

The BigTop Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Sonjia Nicholson

Setting address Bedgrove Pavilion, Bedgrove Park, Ambleside, Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire, HP21 9TT
Telephone number 01296 427 861 or 07814 828 088
Email sylvia robinson@btopenworld.com
Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

The Big Top Pre-School was registered in 2002. It is privately owned and operates from a community centre in the Bedgrove area of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. The pre-school opens from 9.15am until 12.15pm on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and from 1.00pm until 3.30pm on Tuesdays during term times only. Children have use of a large main hall with easy access to an enclosed outdoor area. Staff make use of the pre-school's close proximity to the playground, park and training pitch to further extend children's physical play. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and both parts of the Childcare Register to provide care for up to 40 children under eight years at any one time. There are currently 75 children in the early years age range on roll, The pre-school receives funding for free education sessions for two-, three- and four-year-olds. The pre-school supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and who are learning English as an additional language. The pre-school employs 10 staff. The owner/manager is awaiting the result of her Early Years degree and all other staff have relevant early years qualifications. The pre-school is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and is part of a pilot scheme offering places to disadvantaged two year olds. The setting is currently working towards gaining the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) 'Rights and Respecting Early Years Award'. It receives support from the Buckinghamshire Early Years and Childcare Service.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are eager to attend this welcoming, friendly setting. They are busily engaged in a wide variety of activities which, overall, are planned to meet their specific individual needs. The diverse staff team provides outstanding support to all children and ensures they are included in all aspects of the pre-school. The setting demonstrates a good capacity for continuous improvement as they constantly review their practice.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop and implement techniques to support children in turn-taking, waiting until someone else has finished and listening to others.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All staff attend safeguarding training and as a result know about the possible signs and different types of abuse. They maintain confidential records of any concerns, meetings and existing injuries and report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). She is extremely familiar with the procedures to follow and has worked closely with the referral and assessment team to ensure children receive appropriate intervention. In light of recent high profile cases the DSO has introduced several new procedures to further protect children; these include monitoring the use of social networking sites and ensuring mobile telephones are not used in the playroom. Children play safely as hazards have been identified through risk assessments, for example, staff supervise children as they go to the toilets and do not allow them access to the kitchen. Staff describe well thought-out procedures to keep children safe on walks to the nearby spinney and nature reserve.

Children have access to a wide range of toys and resources that are in good condition. New units have been purchased to enable children to be more independent and select their own craft materials, tools and musical instruments. Staff are deployed successfully so children receive appropriate support as they play.

Partnerships with parents are successful. Parents of children due to attend the following term are invited to visit several times before they start. Those spoken to are very happy with their choice stating they like the outdoor area and the way staff speak to the children. Information for existing parents is on display in the foyer and regular newsletters mean they are aware of what is going on, for example, the end of term picnic. Parents and carers are very positive about the service and particularly like the range of activities offered, the way children with special educational needs and or/disabilities are supported and the fact that children go on walks in the local area. They think the staff are 'fantastic' and feel the key person system works 'brilliantly'. Communication is 'first class' comments one carer. The owner/manager is very keen to drive her business forward. She regularly takes part in new initiatives, such as, the two- year-old pilot scheme, so staff gain new experiences and knowledge and the setting is often used as a host venue for training courses. Staff meet regularly to discuss their practice and annual appraisals highlight their training needs which are given high priority. They attend many short courses and show a commitment to gaining professional childcare qualifications. The recommendations raised at the previous inspection have been successfully met.

Outstanding partnerships have been established with many outside agencies including staff from the local authority Quality Improvement Team. Staff have an excellent rapport with the inclusion officer who frequently visits along with other professionals, such as staff from the pupil referral unit to support the high number of children attending with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All staff have seized the opportunity to observe a speech and language therapist at work to gain a greater understanding of how to support children. The setting's special

educational needs coordinator is well-qualified to advise staff when they have concerns about a child's development. As a result children and parents receive exceptional support. Children celebrate a number of events to help them develop an understanding of cultural diversity. These include the World Cup, Fair Trade Fortnight, Diwali and Chinese New Year.

The setting is working towards gaining the UNICEF rights respecting early years settings award which has made them consider children's rights. These include the right to have good quality healthcare, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment. Consequently children are beginning to understand why litter and graffiti are unacceptable. They are also learning about recycling and the fact they must not waste water.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children have fun and enjoy their time at pre-school. They have a strong sense of belonging and feel safe, demonstrated by the fact they move confidently around the setting, approaching known adults and starting conversations. They are familiar with the established routines in place. For example, they are fully involved in tidying the toys away at the end of the session. Children are progressing well as staff are aware of their starting points for learning and use this, along with information gathered from ongoing observations, to plan activities that are specific to their needs. They also plan activities that are linked to children's interests. For example, they add more vehicles and non-fiction books for a child who is keen on lorries and create a treasure map with clues for a child to follow. Subsequently, children are excited by their environment and are keen to participate. For example, they make handprints to create sunflower pictures, observe the caterpillars inside their cocoons and enjoy investigating modelling dough.

Free-flow play is available throughout the session and the outdoor area is particularly popular as it provides ample opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. They use the training pitch to run about and kick and throw a variety of balls. Children make marks with large brushes in the water trough outside, paint at the easel and balance on low-level beams as staff replicate indoor activities. Children are encouraged to become independent, especially at snack time, where several children are chosen to be milk monitors. They have a variety of healthy snacks, such as satsumas and breadsticks, that cover all the necessary food groups required for a balanced diet.

Children benefit from the motivated staff team who work very well together to ensure the session runs smoothly. Children observe the staff engaging in lots of friendly banter and laughter and enjoy excellent interaction with them in all aspects of their play. As a result children's communication and language skills are developing well. Most children are confident speakers but during large group times some children are so eager to speak they interrupt others and do not always listen attentively. This means that not everyone is able to take a turn. Children make a positive contribution to the setting as they behave well and play cooperatively.

Their views are actively considered by the staff and their feelings are explored through a variety of resources and activities. For example, they roll the 'emotions' dice and talking about how it feels to leave pre-school and start 'big school'. Children are gaining skills for the future through a wealth of activities. They often use the photocopier with adult support and access the laptop computer to develop basic information communication and technology skills.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met