

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Busy Bees Childcare Limited**

**09 June 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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## **Busy Bees Childcare Limited**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Busy Bees Childcare Limited (Busy Bees) was established in 1983 and is a private limited company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Busy Bees Group Limited. Busy Bees is the sixth largest childcare provider in the United Kingdom. The company employs over 1,800 staff and operates from 57 locations. Provision includes private day care, workplace nurseries, shoppers' crèches and school play schemes.

2. Busy Bees Training is a department of the Busy Bees group. Busy Bees Training offers training in health, social care and public services, specifically in early years, and is funded through the National Employer Service of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The training department is managed by a training manager and is supported by an operations manager, a lead internal verifier and a quality co-ordinator. Training and assessment are the responsibility of two full-time tutor/assessors, three full-time assessors and one part-time assessor.

3. In 2003, Busy Bees made a strategic decision to rationalise the training it provided and to focus solely on the delivery of advanced apprenticeships in early years care and education. In addition, it was decided that Busy Bees would focus on training staff for its own childcare provision. As a result of this, many learners were transferred to other training providers.

4. Busy Bees currently has accreditation with Investors in People, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its staff. The company was the first childcare company to achieve this award.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Busy Bees' leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in health, social care and public services.

6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Inspectors found the self-assessment report to be mainly accurate. Many of the strengths and weaknesses matched those identified by the inspectors, although there was no explanation of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Self-assessment is well integrated within Busy Bees and the current report is the fifth to be produced. All staff are involved in assessing the quality of the provision. The resulting action plan is well written and provides clear targets and timescales.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Busy Bees has a clear commitment to continuous improvement. Since the previous inspection, the company has taken over the work of a provider of early years care and training. It has been effective in handling these changes. Busy Bees has been effective in carrying out actions to promote improvement. Proposed actions to improve quality have

clear timescales and details. Progress against proposed actions is monitored well. Good recent strategies have been introduced to improve retention rates. It is too soon to judge the effect of these actions.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR BUSY BEES CHILDCARE LIMITED:

- continue to develop strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve literacy, numeracy and language skills support
- develop a single management information system
- resolve differences in programme delivery
- build on and maintain the high standards achieved

## GRADES

*grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate*

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		2

Health, social care & public services			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Early years</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	94	3	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. The training offered by Busy Bees for learners on the early years programme was reported on and graded. Two inspectors visited Busy Bees once in the six weeks before the inspection.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	39
Number of staff interviewed	17
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of visits	4

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

9. **Learners develop good workplace skills.** Many learners are promoted within the organisation before they achieve their full framework. Learners are able to work safely, independently and to a very high standard.

10. **All learners have good opportunities to gain additional work-related skills and qualifications.** They gain skills in areas such as food hygiene and paediatric first aid to support their vocational work. Opportunities to improve communication and management skills are provided by attending in-house courses and meetings with prospective nursery users.

11. **The proportion of learners remaining on programme is increasing.** Of the 82 learners who started their training in September 2002, 12 were still in learning in June 2003. Of the 27 learners who started in September 2003, 22 were still in learning in June 2004. At the time of the inspection in June 2005, 47 of the 51 learners who started their training in September were still on their programmes.

12. **Completion rates on the apprenticeship frameworks are poor.** Of the 215 learners who started their advanced modern apprenticeship between 2000 and 2003, only five have completed the framework. None of the 31 learners who started their apprenticeship in 2002-03 have completed the framework. Eight learners who are no longer receiving funding have completed all aspects of their advanced apprenticeship and are awaiting verification. A further six learners have achieved their national vocational qualification (NVQ). Twenty out of the 22 learners who started their advanced apprenticeship in 2003-04 have achieved their technical certificate.

### The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	2	3	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

13. **Effective progress reviews monitor learners' progress and set most learners clear and challenging targets.** Progress against targets is well monitored and discussed at training team meetings and quarterly individual meetings. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is well monitored at reviews.

14. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. All of the learning sessions observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory. Most sessions are well planned and stimulating. Good use is made of learners' workplace experiences to support the learning processes. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Most portfolios are well presented and contain a sufficient range of assessed work.

15. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners' literacy and numeracy skills support needs are assessed when they join the programme. However, the provision of additional

support is varied and **some learners receive insufficient support.** Most staff do not have sufficient experience, confidence or qualifications in the delivery of essential skills.

