

# Busy Bees Childcare Limited

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 50936

Name of lead inspector: Deavon Baker-Oxley HMI

Last day of inspection: 2 July 2010

Type of provider: Employer

Address: Busy Bees Childcare  
Shaftsbury Drive  
Burntwood  
Staffordshire  
WS7 9QP

Telephone number: 01543 678550

## Information about the provider

1. Busy Bees Childcare Limited (Busy Bees) was established in 1983 and is a private company that is a wholly owned subsidiary of Busy Bees Group Limited. Busy Bees which is one of the largest childcare providers in the United Kingdom, currently operates 125 childcare facilities across the country, and employs over 4,600 staff.
2. Busy Bees Group provides training for apprenticeships in children's care, learning and development. The training is funded through a contract with Birmingham and Solihull Skills Funding Agency.
3. The responsibility for training rests with the operational team under the leadership of the human resource director. The training team consists of a contract manager, a training operations manager, who is also the lead internal verifier, a quality co-ordinator, two full-time regional tutors who deliver the short-course programme, four full-time tutors/ assessors and one administrator.
4. The training contract manager, training operations manager, quality assurance co-ordinator and the administrator are based at Busy Bees Group head office in Burntwood, Staffordshire, whilst the remainder of the training team work at various sites throughout the country.
5. There are currently 61 learners; 40 apprentices and 23 advanced apprentices. Some enter the training directly from school, or are referred by Connexions, while others are already employed by the Busy Bees Group. Training and assessment are carried out in the learners' workplace, with off-the-job training sessions taking place at the four training centres for all apprentices.

| Type of provision                      | Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10 |
|--|--|
| Employer provision:<br>Apprenticeships | 61 apprentices                         |

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve                | Grade 2 |
|                                    | Grade   |
| Outcomes for learners              | 3       |
| Quality of provision               | 3       |
| Leadership and management          | 3       |
| Safeguarding                       | 2       |
| Equality and diversity             | 3       |
| Subject Areas                      | Grade   |
| Health, Public Services and Care   | 3       |

## Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of Busy Bees' provision is satisfactory. The company has a good capacity to improve and the overall quality of its training is satisfactory with some good aspects. The majority of current learners are making good progress and are on target to complete successfully in their planned time. However success rates for advanced apprentices are inadequate. Learners develop a good awareness of childrens' needs. The training helps them to improve their self-esteem and, as a result, they are more confident in carrying out their work roles. Most learners enjoy and value their training. They are well supported by mentors and assessors. Good attention is paid to health and safety in the workplace. The overall safeguarding of learners is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Clear strategies are in place to ensure that learning and development are a central focus although support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs remains an area for improvement. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Assessors reinforce learners understanding of equality and diversity issues well throughout their training. Busy Bees does not promote its training sufficiently well to different ethnic groups.

## Main findings

- Success rates have been inconsistent over the last three years and show significant differences between apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. During 2009/10 success rates for apprentices were good at 82%. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships have remained below the national rates for the last three years and are inadequate.
- Learners at all levels develop very good work place skills and demonstrate a high standard of work within their portfolios. They are able to relate childcare theory to practical situations.
- Apprentices and advanced apprentices have good progression into employment within Busy Bees. All learners are employed and many move into permanent positions during the training.
- Learners have a good understanding of safe working practices. They can explain how to work safely and the importance of maintaining a safe environment for children.
- Action plans to link on and off-the-job learning are highly effective. Assessors negotiate clear focused targets with learners and their managers in order to effectively support the development of learners' skills and knowledge.
- Technology is used very well to support learning and assessment for apprentices. Many learners choose to use the electronic portfolio system which provides good access to their assessors and prompt feedback on assessed work.
- Good assessment practice supports learners' development of vocational skills for national vocational qualification (NVQ) and technical certificates. Assessors meet the needs of individual learners very well through the analysis of a wide range of evidence. Learners are regularly assessed in the work place and targets for achievement are reviewed and updated.
- Effective progress reviews ensure that learners are very well supported by assessors, managers and training mentors. Learners are clear about the progress they are making and what actions they need to take to be successful, such as gaining experience with different age groups of children to broaden their experience.
- The clear strategic vision of the Busy Bees management team is shared with all staff. The company has strong values and a positive learning culture that encourages everyone to contribute to improving the quality of the services provided to children and young people.
- Strategies to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills are ineffective for advanced apprentices. Learners working towards key skills in application of number and communications have little effective support to help them achieve in the external tests. Assessors are not appropriately qualified or sufficiently skilled to provide literacy and numeracy support to meet learners' needs.
- The views and overall evaluations of learners and managers are collected using a range of surveys at different stages of training. However, learners and

managers are unclear about any actions the company has taken as a result of their input.

- Safeguarding of learners is good. All assessors and learners are Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checked. Learners have a good understanding of the importance of safeguarding within their settings as part of their work with children.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All staff complete appropriate training and updates on relevant issues. Learners have an appropriate level of understanding of equality and diversity in the context of working with young children. The company recruits too few people from minority ethnic groups to the programme and makes insufficient use of data to plan how to improve this.

### What does Busy Bees need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates by ensuring there is greater support, especially for advanced apprenticeships, and by maintaining the effective links between on- and off- the-job training for all learners.
- Develop and implement an effective literacy and numeracy strategy that meets the needs of all learners and especially advanced apprentices. Ensure that staff are appropriately qualified to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Widen the participation of different ethnic groups to more closely reflect the community served. Make better use of data to plan effectively to rectify this issue.
- Secure the active involvement of all learners and managers in the quality improvement process and ensure that they are fully aware of actions taken to bring about improvement.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- off-the-job training and the chance to share experiences
- the good support from assessors and training mentors
- taking assessments
- using the electronic portfolio
- developing new skills that help to improve their confidence
- the good working relationships with assessors who are friendly and approachable
- opportunities during the training that enable them to progress up the career ladder.

