



Office for Standards
in Education

NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 141119

DfES Number: 594509

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 18/11/2004
Inspector Name Samantha Powis

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name LITTLE BIRCH PRE-SCHOOL
Setting Address BLANDFORD ST MARY FIRST SCHOOL
BIRCH AVE, BLANDFORD ST MARY
BLANDFORD FORUM
DORSET
DT11 9QD

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Little Birch Pre-School Committee 1083986

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Little Birch Pre-School Committee
Address Birch Avenue
Blandford St Marys
Dorset
DT11 9QD

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Little Birch pre school opened in 1976 and operates from a purpose built unit in the grounds of a First school in Blandford. It is a committee run group and is open each weekday from 09:00 to 11:45 during term time. There is a small secure fenced area surrounding the building for outdoor play, with children also having supervised access to the school playground and playing field when not in use by school children.

The pre-school is registered to care for 16 children aged from 2 to under 5 years and there are currently 24 children on roll. Of these 19 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves the local area, and currently supports a number of children with special educational needs, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. One member of staff holds an appropriate early years qualification, and two others are working towards a qualification. All staff have attended short courses relating to their role.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Little Birch Pre-School offers good quality care, where children are making generally good progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. In the areas of creative and personal, social and emotional development, children are making very good progress.

Teaching is generally good. Staff manage children's behaviour very well, using a range of effective strategies and a positive approach. The planning and assessment systems require further development to ensure they are effective, however, the use of the outdoor area is well planned for, maximising opportunities for all children. Staff interact very well with children, they organise their time well to ensure that whilst the children are present, they are actively involved with their learning. The pre-school has a wide variety of resources, however, in some areas, the lack of organisation of equipment prevents children from being able to access appropriate tools for themselves. Effective systems are in place to support children who have special needs, and those who speak English as an additional language.

Leadership and management of the setting is generally good. Recent changes in the staffing and committee have occurred, but systems have quickly been put in place to establish good working relationships between all concerned. The introduction of appraisals for staff has been used to identify training needs, and support is offered to staff to attend training. Systems have not yet been set up to allow key staff opportunities to monitor the success of the pre-school routines.

Partnerships with parents are generally good. They receive newsletters, have access to planning sheets and are informed through notices about forthcoming topics and events at the pre-school, however, they receive little information about the foundation stage curriculum. Parents feel confident to discuss their child's progress and are aware of their child's key worker.

What is being done well?

- Personal social and emotional development is a strength throughout the group. Children are busy, involved and interested in their play and learning. They develop good relationships with adults within the setting and their peers, and have good opportunities to be independent within the setting. They are beginning to learn right from wrong, understanding the clear boundaries established.
- Very good use is made of the outside environment. The group has access to several different interesting areas, and plans include details of how opportunities for learning will be maximised by making full use of the playground, climbing equipment, nature trail and the smaller enclosed area.
- Staff use a range of very good strategies to manage children's behaviour.

The children are constantly praised and encouraged throughout activities. Staff are consistent and fair in their approach, setting clear and realistic boundaries for all children.

- Children have excellent opportunities to use their imaginations during a good range of art, craft and music. They freely explore paint, colour and texture, developing their own creativity when designing and making their own pictures or models, encouraged and supported by staff who value all of the children's work. They love to join in with songs and rhymes, and listen carefully to music that is played during the session.

What needs to be improved?

- the organisation of resources and equipment to allow children to access appropriate tools from the wide range available
- the opportunities to encourage children to engage in mark making activities
- the system used for planning to ensure it clearly identifies learning aims and is linked to assessment records to offer appropriate challenge to all children.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The setting has made generally good progress since the last inspection. They had three key issues to address.

They were asked to extend opportunities for children to practice mathematical skills throughout a wide range of activities. Planning now includes many opportunities for children to use number, however, the opportunities for children to engage in simple problem solving continues to be limited.

Staff were asked to build on existing teaching skills and use open ended questioning. The staff team has changed since the last inspection, the current person in charge is qualified and demonstrates a sound understanding of how to encourage children's learning through effective questioning. She discusses learning aims with other staff at the beginning of each session, and they in turn use effective questioning with individual children. Staff attend short courses to develop their skills, and two staff members are attending level three training in childcare.

The final issue related to implementing the new assessment system. Due to the changes in staffing, the group are currently developing a new assessment system, to work alongside planning, this area is ongoing.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are confident and settled within the familiar daily routines. They show interest and excitement when engaging in the range of activities on offer. They are comfortable within the pre-school setting, freely choosing and selecting activities independently. Children's behaviour is good, they respond well to the praise and encouragement offered by staff. They develop good relationships with adults and other children, learning to share and take turns.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's spoken language is developing very well. They confidently exchange their thoughts and ideas and share information and news within a small group. Children are not fully encouraged to develop their mark making skills. They demonstrate a clear understanding that print carries meaning, and make good use of books, enjoying having a story read to them, but also demonstrating a good understanding of how to use a book themselves, taking pleasure in offering to "read" a story to an adult.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children show an interest and developing awareness of shape, size and measure introduced through a range of practical activities. They sort and order objects according to colour and height. The children use numbers independently when engaging in games and play, and are developing an awareness of numbers that are important to them, however, their interest in number is not fully extended to consider simple problem solving during practical activities such as snack time.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children enjoy exploring, and are offered many opportunities to find out about both natural and man made objects in the indoor and outdoor environments. They are developing an awareness of themselves and of their own community, becoming involved in activities with the first school children. Through a range of interesting projects and resources, are developing an understanding of other communities. The children have few opportunities to fully extend their awareness of ICT equipment.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children move confidently and with care when playing indoors and outdoors, moving their bodies to music, and adapting their movement according to instructions. They demonstrate a good awareness of space, and have frequent opportunities to engage in climbing and sliding on purpose built equipment. They are not often encouraged to think about their own bodies and the effects that exercise has on them. They use a range of small tools and equipment with increasing skill and control.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children regularly engage in creative activities, using their own imaginations to produce art and craft work that is always valued by staff. They explore colour through paint, and use a range of tools to make different effects. They enjoy music, which is played during the session, and join in with the fun songs and rhymes at group times. Musical instruments are available, and some children use these to join in at singing time, showing a developing awareness of rhythm.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- review the organisation of resources to ensure children can easily access appropriate tools for specific activities
- increase opportunities for children to develop mark making skills
- continue to develop and improve the planning and assessment systems.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.