

Badgers Barn Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	304967
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Inspector	Suzette Butcher
Setting Address	132 Chester Road, Helsby, Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 9NN
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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?

Badgers Barn Pre School is privately owned and opened in September 2000. It operates from a converted two-storey barn situated in the grounds of the owners' home. It is close to the centre of Helsby in Cheshire and caters for children from a wide surrounding area. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 all year round. Children share access to secure outdoor play areas.

There are currently 91 children from birth to five years on roll. Of these, 29 children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are 16 members of staff, of whom 13 hold relevant early years childcare qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. The setting achieved the Investors in People Award in 2004.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young children's emotional well-being is supported because staff are sensitive to their needs and offer good support, such as a cuddle when coming into nursery and help and encouragement with an activity. Sleep and rest times are arranged around children's home routines which helps to promote good continuity of care and to encourage children to feel settled and secure.

Children and babies sleep in air conditioned areas where the temperature is monitored to provide a healthy atmosphere. Children are protected from infection and cross contamination through good hygiene routines which are clearly established and consistently followed by all staff. Clear procedures for recording accidents, administering medication and caring for sick children are understood by all staff, shared with parents and are used effectively. In daily routines children are learning about healthy lifestyles, helping them to become aware of their own needs with regard to eating, sleeping and hygiene. Older children learn to accept responsibility for their own health needs and understand why they should wash their hands before eating and after toileting as they talk about germs and disease with staff. Younger children are reminded why they need to wash their hands after stroking the hamster. Children are encouraged to develop independence in all their self-help skills. Toddlers look for their own shoes and try to put on their socks. Older children confidently look after their own personal care and younger children take themselves to the nearby toilets with discreet prompts and supervision from staff. An effective toilet training programme is established for individual children in close partnership with parents to promote continuity and a positive outcome for young children.

Meal times are friendly, relaxed occasions where children and staff sit together and enjoy their food and happily chatter as they enjoy each other's company. They gain an understanding of the importance of eating a healthy diet through the provision of nutritious and balanced meals and snacks. Menus are clearly displayed for parents and include dishes from different cultures, such as curry or chilli. Dietary needs are recorded and special diets catered for when required. Children are encouraged to make their own choices from, for example, a selection of chopped fruit. Independence skills are promoted and developed when babies and toddlers are encouraged to experiment with different tastes and textures, and children gradually progress to using appropriate cutlery and cups. Older children help themselves to accessible drinking water and drinks are offered to every child on a regular basis. Younger children recognise their own and their friends' beakers as they help themselves to a drink and offer cups to others on a hot day. Children are encouraged to drink more water in warmer weather and the importance of hydration is discussed with children.

Children develop a positive attitude to physical exercise as they enjoy participating in regular energetic and physical play activities. This means that children make good progress in their physical development and develop a basic understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Children have good opportunities to play outside in large play areas with soft and hard standing surfaces. They are able to move around spontaneously, learning how to negotiate space and move freely with pleasure and confidence. Children delight in the challenges presented to them when they skilfully steer wheeled toys around the outdoor play space or they learn to negotiate and coordinate their movements balancing on wooden beams or on an exciting obstacle course. They develop their large muscles when they clamber across or hang from the climbing frame. Children and babies have fun manipulating different consistencies, such as jelly or gloop. They gain fine motor control as they learn to use tools and implements to make marks or investigate.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and secure in the bright, well-maintained nursery. Security is given a high priority throughout the nursery with close circuit televisions to monitor nursery areas and security identification cards, with effective systems in place to ensure the safe collection of children. Regular risk assessments are conducted, recorded and action is taken when needed. Staff are vigilant and alert to children's individual needs and quickly assess and reduce potential hazards. For example, staff create a barrier with traffic cones to reduce risks and protect younger children in a safer area outdoors. Children's safety is carefully considered on outings and potential risks are reduced when every child wears a safety tag with the nursery's contact details. Children are well protected because all staff have a clear understanding about their role and responsibility with regards to child protection issues. Relevant information and contact details to safeguard the welfare of children are all in place.

