



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 130628

DfES Number: 517465

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 17/09/2003
Inspector Name Maureen East

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care
Setting Name Buffer Bear Nursery
Setting Address Watford Junction Station, Station Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD17 1AB

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Buffer Bear Limited 130628

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Buffer Bear Limited
Address Head Office
The Hospitium, Valpy Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 1AR

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and 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

Buffer Bear Limited is a privately run company providing childcare across the country, it has a chain of 26 nurseries. Dr Kay Turner is the managing Director and Julie Felton Witter the Area Operations Manager. Buffer Bear at Watford is managed by Jackie Hewett. It has been open since May 1994. Jackie Hewett has been with the company since January 1995. She has appropriate qualifications in both childcare and management.

The nursery is open from 07:00 - 19:00 hours, Monday to Friday all year round. It is a purpose built building on one level. It is situated at Watford Junction Station but available to the public. A small number of places are reserved for employees of some Civil Service Departments. Both full and part time places are available.

There are currently 64 children on roll, of whom 6, four-year-olds and 2, three-year-olds receive funding. There are no funded children that speak English as an additional language, however, there are two children with special educational needs. Two members of staff are working with the funded children; one is a nursery trained teacher and the other a qualified nursery assistant.

How good is the Day Care?

Buffer Bear Nursery provides satisfactory care for children. It has strong leadership with a continuous group of senior staff. At least 50% of the team are suitably qualified although there has been a recent turnover of nursery assistants. Additional part time staff help cover the busy periods of the day with a bank of staff to cover leave. An effective induction programme is in place with ongoing, in-house training. The nursery is well organised into 5 play rooms, grouped according to age and ability to meet the needs of the children. The environment is warm and welcoming with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.

Planned activities are carried out daily for all ages of children with additional opportunities and play experiences for the over 2's to extend their learning and development. Toys and resources are rotated regularly throughout the day. The

range is being extended but the choice for the under 2's is still limited particularly for the more mobile babies.

Interaction between the staff and the children is generally good, however, some of the staff working in the Koala Bear playroom need to develop their skills and understanding to meet the needs of these very young children to ensure an age appropriate, stimulating environment is provided.

The staff have a satisfactory understanding of health and safety. They take positive steps to ensure that risks to children are minimised. Two recommendations have been identified to improve further. The nursery has a dedicated cook who provides a healthy diet for the children. Good use is made of meal times to develop independence and social skills.

The staff and parents work in partnership to meet the individual needs of the children. Information is shared daily both verbally and through written daily charts. All documentation is in place with an extensive range of policies and procedures, staff need to ensure that all visitors sign the provided register.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Three actions were identified at the last inspection: review and replace the children's beds and bedding as necessary. Make the gate leading to the railway platform inaccessible to the children using the nursery. Review entry system to ensure staff working in the playrooms are not responsible for admitting parents, visitors and deliveries.

Floor mattresses and bedding have been purchased and new cots are in place for the babies. The gate leading to the railway platform is kept locked, security cards are issued for emergency access. The intercom system for the entrance has been moved to the office. All staff and parents have been issued with swipe cards for access.

What is being done well?

- The nursery has the benefit of effective management and leadership. The nursery manager has 8 years experience working within the setting. She has suitable qualifications both in childcare and management. (Standard 1)
- The structure of the day is well organised to meet the varying needs of children between the ages of 3 months - 5 years. The children are familiar with the routine, they appear happy and settled. The key worker works closely with the parents to ensure consistency and continuity of care. (Standard 2)
- Staff plan first hand experiences for the children which enables children to make choices as they develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. The children's development is monitored regularly and this information is used to provide for their individual needs. (Standard 3)

- The staff understand the importance of safety, regular risk assessments are carried out and fire drills practised monthly. An additional off site evacuation area has been established and emergency lighting installed in the provision. All of the play rooms interlink which enables staff to assist each other to ensure children are supported at all times. (Standard 6)
- A good range of resources are in place to reflect positive images, diversity and disability. Children are treated as individuals to make them feel valued and good about themselves. (Standard 9)
- An extensive range of policies and procedures are in place to ensure the efficient and safe management of the provision which promotes the care, welfare and learning of children. Ofsted is kept informed of all significant changes and events. (Standard 12)

What needs to be improved?

- the procedure to ensure that all visitors sign in the provided register; (Standard 2)
- the knowledge and understanding of all staff working in the Koala Bear playroom to ensure that they meet the individual needs of very young children; (Standard 3)
- the range of toys and resources for the under 2's, in particular for the more mobile babies; (Standard 5)
- the safety of the self closing, external playroom doors; (Standard 6)
- the safety of the children playing outside in the hot weather, to ensure some shade. (Standard 7)

Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person must take the following actions by the date shown

Std	Action	Date
-----	--------	------

3	provide and implement an action plan which details how the staff in the Koala Bear playroom will develop their skills and understanding to meet the needs of very young children to ensure an age appropriate, stimulating environment is provided	03/10/2003
---	--	------------

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
5	extend the range of toys and resources for the under 2's, in particular for the more mobile babies
6	ensure that hazards to children on the premises are minimised. This refers to the external doors in the playrooms that have self closures and are propped open at times.
7	review the safety of the children playing outside during the hot weather to ensure some shade

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The nursery is providing the children with a generally good early years experience. The children are making good progress in the areas of mathematics, creative and physical development and generally good progress in the areas of personal and social development, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.

