



Bumblebees Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY309643
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Inspector Susan Marriott

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Registered person Bumblebees 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?

Bumblebees Playgroup opened in 1989. They relocated to their current location, in a portacabin within the grounds of Beadesert Lower School, Leighton Buzzard, in September 2005. The playgroup has sole use of one room in the portacabin, kitchen facilities within the other room and toilet facilities in the main school building. They also have access to an enclosed outdoor area. The setting is able to support children who have special needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

Although the playgroup is registered for 24 children aged 2 years to under 5 years, the group does not care for any children under 2 years 6 months.

The group is to open five days a week, term time only, from 09:15. to 11:45, with children attending a variety of sessions within that time. There are 31 children on roll altogether and of these, 21 children receive funding for nursery education. There are 6 members of staff who work with the children. Of these, 3 hold qualifications to level 3, and 3 staff are working towards gaining a level 2 qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher and development officer from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). The playgroup are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because most staff follow effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray to prevent cross contamination. Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because a number of staff hold suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible. Staff record accidents and include the relevant details. Children wash their hands before snack and after visiting the toilet to prevent the spread of infection. Children can access tissues easily and a bin for disposing of the soiled article is provided nearby. Children therefore learn about germs through the daily routines because most staff remember to promote discussion about the reasons for hand washing and keeping noses clean.

Children benefit from a healthy diet where all snacks are nutritious and prepared on site. Snacks include a healthy range of fruit, toast and biscuits and children have the choice of milk or water, which they mostly pour themselves, although some staff do not stand back and allow the children develop their independence. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they can ask for a drink at any time and can freely access a jug of water and cups.

Plans show that all the children enjoy daily indoor activities, designed to enable them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. For example, during the inspection, children enjoy counting how many jumps they could do on the trampette and the rockers are popular with the younger ones. The outdoor facilities have not yet been completed and the programme is still being devised. However, children have access to wheeled toys and will be able to benefit from the school playing field facilities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff conscientiously monitor the door to the playroom, although the gated access to the side of the school is not secure and potentially allows unvetted persons to gain entry to the pre-school portacabin. This situation compromises the safety of children and staff. Staff are aware of the risk and seek to limit their concerns via excellent supervision of the children. The children use toilets in the main school building which can be accessed from the insecure area and staff always accompany children to the toilets. Practice in other areas of safety continues to improve. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting although the record of visitors does not provide space for recording the actual purpose of the visit to the premises. Staff informally attempt to monitor the environment in the playroom in the unseasonably wet and cold weather, but have no means of measuring the temperature accurately. Relevant risk assessments are completed on a daily basis and staff complete an annual evaluation on the occasion of insurance renewal. They do not currently monitor the record of accidents and link this to risk assessment. High level door handles prevent children from accessing areas reserved for adults. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting because staff give good explanations as to why, for example, a child should sit still on the chair.

Children are warmly welcomed and well-cared for in a bright and pleasant, spacious playroom which is thoughtfully set out to facilitate children's choice and developing independence. The setting uses space creatively and areas are set aside for dedicated activities, reflecting the six areas of learning. One area is set aside for quiet activities, enabling children to concentrate on mathematical and literacy skills, whilst other areas accommodate those activities which generate more noise.

Equipment and resources are safely stored and clearly labelled so that children and staff can access them easily. Toys are suitably organised on low level trolleys and shelving units which enable children to have easy, independent access to a wide range of quality resources which promote their care, learning and play. The staff put up posters and pictures to make the room attractive for children and set out the equipment on the tables before the children arrive.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because they are protected by informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The responsible person for Child Protection in the setting has received suitable training in this field.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to make sound progress in learning, leisure and personal development because staff demonstrate a real commitment to training and have attended many recent courses to update their knowledge and develop their skills. Overall, children are inspired to play and learn in the busy and purposeful atmosphere. Staff provide positive role models for children and give caring, friendly support to all children. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's vocabulary through

constant praise and recognition as they support play. Some staff skilfully adapt their level of language and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. This helps them to meet the needs of the children. However, the skills of the staff vary widely and some staff tend to 'take over' an activity rather than know when to stand back and encourage the children to try for themselves. Staff have begun to implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are beginning to use this to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for younger children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Practitioners have an increasing knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are using their developing understanding of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals to guide their planning of the programme. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are generally deployed well to support learning through play around the room. They deliver a varied programme of play-based activities which provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making suitable progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. Children happily participate and gain a sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem through self-chosen activities, although the older and more able children begin to lose interest in the activities towards the end of the session. Not all staff are yet able to re-direct their learning appropriately and consequently noise levels begin to rise.

