

Busy Bees Childcare Limited

Employer

Inspection dates		16-19 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of learners achieve their qualification within the planned timescales.
- Apprentices develop good childcare, personal and analytical skills.
- Learners benefit from good training and a rich range of training activities, supported well by specialist training staff, managers and workplace mentors.
- The company's strategy is to develop its own staff, and it provides good training and progression routes to achieve this. Busy Bees has high expectations and invests significant resources into apprenticeship training and development.
- Apprentices aged 16 -18 are trained within a fully staffed nursery and so they benefit from allocated time to train and learn during working time. Safeguarding arrangements for apprentices are excellent.
- The Busy Bees' training team is led and managed very well and has a good record of improving its programmes successfully and achieving high standards.
- Training staff respond well to the clear direction they receive and participate in change and improvement enthusiastically. They are supported effectively through well-managed, continuous professional development.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The training department has not yet introduced its own clear strategic development plan or evaluation process to judge the quality and performance of its activities overall.
- The training skills and qualifications of the training team require further development to meet the planned expansion of the provision's learner numbers.
- Written records of topics discussed at learners' reviews on equality and diversity, health and safety and safeguarding lack rigour.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop the training skills and level of qualified expertise in the team required to expand the provision further, in particular with regards to the teaching methods for functional skills.
- Increase the number of staff qualified to monitor and further develop standards in teaching, ensuring that all assessors gain qualifications.
- Create and implement a development plan, with measurable objectives, which identifies clearly key performance indicators to ensure the overall progress made by learners can be evaluated and actions can be taken to establish outstanding apprenticeship programmes.
- Ensure effective recording of equality and diversity, safeguarding, and health and safety issues during learners' reviews to facilitate reflective learning.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Success rates have improved continuously over the last two years and are now high. The majority of learners achieve their qualification by their planned end date. The integration of key and functional skills is good and effectively supports the achievement of the full framework. There are no significant differences in the achievement of outcomes between different groups of learners.
- Learners' retention has improved since the last inspection and current learners are making good progress. The provider works hard to provide very effective support for learners by reviewing its recruitment practices, and using the outcomes of initial assessments to ensure that learners are on the correct level of programme. It implements appropriate development plans to support achievement.
- Learners develop very good workplace skills, and demonstrate a high standard of theoretical knowledge. Learners demonstrate how they relate the theory of child development to their practical work, for example during storytelling. Many learners identify how they have grown in confidence and improved their ability to communicate with children, the children's parents and carers, and colleagues. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is high.
- Progression within the company following completion of the apprenticeships is very good. Busy Bees employs all its learners, who are able to develop their careers within childcare and progress on to managerial roles. A high proportion of learners progress to increased levels of responsibility through promotion, for example by becoming qualified early years' educators, room managers at different levels and assistant nursery managers.
- A substantial number of learners progress from intermediate to advanced apprentice training. The company has seen a considerable decrease in staff turnover for learners who have completed their qualification.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as is reflected in the improved and good outcomes for learners. Learners enjoy their studies and are highly motivated to improve their practice and

to progress. For example, many learners have gained promotion to room manager and are now working towards a level 3 management certificate or foundation degree.

- Learners demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of the children in their care. They work well with other members of staff to provide a safe and stimulating environment. In particular, learners develop good communication skills, encouraging children to explore and gain confidence in the nursery.
- Training officers are satisfactorily qualified and vocationally experienced. All have, or are working towards, appropriate assessor awards and teaching qualifications. They use their experience well to promote discussion and to challenge learners to reflect more deeply and to improve their practice that helps them to aspire to a high standard of provision. For example, they encourage learners to reflect upon different strategies to support children's language development.
- Assessment practice is carefully matched to the needs of individuals. This supports learners very well. Training officers use action plans creatively, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Learners take good ownership of their learning by choosing units to match their work role and deciding the order in which to complete them. Those wishing to work more quickly are supported well to do so with frequent visits.
- Thorough induction to both the apprenticeship programme and the nursery encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning from an early stage. Clear and challenging targets are negotiated, reviewed regularly and updated. Managers and mentors are involved fully in this process, providing additional support and guidance to learners.
- Detailed and comprehensive feedback on work and performance is used well, encouraging learners to reflect and identify ways to improve their knowledge and professional practice. However, written feedback during reviews does not record learners' responses to questions routinely, that makes it difficult to measure their understanding of equality and diversity, safeguarding, and health and safety.
- Key skills are satisfactorily integrated into the main programme, however, spelling and grammar are not always corrected. Managers have introduced functional skills recently and are in the process of integrating them. They integrate information and communication technology, personal learning and thinking skills particularly well.
- Busy Bees celebrate successful completion of apprenticeships regularly. For example, a competition for storytelling involved learners from all regions, and led to the 12 finalists reading their story to the author, senior directors and publishers in London. Awards were made at the House of Lords to a learner in training and to another learner who had just completed the advanced apprenticeship.
- Learners demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of safeguarding children that informs their practice well. They recognise the importance of working closely with colleagues, parents and carers to plan and promote children's learning within a safe environment. Learners adopt safe working practices and are able to identify key personnel should a problem arise.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Busy Bees' vision demonstrates its ambition for its apprentices through its strategy for achieving high quality childcare in its nurseries. The company has high expectations and invests significant resources into apprenticeship training and development.
- The company's strategy is focused on developing its own staff, and it provides good training and progression routes to achieve this. Apprentices aged 16-18 are trained within a fully staffed nursery and are given time to train and learn. Training staff work well as a team, are highly motivated and have high expectations for their apprentices. They work very effectively with