16. Induction is satisfactory. All learners are provided with the relevant policies and procedures. All learners receive a three-day induction into their training and a 12-week induction into the workplace.

17. **Busy Bees does not actively encourage learners to participate in activities not related to their training.** No extra curricular activities are organised and learners from across the company have limited opportunities to meet and share experiences. Learners are not informed of opportunities outside of the workplace. A few learners have participated in a fundraising activity.

### Leadership and management

18. **Busy Bees has a clear and effective strategy** that is shared with and understood by staff. Training is a core component of the business plan and is a key focus of the organisation.

19. **Good formal and informal communications keep all staff informed of training and learners' progress in training.** Regular training team meetings ensure all staff have current relevant knowledge and are operating to a high standard. Meetings are well attended and recorded and are effective in ensuring quality. Learners' success is shared and celebrated through a monthly training update that is circulated to all nurseries.

20. **A good range of additional training enables all learners to gain additional qualifications and progress within the organisation.** Busy Bees has a strong commitment to lifelong learning, training and personal development.

21. Busy Bees monitors staff members' performance satisfactorily. All staff are set key performance indicators that are monitored and reviewed at quarterly individual meetings. Staff are appropriately qualified and have recent relevant vocational experience. Learners' workplaces provide them with up-to-date, modern equipment. A range of books and other resources are available to support learners in their training.

22. **Busy Bees has implemented equality of opportunity well.** An effective equality and diversity focus group promotes all aspects of equality of opportunity across the organisation. Comprehensive policies and procedures are well understood by staff. All new staff are made aware of the policy and its requirements during their induction. The organisation has clear targets to recruit a diverse workforce. The human resources department monitors the implementation of the policies and procedures. Equality of opportunity is reinforced at reviews using a set of questions. Matters arising from the reviews are discussed at training team meetings and relevant training provided.

23. Busy Bees uses data to monitor the rates at which different groups of learners achieve. It makes comparisons of achievement by learners' gender, ethnicity and location within the country. However, it does not analyse the achievement of learners who require additional learning support. Recruitment and selection of staff and learners is closely monitored and analysed.



**24. Busy Bees effectively implements and monitors good initiatives to improve quality.**

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that training is monitored and continuously improved. A comprehensive schedule ensures that all key processes are monitored and reviewed. Busy Bees uses feedback from learners and employers effectively to improve training. Feedback is analysed and discussed at training team and verification meetings and actions agreed, implemented, monitored and reviewed at subsequent meetings.

25. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. Appropriate documents are used to record the outcomes of the verification and to provide assessors with clear and useful feedback.

26. The self-assessment and action-planning process is effective. All staff are involved in the process and understand its purpose. The action plan identifies clear actions and timescales for dealing with all of the points made in the report. However, some of the areas highlighted as strengths in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice, and the effect on learners of the identified weaknesses is not explained.

**27. Busy Bees' management of some aspects of programme delivery is ineffective.**

Standards of training vary across the company. Learners who are accessing their training through distance learning have experienced delays in receiving their work and are not progressing as quickly as other learners.

**28. The support for learners who have literacy, numeracy or language needs is unco-ordinated.** Busy Bees does not have an effective strategy. Training staff are not qualified to deliver literacy and numeracy skills support. Not all learners receive the support they need. Too little use is made of organisations outside of Busy Bees to provide the additional support.

**Leadership and management****Strengths**

- clear strategic direction and management of change
- good initiatives to develop quality improvements
- good implementation of equality of opportunity
- wide range of training opportunities to support learning and progression
- good internal communications

**Weaknesses**

- ineffective management of some aspects of programme delivery
- insufficiently developed strategy to meet additional learning needs

## **Health, social care & public services**

### ***Early years***

### ***Grade 3***

#### *Strengths*

- good opportunities to gain additional skills and qualifications
- good development of workplace skills
- increasing proportions of learners remaining on programme
- effective progress reviews for most learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor apprenticeship framework completion rates
- insufficient literacy, numeracy and language skills support
- limited opportunities for learners to participate in enrichment activities

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BUSY BEES CHILDCARE LIMITED:**