Families are warmly greeted as they arrive and children quickly settle happily with their friends. Children are cared for in a well-organised environment where areas are used effectively for play and learning both indoors and outdoors. An extensive range of good quality toys and resources are available for children to choose from in all the indoor and outdoor play areas. Toys are stored at a low level to enable children to be proactive in their own learning and make their own decisions. Children are well supervised and are able to move about freely and safely in the child-friendly environment. The outdoor area is well planned with a large woodland area for more adventurous play and a hard surfaced area for a wide range of interesting opportunities, such as riding bikes or enjoying role play in the play house. An enclosed, raised decked area provides further play and learning opportunities and babies have access to a self-contained outdoor play area. The indoor environment is colourful and bright with photographs of children learning through play, tactile displays of children's work and information for parents and visitors. This promotes a warm and welcoming atmosphere and develops children's self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Children learn about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe in a supportive and caring environment. They understand the importance of putting on sun cream and wearing sun hats to protect themselves when going outside on a sunny day. Children are supported as they learn about potential dangers and experiment with taking risks. They are encouraged to consider the consequences of their actions with gentle prompts and reminders from staff. They have fun exploring and experimenting as they build dens together, roll down grassy slopes or look for bugs in the mud. Children learn to follow the Green Cross Code in role play and when they are taken on outings. Topic work and visits from the police sensitively remind children to be aware of 'stranger dangers'.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have fun and enjoy being together in the lively, friendly nursery. Babies happily explore and investigate opportunities in their self-contained area. They gain confidence as they practise and rehearse recently formed skills and achievements in a supportive environment. For example, toddlers carefully take their first few steps towards a welcoming adult and beam in delight when they are enthusiastically praised and encouraged. Babies experiment with cause and effect toys when they press buttons or turn knobs. As they play they begin to realise their actions have consequences. Babies tentatively or eagerly participate in sensory play activities when the group experiments with Rice Krispies, yoghurt, pasta or bubble painting. They learn

about taste, textures, smells or sounds in a variety of different ways and develop a stronger sense of self when they try to put hats on their heads or socks on their feet in front of low-level mirrors. Young children happily experiment with gloop and help to create patterns and pictures with chalk on the outdoor play area. Children are provided with a wide range of activities to help them acquire new skills and knowledge. They concentrate hard as they take turns to gently bath the baby dolls in soapy water and learn to follow instructions to 'hold the baby's head carefully' and 'make sure soap does not get in her eyes'. Young children tenderly stroke the pet hamster and decide if its' fur is soft or hard. They carefully return the hamster to its home and compare the cage to their own house.

Communication is given a high priority throughout the setting as staff listen and respond appropriately to children's speech and babies' babbling. Signs, gestures and facial expressions are used to reinforce meaning and provide visual cues. Children enjoy sitting in a cosy group to share familiar stories. They listen and watch attentively as they excitedly contribute and point to favourite characters in the books. They proudly respond to questions, such as 'where is your nose?' or 'what sound does a cat make?'. Children happily join in action songs and rhymes and dance to music, enabling them to explore and experiment with sounds and movement.

Staff have a secure knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework and use it successfully when planning for younger children. Clear learning outcomes are identified and plans promote flexibility to meet children's interests and changes in the weather. Staff successfully record the children's progress against the Birth to three matters framework and record observations of significant details and progress to inform assessment and link with future planning. However, next steps in learning for individual children are not clearly identified and recorded to inform future planning and to share with parents and carers. As children progress through the Birth to three matters framework, they learn to concentrate for longer periods and become purposefully engaged in activities. Children relate warmly to staff and other children and are able to indicate to staff when they need help or support. They begin to display responsible behaviour, such as helping to tidy up, taking turns and sharing.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress in all areas of learning because staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and have a sound understanding the underlying principles of early years education. Planning comprehensively covers all six areas and there are clear learning outcomes identified for groups of children. Staff know children well and provide exciting and stimulating play opportunities. However, planning systems do not always reflect the high quality of play and learning opportunities that children are involved in on a daily basis, many of which are organised and improvised spontaneously to respond to individual children's learning needs and interests. For example, children find an unusual, large moth in the garden. They examine it and take photographs which they help to process and print on the computer. They decide to go to the library to investigate further, finding a book with a photograph and name of the moth and then draw pictures to take home to share with their families. A system of observing and recording details of each child's achievements and developmental progress has recently been introduced and highlights children's independent learning. Observations are used to identify what each child already knows and can do and to inform future assessments. Children's progress is recorded on their individual profile and in a colourful ongoing record of achievement with photographs, examples of work and informative observations. This is shared with parents. However, information on children's progress is not used effectively to build on what children already know and can do or to inform

future planning. Next steps in play and learning are not clearly identified for each child which restricts opportunities to share information and learning opportunities with parents and carers.