The new staff team are beginning to work together. However, snack time is not yet being used to full effect as a learning time for children. Time is not always well-managed and the children sit and wait with nothing to interest them until a staff member gets them to join in with a popular song. Staff's use of questioning is variable and sometimes lacks imagination and forethought. For example, staff frequently ask closed questions to which there is no more than one answer. They ask 'what colour is an orange.....what colour is this apple?' Another staff member attempts to extend the questioning to a more open format by asking what an orange tastes like and whether the children know what a banana looks like when you take the yellow skin off. Some aspects of literacy and mathematics are separated from interesting play, for example, because they are included in a rote learning session after snack. For instance, the children identify the colour, number and letter of the week. Children develop their hand-eye coordination when they pour their own drinks and pass round the fruit plate. The children recognise their names on cards on the self-registration board, but do not always fetch these to name their own work at the painting table. Although children share books with staff and their contributions are valued and affirmed during story time, insufficient priority is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Children learn about numbers and use mathematical language but have infrequent opportunities to solve problems in everyday contexts. They display high levels of imagination and demonstrate their growing knowledge of the world around us as they play in the role play area. A wide range of construction toys enables children to build and fix pieces together, improving manual dexterity. Staff talk with children about their lives and families whilst participating in activities, asking questions such as 'Did anyone go to the town/park/farm at the weekend?'

Planning continues to present a challenge for the setting. It is beginning to be

generally effective, because it builds on the Foundation Stage guidance. A topic is identified and activities are planned to support the chosen theme. For example, the current theme is 'Transport'. The staff are working upon the regular inclusion of a directed focus activity as a means of providing increased challenge for the older and more able children. Focused activity plans show the increasing skills of the staff in selecting stepping stones and matching them with activities that will develop children learning in different ways. However, the manager has already identified that children are not always attracted to the focus activities and this means that some children receive insufficient challenge and their learning is left to chance. Potentially this means that the programme does not cover a sufficiently broad range of the stepping stones to address the needs of children who learn at different rates.

Detailed evaluations note individual children's progress and this information is being transferred to the assessment records. However, assessment is not yet fully effective in securing children's progression in learning and informing the next steps in the learning programme. Nonetheless, the developing skills of the staff team limit the potential weaknesses of the planning and assessment system to ensure that taken overall, teaching meets the needs of the children who attend.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children from the local community are warmly welcomed and included in all activities. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. Displays for special events such as Chinese New Year and labels in a multitude of different languages increase children's awareness of other cultures. This enables the children to develop a positive attitude to others. Children who have varying needs receive suitable support. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision. Staff provide positive role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children frequently, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Behaviour is good because staff effectively challenge instances of poor behaviour giving explanations as to why the behaviour is not acceptable. This positive approach actively fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff continue to strive to develop a positive partnership with parents to support children's progress in learning, but report variable responses from parents. There is a wealth of information which is easily accessible in the entrance hallway which includes general care and educational literature. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well-supported by staff during the settling-in process. Staff are developing ways of sharing information about the children who receive nursery education. Parents are able to see their child's records and may contribute to them. This two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. However, the setting is unaware of new legislation issued October 2005, regarding the complaints process.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The continually improving quality of organisation and leadership and management of the nursery education safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. The newly assembled, mature staff team are extremely dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. Lots of recent training continues to extend staff skills and knowledge. Staff report that they now understand the reasoning behind their daily practice. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and mostly provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes increasingly positive outcomes for children. Documentation is clear and generally accessible. Staff clearly and confidently speak about their procedures to follow in the event of a range of scenarios. Planning and assessment systems continue to evolve, thereby securing and progressing children's learning. Taken overall, the nursery meets the needs of the 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.

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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):

- continue to develop the implementation of the 'Birth to three matters' framework within your provision

- ensure the safety of children and staff at the playgroup. Review the security measures to ensure that no unauthorised persons are able to gain access to the provision. Ensure that the premises are maintained at an appropriate temperature and ensure that all visitors record the purpose of their visit
- review the complaints policy and procedure in line with the new requirements set out in the Addendum to the National Standards, issued October 2005.

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):

- make more use of records of children's progress and assessment to set next steps for learning and to inform and guide planning, particularly in relation to older and more able children
- improve the overall quality of learning experiences and challenges for older and more able children in all areas of learning; paying particular attention to the organisation of group times, snack time and opportunities for children to develop literacy skills, such as writing for a purpose and linking sounds to letters
- develop further, staff knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals and associated stepping stones
- devise systems to keep parents and carers fully informed about their child's progress and achievements.

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