- the excellent teaching
- the relevance of off-the-job-training to their work role
- being able to work at their own pace
- having the whole day off to attend training
- the application of number workbook - 'very helpful in getting the key skills assignments done'
- Busy Bees' ethos of bettering yourself - with opportunities for extra training and career progression
- the good assessors
- the good training

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK BUSY BEES CHILDCARE LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- the amount of time allocated to work on the NVQ in the workplace
- the amount of help at the beginning of the programme
- the amount of handouts - there are too many of them
- the wait in training sessions for other learners to complete their work
- the textbook - 'it was hard to read and understand'
- the distance to travel to training
- the provision of travel expenses to travel to training

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Grade 2

#### Strengths

- clear strategic direction and management of change
- good initiatives to develop quality improvements
- good implementation of equality of opportunity
- wide range of training opportunities to support learning and progression
- good internal communications

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective management of some aspects of programme delivery
- insufficiently developed strategy to meet additional learning needs

29. Busy Bees' managers and directors set a clear strategic direction that is shared with and understood by staff. In 2003, the board of directors at Busy Bees took the strategic decision to offer training to support the development of its own childcare workers. Learners who were on a range of training programmes and employed by a variety of companies were found suitable alternatives by Busy Bees in conjunction with local LSCs. The appointment of a training manager in 2004, a lead internal verifier and a training co-ordinator has been instrumental in developing an effective training team that is providing learners with improved learning experiences. The training team has provided the company with a strong focus on training and a clear desire to produce high-quality learners across the business. Training staff attend nursery managers' meetings and are represented at the annual nursery managers' conference. The strategic direction of the training department is detailed in the overall company business plan which is produced from individual nursery business plans. The business plan has clear links to the self-assessment and development plan process

30. Internal communications are good. Busy Bees has very well-developed formal and informal communication channels. Monthly training team, assessor and internal verification standardisation meetings are held. Assessors and tutors are able to discuss common concerns and to share good practice. Comprehensive minutes are taken and circulated to all relevant staff. Assessors attend regional team meetings where training is a standard agenda item. A monthly briefing sheet, 'Training Matters', keeps staff and learners at all sites well informed of training department developments and learners' achievements. It has been useful in raising the profile of training among staff and managers in the nurseries.

31. Busy Bees has a strong commitment to lifelong learning, training and personal development. Learners have good opportunities to participate in a wide range of mandatory and optional courses. These include baby care, manual handling, health and safety, anaphylaxis and challenging behaviour. Learners who take the 'selling nursery places effectively' course are able to show prospective clients around their nurseries. Learners who register clients following the visit receive a booking bonus payment. Busy Bees has a commitment to providing in-house qualifications which enable the company to monitor and influence the quality of training and to ensure it supports the strategic aims of

the organisation. Learners benefit from clear progression opportunities with associated training. For example, they are able to participate in modules of management training before they take on a management role. Busy Bees actively encourages staff to progress in the organisation, and many positive role models have progressed into positions of seniority.

32. Monitoring of performance is satisfactory. All learners' information is collected and disseminated centrally and is shared with senior managers and the organisation's board. Assessors are set targets for rates of retention and achievement and for documents that are reviewed quarterly in individual meetings with managers. All training staff are actively involved in setting and monitoring their individual targets. Key performance indicators have been introduced to identify trends in learners' performance and to raise achievements rates. These are discussed and reviewed at the monthly assessors' meetings and at quarterly individual meetings. They are also used as a key part of the annual appraisal process.

33. Busy Bees' management of additional literacy, numeracy and language skills support is unsatisfactory. Busy Bees does not have a policy or strategy for this support, and provision of support varies across the organisation. Initial assessment identifies learners' additional learning support needs but staff do not have the knowledge and experience to ensure that support meets each learner's additional needs. Not all learners who are identified as needing support receive it. Where support is received, the effect of it is not monitored. Busy Bees does not make use of other local providers to support learners' needs.

34. Some differences in the standards of teaching and assessing exist across the company. Learners at one training centre have experienced changes in assessors, and distance learners at this centre have experienced delays in receiving their training packages. These learners report that they are given little or no time to work on their tasks during working hours, although time is available to learners at other Busy Bee centres. Progress for some of these learners has been slow.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 2**

35. Busy Bees has comprehensive policies and procedures which are well understood by staff. These cover equality and diversity, bullying and harassment, grievances, complaints and disability. The business plan has clear aims and targets to recruit a skilled workforce that represents the diversity of the communities it serves. The equal opportunities policy and procedures are clear and detailed and state the standards staff are required to meet. The policy takes into account all relevant legislation. The human resources department monitors the implementation of the policies and procedures. All new staff are made aware of the policy and its requirements during their induction.