learners, providing a good, flexible and responsive service to them in the workplace with a high level of individual support.

- As a leading employer in its sector, the company plays a prominent role with external partners, including government departments, to raise standards and promote high quality training for the sector, in line with national and local priorities.
- The training department provides good leadership and management for the apprenticeship programme, with a good record of successfully implementing improvements and raising success rates over the past two years. Last year, a high proportion of learners achieved qualifications within their planned timescales.
- The current approach taken to improving teaching and learning is good and the outcomes contribute to staff performance appraisals. Well-managed and resourced continuous professional development supports the quality improvement strategy for training. This includes a successful approach to the sharing of good practices through shadowing and peer observations. However, further development of staff's training skills, for example by providing teaching and support for functional skills and for overseeing standards is a required improvement. Too few qualified observers for teaching and learning are available to respond to increasing learner numbers and the changing requirements of the training programme.
- Comprehensive quality assurance arrangements, including responding to users' views, internal verification and self-assessment, are effective and lead to continuous improvement of learners' experience. Managers use data analysis very effectively at all levels of the provision. Staff and managers monitor apprentices' progress effectively and take appropriate action when required. A revised support strategy for learners is in place although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this.
- Managers carry out the planning and evaluation of specific initiatives and changes well. However, evaluation and future planning of the training department's apprenticeship programme are not formalised. The current key performance indicators are not specific to the apprentice programmes.
- Good curriculum management ensures that individual learners' needs are prioritised and that programmes reflect well learners' needs and those of the business. Training is accessible to learners at work and they benefit from the expertise of training staff who are highly experienced in childcare. These staff provide a rich programme of learning and successfully integrate on- and off-the-job training.
- The size, scope and geographical coverage of the apprentice programme continue to expand. Leaders and managers respond appropriately to external requirements. Strategies to increase the proportion of learners aged 16-18 are working reasonably well, with 47 percent of current learners being from this group at the time of the inspection.
- Strong partnerships exist internally between managers and mentors in the nurseries who provide good training and support for learners. Managers and mentors are well briefed and respond well to the requirements for work-based learning. Mentors are carefully selected, trained effectively, and provide particularly helpful individual guidance and support for learners at work.
- The company promotes equality and diversity effectively. Positive messages are communicated through all the company's communications. It monitors participation, progress and achievement for different groups of apprentices and actions taken have reduced differences in progress and success rates.
- Busy Bees' approach to safeguarding is outstanding and it has continued to develop since the last inspection when it was judged good. Training staff work closely with learners and their mentors to understand their individual needs and backgrounds and to identify any possible risks. Health and safety arrangements are thorough and the provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Busy Bees Childcare Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
	Overall effectiveness	2				2			
	Outcomes for learners	2				2			
	The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2				2			
	The effectiveness of leadership and management	2				2			

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Early years and playwork	2

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	81	18	27	167	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Additional socio-economic information

Busy Bees Childcare Limited is a private company, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Busy Bees Group Limited. Busy Bees is the largest childcare provider in the UK. The company currently operates 200 childcare facilities over a wide geographical spread and employs over 6000 staff. These facilities are a combination of commercial private day nurseries, work-place nurseries, shoppers' crèches and out of school schemes.

The training manager and core team are all based at Busy Bees Group Head Office in Burntwood, Staffordshire. The remainder of the training team work at various sites throughout the group. The responsibility for training is within the operational team, under the leadership of the Human Resources Director.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Deavon Baker-Oxley HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the training manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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