Children have fun exploring and investigating from an early age. The outdoor play area is a natural extension of the indoor learning environment and activities smoothly transfer from one to the other. Learning opportunities are imaginatively presented in stimulating practical activities. Staff skilfully arouse children's natural curiosity which strongly motivates them to experiment and make connections with other areas of learning and experiences. For example, children regularly enjoy exploring their natural environment and learning about the wider world in the wooded adventure play area. They learn about the different seasons and observe nature's changing cycles. Children eagerly lift up logs and wood piles to examine woodlice, worms or centipedes with magnifying glasses and discuss how they like to live in cool, damp, dark places. They carefully collect worms to live in the 'wormery' that they have created and observe tadpoles growing and developing. Children eagerly mix different coloured water and pour this into bags to make frozen ice cubes. They discuss opposites and contrasts, such as solids and liquids, freezing and melting or hot and cold. Children introduce their own ideas when they experiment floating and sinking with ice lolly sticks after everyone finishes eating their own ice lolly. Staff skilfully maximise opportunities for informal learning throughout the day. Children are encouraged to count, recognise and understand numbers and complete basic calculations in role play and everyday situations. For example, children happily interact with adults and each other as the house becomes a café. Staff skilfully introduce new ideas and facilitate informal learning when they ask 'how much is it?' or 'how many more have you made?'. Children eagerly respond that it will be 'three pounds, please'. They competently count three children as they enter the play house, adding on two more who arrive to make five altogether. Concepts of shape, size or weight are introduced and reinforced in play situations and sounds and letters are practised when children attempt to write and recognise their own names. They proudly create their own postcard, drawing pictures and writing the address and personal greetings. A good balance of adult-led activities run alongside child-initiated activities creating a relaxed but purposeful learning environment for the children.

Children are very confident and articulate. They respond to and learn from adults in the setting because staff are skilled in talking and listening to children. Older children eagerly engage in lively conversations with their friends and staff members at mealtimes or in everyday play activities. They enjoy sharing jokes and happily chat about past events or look forward to future activities. Staff challenge children to think and to extend their vocabulary through open ended questions and comments, such as 'tell us what you did' or 'what happened next?'. Children are encouraged to comment on their play and practise thinking out loud when they reflect on what they have been doing and tell others all about it. For example, children proudly direct adults to a display about their recent topic on animals and continue to excitedly share interest with the group when they explain that 'bees make honey in the hive' or that 'dolphins swim in the sea'. Children initiate and extend role play sequences in the indoor and outdoor environment. They enjoy exploring their environment on outings and visits. Picnics on Helsy Hill, adventures in the park or outings to garden centres increase and extend practical and stimulating learning activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy, sociable and relaxed in the cosy, friendly nursery. Everyone smiles and laughs a lot as they have fun and enjoy warm and caring relationships with one another. Children are very well behaved, polite and considerate towards adults and each other. They develop a

strong awareness of feelings and emotions through role play activities and group discussions. Older children sensitively consider the needs of others and gently ask if their friends are 'ok, yes?'. Children feel valued as individuals and follow the staff's calm, consistent and respectful example. Frequent praise and encouragement enable children to develop confidence and self-esteem as they test out their social skills within the security of the nursery. Babies are reassured with hugs and cuddles and enthusiastically encouraged as they become more adventurous and confident. A member of staff has the role of linking the babies and toddler groups to promote a smooth transition between the groups.