36. Learners receive good reinforcement of equality and diversity at regular review meetings. Busy Bees has developed an effective set of questions that check knowledge and understanding. Learners' responses are recorded on the review documents. Their answers are analysed to assess the depth of their understanding of specific topics so that additional information, training or support can be provided. Equality of opportunity is covered satisfactorily at induction and in training. The training sessions and their content are effectively used to promote learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. The language used is appropriate to the needs of the learners. All learners receive an appropriate induction that includes equality and diversity. All learners are given the Busy Bees equal opportunities, complaints, anti-bullying and harassment policies. Learners have

a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities and how to protect them. They know how to use the complaints procedure and where they can obtain help.

37. Busy Bees' focus group has been effective in promoting equality and diversity across the organisation. For example, new display literature and information have been sent to all nurseries and training centres following a questionnaire to staff on their understanding of equality and diversity. Staff training on equality and diversity is being revised following the feedback from the questionnaires and the advertising and application forms are being revised to target under-represented groups. Equality of opportunity is now a key focus of the annual nursery audits.

38. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item for all training team meetings. Mandatory training on equality of opportunity is provided for all staff and included in all new staff inductions. This training covers major areas such as equality and diversity, bullying and harassment, and disability awareness. All staff involved in recruitment attend specific training with regard to equality and diversity as it applies to recruitment practices. All training staff attended training in June 2005 on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

39. Busy Bees collects a satisfactory amount of data relating to ethnicity, additional learning needs and learners' progression. The data is analysed and shared with staff, and monthly reports are presented to the board. Data is used to identify learners' achievements by gender and ethnicity. The equality and diversity focus group uses data from comparative organisations to benchmark progress and set targets for recruitment of under-represented groups. Busy Bees' strategic plan sets specific and measurable targets for raising the numbers of men and members of minority ethnic groups in its learner intake. However, at the time of the inspection, only one learner was from a minority ethnic background and no learners were men. Busy Bees recognises this weakness and has taken positive action to recruit more learners from these groups. For example, it is currently working with a national association for young people and local youth and community groups to raise the profile of early years work. It also distributes information on the advanced apprenticeship programme to the Connexions service, colleges and schools. Information on the programmes is available in the main community languages.

40. All nurseries have been audited to check compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and to identify where changes were needed. All adaptations have now been completed. Most centres and facilities are accessible to people with restricted mobility. Where access is not possible, appropriate arrangements are made.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 2**

41. Busy Bees has been effective in identifying and implementing a range of quality improvements. It has developed an overall quality framework that details the key processes, policies, procedures and documents to promote and ensure continuous improvement. Although the quality framework is a recent development, the training team has identified and developed quality improvements in the planning, delivery and monitoring of learning. Recent developments include the creation of a procedures manual that identifies all key aspects of a learner's training. It includes self-assessment and development planning, internal verification and observations and feedback of teaching and learning. Existing individual learning plans have been replaced with more appropriate personal

learning plans to improve the recording and quality of information on learners. A comprehensive quality review plan identifies dates for the review of all key process and procedures by the training team. Reviews of the key processes can be implemented early if inconsistencies or improvements are identified. For example, the quality review plan was updated after regular internal audits of learners' files identified inconsistencies. A training session was quickly organised for all assessors to clarify and consolidate the process for reviewing learners' progress.

42. Busy Bees collects feedback from learners and managers three times a year. Learners are asked about their experiences of induction, the content and structures of taught sessions and their overall impressions of the programme. Managers are asked about the timing of the training, communications with the training team and the extent to which the training meets the needs of the workplace. The training manager analyses the feedback thoroughly and shares it with the training team, which has responded positively. For example, staff training has been moved from a weekend activity to predominantly a weekday activity for learners. This allows learners and managers to feel more involved in training.