The quality of teaching is generally good, the nursery teacher has a sound understanding of the early learning goals, these are encompassed within thorough written plans. Plans state what the children are expected to learn and the activities and resources which will support this learning. Activities presented to the children are stimulating, however some planned group activities were too challenging for the younger children, which in turn disrupted learning for the older and more able children.

The leadership and management of the nursery is good. The manager has been in post for three years, and has worked within the setting for the past nine years, she leads her team of staff effectively, and ensures there is provision for updated training. The nursery teacher has been in post for six years, thus also brings stability for her group of children. The manager has a positive approach to the continual monitoring and improvement of the nursery, necessary procedures are in place.

The nursery has developed generally good relationships with parents. The majority of parents stated within their questionnaires that they were very happy with the service being provided. The nursery holds parents evenings twice a year, and maintains written developmental records for each individual child. There have been some issues surrounding communication with staff and parents, the manager has acknowledged this issue, and has implemented a message book within each room and hopes this will improve the situation.

What is being done well?

- Children are happy and secure within their environment. They are generally co-operative and respond well to the adults caring for them.
- Children are learning and developing good mathematical skills through everyday practical activities.
- Children's physical development is particularly good, they are progressing within all areas, they show good levels of co-ordination and manipulative skills.
- Staff continually assess children's individual progress, written observations of their development are utilised to inform future planning.
- Staff plan an exciting curriculum that captures the children's imagination, all

areas of learning are given high priority.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's planning of group activities, to ensure that these are pitched at the appropriate level for both the younger and more able children.
- resources for language and literacy, this refers to the reading and writing areas. These areas could be more inviting and stimulating, thus encouraging independent use by the children.
- the use of the computer to ensure that all children have equal access to this resource.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The nursery has made significant improvement in the three key issues arising from the last inspection, this has had a positive impact on all children within the group. The children now have regular opportunities to access a wide range of multi-cultural resources, planning incorporates looking at different cultures and religions. The children have been very interested in their recent project "holidays", children's knowledge and understanding of different countries has been extended. Creative work is now geared towards free expression rather than a desired outcome, staff have noted a real development within children's confidence to explore creative art materials. Children's awareness of health and their bodies is an ongoing development, plans incorporate extending children's understanding of how their body works and what happens to them when they run or get tired. The children are gaining confidence within their own self care, they brush their teeth and wash their hands independently.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's learning in personal, social and emotional development is generally good. The children are confident to access their environment and relationships on the whole are secure. Both the younger and older children are developing a positive sense of self worth and independence, during lunch they delight in helping to set up the tables, and assist themselves to the food on offer. Some aspects of children's learning is hindered through inappropriate grouping of younger and more able children.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's progress in communication, language and literacy is generally good. Children are confident to talk out within group situations and younger children are encouraged to share their ideas. Emergent writing is evident within the children's work books, younger children focussing more on the aspects of pencil control. Reading and writing is given high priority, however resources are limited, and the environment could be more inviting to encourage the children's independent use of resources.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are making good progress in mathematical development. Staff make good use of everyday situations to extend children's understanding of numbers. Both younger and older children count how many plates and cups they will need for lunch, they organise the correct amount of cutlery. They have regular opportunities to cook, and thus weigh ingredients and explore quantity and size. Weekly plans encompass this area well, a focus number is adopted, thus reinforcing children's understanding.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world is generally good. Children have good opportunities to increase their awareness of the natural world. Children went out into the garden and explored the texture and properties of the small birch tree, they then recorded their observations through drawings, and older children through their writing. Children confidently utilise the computer, however there is no monitoring of this resource to ensure all children have equal access to this.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Provision for children's physical development is very good. They have daily opportunities to develop and extend both their larger and finer motor skills. A weekly tots in sport session allows children to explore their bodies further, the children participated in a soft ball rugby game. The coach adapted the session to cater for both the younger and older children, he encouraged their development of balance and co-ordination as well as ball skills. The children thoroughly enjoyed this activity.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's progress in creative development is good. Plans incorporate daily opportunities for children to explore freely creative art materials. Music sessions are held weekly. Painting, water and sand play was offered to the children both outside, and within the nursery, these were well utilised. Displays of children's work and topics covered, reinforce their development within this area.

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

- ensure that all children's individual needs are considered, when planning group sessions. Sessions should be at an appropriate level for both the younger and more able children.
- extend resources for the provision of language and literacy, this refers to books and comfortable furnishing for the reading area and more writing aids to encourage the children to participate in independent writing.
- ensure that all children have equal access to the computer.

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.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.