accident records. A further visit took place on 20/04/2005 and all actions had been addressed. 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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure minimum ratios are adhered to at all times and ensure staff deployment is effective for all children

- ensure staff take positive steps to prevent accidents
- ensure that adults are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour that is consistent and developmentally appropriate
- ensure children are learning about healthy eating and drinking water is available at all times
- ensure all staff have effective induction training

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):

- further develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals to ensure planning gives due emphasis for all aspects of children's learning, clearly highlights the learning intention and differentiation for all children, and uses assessments to plan the children's next steps
- improve partnership with parents to ensure they are involved in their children's learning

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