43. Busy Bees has satisfactory management information systems. Reports on learners are produced regularly from two management information systems. One system provides information on contractual performance to senior managers and the local LSC while the other provides information on learners' progress and achievement to senior managers and training staff. The reports have been reviewed to ensure that they support assessors in their work role and provide relevant statistical information on learners' progression. All data is updated monthly, and staff use the performance data in quarterly individual management meetings and annual appraisals. Managers make good use of the management information to monitor the progress of learners and the company, and for decision-making.

44. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. The lead verifier is responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment and internal verification processes. The internal verifier has recently introduced regular standardisation meetings for all assessors. The lead verifier has produced a suitable sampling plan and regular audits have been established. The internal verifier holds relevant qualifications and the internal verification policy is clear. The internal verifier works to a written plan which covers all units and assessors. Written summaries of internal verification are produced and copies given to the relevant assessor. The awarding body's requirements are fulfilled adequately.

45. The self-assessment and development planning process is good. Busy Bees has produced five self-assessment reports. The self-assessment report produced for the inspection was updated in March 2004. Learners and managers were able to contribute to the self-assessment process along with training staff. However, the self-assessment report identified as strengths a number of areas that inspectors judged to be no more than satisfactory, and there was little explanation of the effect on learners of aspects of provision. The self-assessment report included insufficient or no explanation of the weaknesses identified. The monitoring and updating of the development plan was good.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, social care & public services

**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Early years</i> Apprenticeships for young people	94	<b>3</b> 3

46. Busy Bees currently has 94 early years learners, of whom two are apprentices and 92 are advanced apprentices. One current learner is from a minority ethnic background but no current learners are men. Most learners are employed. A few are in receipt of a training allowance. Learners work in day nurseries, schools, crèches and other early years settings. All of these settings are either owned or managed by Busy Bees. Most learners start their training in September. Training and assessment takes place in the workplace and in weekly workshops that are held at the three training centres. Learners who cannot attend the training centres are supported by a distance learning programme.

#### *Early years*

**Grade 3**

#### *Strengths*

- good opportunities to gain additional skills and qualifications
- good development of workplace skills
- increasing proportions of learners remaining on programme
- effective progress reviews for most learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor apprenticeship framework completion rates
- insufficient literacy, numeracy and language skills support
- limited opportunities for learners to participate in enrichment activities

### **Achievement and standards**

47. Busy Bees is effective in improving learners' employability skills. Learners demonstrate very good practical skills related to their role at work. Learners are competent and knowledgeable in most aspects of childcare and child development. Most managers are pleased with learners' skills, competence and knowledge. All managers stated that learners were able to work independently and to a very high professional standard. Early in their apprenticeship, learners are given responsibility for the quality of their work. Many learners are promoted to room leaders on achieving their level 3 NVQ. Attendance is well monitored and Busy Bees has well-established procedures for reporting absences from work and training.

48. Learners benefit from the opportunity to participate in a wide range of additional qualifications and to develop additional skills. Courses in topics such as paediatric first aid, manual handling, food hygiene and customer services are available at the training centres.



All learners gain additional qualifications that are directly relevant to their workplace. The additional qualifications provide learners with good opportunities for promotion and progression on completion of their advanced apprenticeship. Learners who have specific interests are supported to attend additional training. For example, one learner expressed an interest in specialising in special needs and was supported to attend the special educational needs co-ordinator training and to become the nurseries' co-ordinator. Learners have opportunities to develop communication skills by attending courses in 'promoting nursery places', showing parents around the nurseries and attending management development courses.

49. The proportion of learners remaining on programme is increasing. Of the 82 learners who started their training in September 2002, 12 remained in learning in June 2003. Of the 27 learners who started in September 2003, 22 were still in learning by June 2004. At the time of the inspection in June 2005, 47 of the 51 learners who started their training in September were still in learning.

50. Achievement rates are poor. Of the 31 learners who started their apprenticeship in 2002-03, none have completed their framework. Of the 215 learners who started their programmes between 2000 and 2003, only five achieved their full framework. Progress of learners who have been retained is improving. Eight have now completed all aspects of their award and are awaiting verification. A further six learners have achieved their NVQ and are currently completing their key skills qualifications. Between 2002 and 2004, only two learners achieved their key skills qualifications, but 20 learners have already done so in 2004-05. Of the 27 learners who started their advanced apprenticeship in 2003-04, 22 were retained and 20 of these achieved their technical certificate. The one learner who started her level 3 NVQ in 2003-04 has achieved her qualification.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	51		27	100	57	100	53	100	27	100						
Retained*	0		0	0	20	35	22	42	23	85						
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	2	4	3	11						
Still in learning	47		20	74	14	25	8	15	3	11						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2002-03															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	31	100														
Retained*	9	29														
Successfully completed	0	0														
Still in learning	2	6														