Every child is actively involved in an inclusive environment. Individual needs and preferences are identified and acknowledged and activities are adapted to ensure that children with additional needs are supported to achieve their potential. Staff attend training on subjects, such as Makaton, to increase opportunities for a wider range of children. Staff work in partnership with parents and relevant support agencies to promote good continuity of care for children. Children are helped to consider and value diversity as they learn about the wider world and share stories about different cultures, festivals and celebrations. They enjoy learning about Italian food or finding countries on a globe. Topics about 'People who help us' increase children's awareness and promote positive attitudes towards age, disability and gender in a diverse society. Children have access to a broad range of resources, play opportunities and activities which reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural differences within the nursery. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good. Information is shared with parents before children join the nursery and good settling in procedures are in place. Staff and parents regularly share information informally and every parent receives a daily record of their child's day. A keyworker system promotes continuity for parents and children. Interesting displays and notices are available around the nursery areas to inform parents about the Birth to three matters framework, the Foundation Stage curriculum and the activities that their children take part in. Parents are informed of their child's progress on parents' evenings, although there are limited opportunities for parents and carers to become actively involved in their child's development and record of progress. Notices and newsletters keep parents up to date with current themes and events in the nursery. Parents are invited to share their knowledge and expertise with the nursery children in topics and themes. For example, a chef, doctor, hygienist or vet takes time to talk to the children. Effective links are formed when children transfer to school, and staff, children and their families celebrate the 'graduation' process together. Parents speak highly of the provision and comment on the homely, friendly atmosphere.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The management team demonstrate a strong commitment to continually improving the quality of care and education provided. Frequent staff meetings are held to identify and prioritise areas of strengths and weaknesses with a clear vision in place to steer the work of the setting. The nursery achieved the Investors in People Award in 2004 and plan to reconfirm their award in 2007. Management regularly attend training and meetings to continually improve their knowledge and understanding and follow courses to degree level and above on relevant early years subjects. Managers are actively involved in daily activities where they lead by example and provide positive role models for staff and children.

Rigorous recruitment and employment systems are in place to ensure that children are protected. A comprehensive induction programme is in place and students on placements are carefully monitored and supervised. Staff appraisals are carried out on a regular basis and identify future training needs. Staff are well qualified and continue to attend training on a regular basis to share their knowledge and experience with the whole staff team. Staff have clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and work well together as a strong and very happy team. Staff communicate very well with each other and have a positive sense of worth because they feel valued and involved in the nursery organisation. This create a very happy, homely and supportive atmosphere for children and their families. Everyone successfully promotes the settings aim to provide 'a fun, caring, interesting and living environment'.

The nursery environment is organised flexibly and creatively which allows children to freely choose resources and make their own decisions to increase their independence. Children progress happily and confidently through the different age groups in the homely atmosphere where everyone knows each other very well. The outdoor area is a lively focus for the whole nursery where staff and children gather together and explore and extend play opportunities. Areas are well organised for all weathers as the children confidently decide to put on Wellingtons and rainwear or sun hats and sun cream to play outside. Effective use is made of local facilities and strong links are formed with the local community. Children enjoy many short walks or outings to places, such as Helsby Hill, the nearby park, library, local shops and businesses.

Documentation is in place to effectively to support the care of children. Policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis and are available to staff and parents. A clear and effective procedure is followed in the event of any complaints from parents, but a log of complaints with appropriate information is not available to share with parents on request. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery agreed to review their policies and procedures to include a statement on bullying in their behaviour management policy, and to provide clear safety guidelines and systems for the use of close circuit television recording in the nursery. Policies, documentation and systems have been effectively reviewed and amended to protect children and improve the overall quality of care.

At the last nursery inspection two points for consideration were identified. The nursery have reviewed their planning systems to identify links between children's assessments and the planning of the programme. Staff share assessments more frequently with parents in parents' evenings to increase parents' involvement in the assessment process. Consequently, the nursery has improved the overall quality of nursery education.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required 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, 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 opportunities for parents and carers to be actively involved in their child's development and record of progress (also applies to nursery education)
- provide a log of complaints with appropriate information to share with parents on request.

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):

- identify and record next steps in learning for individual children to build on what children already know and can do, inform future planning and share with parents and carers (also applies to care).

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