



## **Blandford Opportunity Group**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	141094
<b>Inspection date</b>	07 March 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Samantha Powis
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<b>Registered person</b>	Blandford Opportunity Group
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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?

Blandford Opportunity Group was opened in 1992 to support children who have special needs and their families. The group is a charitable organisation, run by a voluntary management committee.

The group operates from premises situated in a residential area close to the centre of Blandford Forum, in Dorset. Children use four rooms, including a sensory room. There is a fully enclosed outside play area. In addition there are cloakrooms, a

kitchen, an office and a room set aside for parents to use.

A maximum of 12 children aged from birth to under 5 years may attend the group at any one time. The group opens on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 09.30 to 12.00 during school term times.

There are currently 18 children on the role. Of these, 6 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide area and all are referred to the group by staff of the statutory services.

The group employs 6 staff to work with the children. Of these, 4 of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. All staff are experienced in working with young children, and attend workshops and short courses relating to their roles.

The setting receives advice and support from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through effective daily routines. Separate towels and cloths or wet wipes are used by the children, which prevents germs from spreading. Children are well protected from the risk of cross infection because the staff implement effective cleaning procedures. All toys and equipment are regularly checked and cleaned after use. Staff share with parents the sickness policy, which is adhered to in practice. This ensures that a healthy environment is created for the children.

Children's health is promoted well, as they are offered an appetising selection of healthy snacks during the session. They enjoy the freshly prepared bananas and select a filling of their choice for the sandwiches they make for themselves. Staff are mindful of children's individual dietary needs, and take positive steps to ensure that their often complex dietary requirements are met.

Children receive prompt first aid treatment in the event of an accident or an emergency, as most staff hold current first aid certificates. Many have also completed additional training to meet the individual health needs of the children. The parents of children who have specific medical needs usually remain on the premises, and can be contacted quickly if needed through a "walkie talkie" system.

There are systems in place to record accidents, administered medication, existing injuries and incidents. However, the use of these records is not effective. The information included on each record is in some cases unclear, and would not ensure that accurate information was passed on to parents. Staff are unclear of the different records to be used, meaning that information may not be recorded correctly. This means that children's ongoing health and welfare is not fully supported.

Children have regular opportunities to develop their physical skills indoors and when using the outdoor area. This includes physical exercises and routines according to the children's individual needs. For example, the bubble tube in the sensory room is used to encourage a child to kneel, therefore, helping them to develop strength and control. Staff find innovative ways to interest the children and keep them motivated; for example, using spiky rubber balls that flash light to catch the children's attention. The staff continually praise and encourage the children with genuine enthusiasm and exceptional support, enabling the children to reach their own goals and gain a real sense of achievement.

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

The provision is good.

Children are settled, comfortable and their physical needs are well met, due to the well organised and prepared environment. Space is used very well to provide areas for children to play, relax, eat and exercise in safety and comfort. All areas are set up well on children's arrival, providing a welcoming environment for the children. Parents are able to stay with their child, and enjoy using the comfortable parents lounge to share a cup of coffee and a chat with other parents. All parents sign themselves and their children in and out of the building, staff and visitors also record their attendance. This ensures an accurate record is maintained at all times, helping to keep the children safe.

Children are safe and secure because the staff are vigilant and carry out daily risk assessments, checking the cleanliness and safety of the premises, equipment and resources. Fire procedures and emergency evacuation plans are in place and one route is practised regularly. However, full consideration has not been given to practising alternative escape routes, which means that not all staff are familiar with these routes. Therefore, evacuation of the premises may be delayed. Positive steps are taken to ensure that the building is secure, this includes an alarm on the main door. This helps to prevent children from leaving the building unsupervised, and also, persons gaining entry without permission.

Children are protected as most staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures. The designated person has a good awareness of the procedures to follow in the event of a concern, and has taken steps to ensure that the written procedure works in practice. Staff attend training on child protection, to ensure their knowledge is updated regularly.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled. They are quick to become involved in activities, secure within the familiar environment and routines. They react with confidence to their key worker, who greets them and their parents warmly. This helps them to feel welcome and relaxed in the setting. Children benefit greatly from the overall enthusiasm of the staff.

Staff use their excellent knowledge of the children's individual needs, to ensure they are offered activities that stimulate and interest them. Some staff have attended training on the Birth to three matters framework, and use this knowledge to help them plan activities. The framework is also used when recording children's progress, to clearly demonstrate their development, and help staff to plan the next step in each child's learning.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Long term plans ensure all areas of learning are incorporated into the curriculum, and all activities are aimed at each child's individual needs. The staff give their full attention to the children throughout the sessions and are extremely focused, assisting and encouraging the children with high levels of skill and commitment. All the activities are purposeful and are pitched at each child's level, enabling them to gain a real sense of achievement. The staff deliver the curriculum with enthusiasm, encouraging the children to have fun and enjoy the activities.

Staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum is inconsistent. This means that not all staff are able to actively participate in the written planning of activities for all children. All staff have an excellent understanding of their key children's needs, and provide them with stimulating learning opportunities. This helps the children to achieve their full potential.

The staff work closely with their key worker children, enabling them to monitor and observe their interaction and progress on a regular basis. The children's assessment files and records clearly demonstrate the progress they are making in their learning. This information is shared with parents and other professionals involved in the child's care, therefore, helping all to work together in supporting the child.