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## **The quality of provision**

51. Progress reviews for most learners are effective. Thorough reviews are carried out every eight weeks to ensure learners are aware of equality of opportunity and health and safety policies and procedures and are working in safe environments. Assessors keep very good records of the reviews which they share with the learner and the manager. Most learners are set challenging and realistic targets that ensure good progress is made towards achieving their qualification. For a minority of learners, targets are not sufficiently specific or challenging. Busy Bees is aware of this and is supporting assessors in this role. Learners' progress is discussed and monitored at monthly assessors' meetings and training team meetings and at individual quarterly reviews. Learners' progress is now a key performance indicator for all training team staff.

52. The induction process for learners is satisfactory. Learners are given copies of all relevant policies and procedures. They are informed about the requirements of all aspects of their programme. Learners attend a three-day induction at the training centre and follow a 12-week induction at their nursery.

53. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners undergo diagnostic testing to assess their literacy, numeracy or key skills support requirements. However, the provision of additional support is varied and some learners receive insufficient support. Some learners requiring additional support are provided with extra time on an individual basis with their tutor and are encouraged to find external support. Others are provided with no additional individual support. Most staff do not have sufficient experience or qualifications in the delivery of essential skills.

54. All of the learning sessions observed were at least satisfactory. Sessions are mostly well prepared and include a range of activities. Learning sessions are well referenced to the learners' work experience. All learners interviewed value their off-the-job training and commented on its relevance to their work role.

55. Busy Bees' staff are appropriately qualified, and a sufficient number of internal verifiers and assessors are in place. All tutors and assessors have up-to-date vocational experience. The training centres and the nurseries contain up-to-date facilities and resources. Learners are working in high-quality premises that set high standards and have high expectations. The training centres have an appropriate range and quantity of up-to-date books and other learning resources.

56. Assessments are satisfactory. They take place regularly and are planned by the learner and assessor. Most portfolios are well presented and learners take pride in preparing their work. Knowledge is assessed using workbooks and written and oral questions.

57. Learners have limited opportunities to participate in activities that are not directly related to their training. No extra curricular activities are organised for the learners. Induction focuses on the requirements of the programme and does not include any opportunities for wider learning activities. Learners from across the company have limited opportunities to meet and share experiences. Opportunities for learners to work in other nurseries owned by the company are not planned. While learners participate in social activities arranged by themselves or their nursery, very few participate in external activities such as fundraising or sports and leisure events.

## Leadership and management

58. Communication between the training team, head office and the nurseries is good. Regular individual meetings, team meetings and newsletters keep all staff informed of the apprenticeship training and wider organisational matters. Assessors are given clear performance targets and appropriate support to achieve them. All members of the training team are part of the self-assessment process.

59. Satisfactory internal verification procedures are in place for the NVQ. Monthly assessor meetings are held, with part of each meeting spent on standardisation. Satisfactory internal moderation of the technical certificate takes place. However, some learners have had their work referred by the tutor. This is slowing their completion and delaying the moderation process.

60. Changes in the content and delivery of training for the advanced apprenticeship programme were piloted and evaluated in 2003-04 by the team at Busy Bees' northern training centre. From September 2004, the changes were introduced across the company. During the inspection, differences were identified in the delivery of the advanced apprenticeship programme. For example, learners who receive their training through distance learning work a five-day week. Learners who attend the training centres spend four days a week in the workplace and one day at the training centres. Distance learners received their training materials five months later than those who attend the training centres. Assessors have been changed, and the progress of a few learners has been delayed. The training manager and the directors are aware of this and have taken action to improve the delivery of training for these learners. For example, very recent initiatives include additional training and support for less experienced staff, work shadowing and the recruiting of additional experienced staff. It is too soon to judge the effect of these measures.

61. All staff and learners are involved in the self-assessment process. Some areas identified by Busy Bees as strengths were judged by inspectors to be satisfactory. While the strengths were clearly explained within the report, the weaknesses were not covered in enough detail.