Children develop confidence and have increasingly high levels of self esteem. They separate from their carer with ease, which is due to the familiar routines and sensitive and skilful support of staff. The recognition of children's achievements, through photos, displays of creative work and celebrations of special events, helps children to feel a valued member of the group. There is an emphasis on children being encouraged to communicate through signing and speech. Staff are sensitive to the body language and responses of those children with limited or no speech. Staff speak clearly, explain activities and ask questions to elicit a response from children. The book corner is inviting and stocked with a good range of books. Children enjoy being cuddled whilst sharing a familiar story with their key worker. The children have been taking part in a project about books, dressing up as their favourite characters from stories. This increases children's interest and use of books. Children's awareness of letters and numbers is increased through good use of text throughout the group. Staff encourage children to become familiar with using mathematical language when comparing number, size, weight and position. Children help to count the teddies on the wall, ready to sing along to the song, and compare the weight of onions in the vegetable shop.

Staff provide children with a wide range of activities which introduce them to the world about them. They are keen to take part in finding out and investigating

activities, such as smelling and touching different plants, and pouring dry sand through funnels and tubes. They are encouraged to express their likes and dislikes. The curriculum is orientated towards sensory exploration as this is most relevant to the children attending. The children are encouraged to think about the weather. They pass around bright and dull coloured fabrics, textured beads and rubber gloves filled with warm and ice cold water, to help them understand the differences in the types of weather. Children are encouraged to express their creativity through a large variety of means. There are good opportunities for the children to engage in role play, dressing up and pretending to make drinks for "the tiger who came to tea". Songs and music figure largely in the day to day routines of the group. The multi-sensory room is used regularly, to stimulate the children's reactions.

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

The provision is good.

Children benefit greatly from the staffs clear understanding of equal opportunities. Each child's individual needs are discussed with parents and recorded in detail, ensuring all staff are aware of their them. The walls within the room are covered with pictures of the children, and examples of their own work. This helps them to develop a strong sense of belonging and pride. Children are valued and treated as the unique individuals they are. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The entire setting is geared towards meeting the needs of the individual children who attend. This builds exceedingly strong relationships with the parents and extremely effective links with other agencies to support the children who attend. All the staff attend regular training and workshops to continue to update their skills and knowledge to provide the best possible care for the children. The person in charge is the designated Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), she has an exceptionally clear understanding of her role and responsibilities. She seeks the advice of parents and other professionals to ensure each child is well supported.

The staff manage the children's behaviour in a calm and consistent way. They are positive role-models and praise and encourage the children throughout the session. Children respond well to this positive approach, and are learning to manage their own behaviour, secure in the familiar boundaries and routines.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Parents receive a detailed information pack which includes answers to many frequently asked questions. It clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the group, and how the staff work in partnership with the parents and carers to help the children achieve their full potential. However, there is little information included about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the early learning goals. Parents are made aware of the groups policies and procedures, copies of which are available to the parents in the lounge area. However, some policies are out of date, or under review, which limits the clarity for parents. Parents are extremely well informed about their children's progress. They know who their child's key worker is and can talk to them at any time. They meet together formally with the key workers, once a term to discuss the child's progress

and develop the child's next individual education plan. This information is shared with other professionals working with the family, to ensure consistency and continuity. The parents have access to their child's records at any time and also receive their own copies. Parents contributions to these records are valued, and allows staff to build up a detailed account of the child's progress, helping them to be fully involved.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from extremely high ratios of staff and volunteers, who are deployed effectively to support them. Staff are skilled in the care of the children, and work closely with parents and other professionals to increase their understanding of how to support each child. This ensures children feel secure, and are cared for by a familiar adult who they are able to build a strong relationship with. Staff often work on a one to one basis, providing the unique care necessary for each child. Everything in the setting from daily routines to the length of activities are tailor made to suit every single child. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Documentation, including policies and procedures, are not well organised. Many policies are under review, but it is unclear as to which is the up to date policy to, leading to some inconsistency in understanding. Recent changes to regulations have been taken on board by the committee, however, they have failed to make changes to relevant policies and procedures to reflect these changes. The systems to record information about accidents, administered medication, incidents and existing injuries are not sufficient to ensure children's health and well being is maintained. Lockable filing cabinets and cupboards in the office area are used to ensure confidentiality of personal information is maintained at all times.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. Effective systems to promote staff development, have a positive impact on children's learning and enjoyment. Staff are supported and encouraged to increase their own skills and regularly attend training and workshops. They then cascade this training to others within the staff team, sharing ideas and important messages. Staff have a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, and the person in charge is supportive towards all the staff. All staff complete an induction on appointment, to ensure they are familiar with the groups practices and procedures. Staff appraisals take place to identify strengths, weaknesses and training needs. Staff meet regularly to review practice and suggest ideas for future improvement. However, communication between the staff and the committee is limited, which means that changes in requirements are not reflected in policies when needed.

The manager monitors and evaluates the daily routines and activities effectively, amending and adapting practice as necessary to ensure the aims of the activities are met fully. The staff team work closely together, and are committed to continually improving the quality of care and education for all children.

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

At the last inspection, the group were asked to review policies regarding special needs and behaviour management. They were also asked to review the way in which accidents are recorded to ensure confidentiality is maintained and to improve the systems to assess risks.

Some policies have been reviewed, therefore, ensuring staff and parents are familiar with these. However, many policies for the group are not consistent with current regulations. Accident reports are recorded on separate sheets, therefore ensuring confidentiality for each child and family. Comprehensive risk assessments are now completed, and in addition to this, daily health and safety checks are carried out. This helps to protect children from harm.

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

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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):

- review the systems in place to record accidents, incidents, existing injuries and administered medication, to ensure the information is accurate, detailed and clear
- ensure policies are consistent with current regulations, and reflect practices within the group, with particular reference to complaints and staff recruitment and vetting policies

#### **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):

- continue to develop staffs understanding and awareness of the early learning goals and the Foundation Stage curriculum
- increase the information offered to parents about the early learning goals and the Foundation Stage curriculum

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)