What learners would like to see improved:

- cover arrangements for advanced apprentices learners for off-the- job training
- the opportunity to focus on one NVQ unit at a time
- the number of visits from assessors
- more off-the-job training.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the supportive working arrangements for learners
- the very good communication between training department and workplace
- the provider's flexibility when developing training arrangements to meet the needs of employers
- the provider's rapid response to concerns and enquiries made
- the improvements noted in the quality of training.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no issues identified.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. Busy Bees' capacity to sustain and improve is good. Since the last inspection the provider has improved its overall success rates and those completing in the planned time. Rates for apprentices are satisfactory overall; they recently improved to good at 82%, in 2009/10. For a small number of learners at level 3, this aspect remains an area for improvement. Nevertheless, many of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been rectified. Teaching resources are good. Learners have good access to information communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. The restructuring of the training department ensures an improved focus on learning and achievement. Busy Bees has successfully managed the large intake of learners from another provider. All the areas for improvement identified by inspectors were recognised by the provider and are part of the current development plan.
8. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The views of managers and learners on the quality of training are sought and acted on. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The quality improvement plan is satisfactory and reflects some areas for improvement but lacks sufficient detail to clearly identify progress made.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Success rates have been inconsistent over the last three years and show significant differences between apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Apprenticeship success rates are around the national averages and are satisfactory. For a small number of advanced apprenticeship success rates are inadequate and have remained so for the last three years. Current rates for 2009/10 indicate that they are continuing to decline. This is because most advanced apprentices are required to achieve key skills and many struggle to pass the external tests at the first attempt.
10. Learners develop very good workplace skills and demonstrate a high standard of theoretical knowledge. Learners are able to demonstrate how they relate the theory of child development to their practical work. Many learners can identify how they have grown in confidence and improved their ability to communicate more effectively with the children, their parents and their colleagues. Learners are confident about the ICT skills they develop through the use of the electronic portfolio.
11. Progression into employment by all learners is good. All learners are employed with Busy Bees from the start of their training, either as an apprentice or nursery assistant. The majority move into permanent positions with the Busy Bees group on a full-time, part-time or casual basis once qualified. Managers

value the opportunity to employ staff who have been trained in the Busy Bees group.

12. Learners have a good understanding of how to work safely. They can explain health and safety requirements and understand the need for protective clothing. All learners are CRB checked and the company provide additional safeguarding training to ensure that learners understand how to keep children safe. The induction to the training and to the workplace covers all aspects of safeguarding. Most nurseries are aware of the safeguarding implications of lone working.
13. Promotion of personal health and well being is satisfactory. Learners are issued with 'informed choices' fact sheets that cover key topics such as drug awareness.
14. Learners make a satisfactory contribution to the community by participating in annual fund raising events for charities as part of their training. Individual nurseries also organise other charity events.

## The quality of provision

Grade 3

15. Overall, the quality of the provision is satisfactory. The quality of training and assessment are good. Training tutors are appropriately qualified, experienced and confident in their role. Lessons are well planned, with appropriate timings and clear aims and objectives. Training tutors are knowledgeable about their subject area and link theory and practical work well. Highly effective action plans link on- and off-the-job training, enabling learners to continue to learn effectively between training sessions and assessment visits. Learners are well-motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy the learning sessions. However, the quality of support for literacy and numeracy for advanced apprentices is ineffective.
16. Good assessment practice supports the development of vocational skills by enabling learners to effectively link practice with underpinning knowledge. Technology is used very well to support learning and assessment which is thorough, well planned and recorded in detail. Plans outline the activity and assessment methods needed to complete assessment. Direct observations during assessments are holistic, covering more than one unit at a time, recorded in detail and expertly cross-referenced to several NVQ units. Learners receive positive and constructive oral and written feedback on assessment outcomes. Learners receive good support with portfolio building and gathering of evidence which helps them to complete the NVQ within the allotted time.
17. Induction and initial assessment are satisfactory. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed during the recruitment phase. however, the strategy to meet the needs of advance apprentices learners is an area for improvement. The comprehensive three-stage recruitment process introduces safeguarding and equality and diversity early on. The three day induction to the training programme further develops learners' understanding. All learners



complete a comprehensive workplace induction, supported by the training mentor.

18. Review of learners' progress is good. Assessors monitor and record progress and make effective use of a traffic light system to identify learners at risk of early withdrawal or who are falling behind. Assessors use this information well to implement timely and effective support through personal learning plans. Targets are effective in measuring the learners' progress and in stretching and challenging them. All targets are agreed, monitored and followed through to completion. Assessors' comments are evaluative. Each area of performance is graded which clearly enables the learner to see their progress.
19. Programmes are satisfactory in meeting the needs and interest of learners. Busy Bees offer apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships that are the relevant work-place qualifications. Currently, Busy Bees are piloting a higher level programme for a small number of employees.
20. Busy Bees work in partnership with a range of local employers by having nurseries located at their venues. Busy Bees undertakes limited networking with other large providers to raise their interest in learning and the quality of childcare. However there is insufficient partnership working to effectively support learners' additional learning needs.
21. Care, guidance and support for the vast majority learners are satisfactory. Timely advice and support are readily available in helping most learners reach their learning goals. Tutors' sensitive support encourages learners to overcome social and personal barriers to learning. Assessors provide useful information about opportunities for future development for learners who wish to progress to higher levels of education or to follow different career paths.

## Leadership and management

Grade 3

22. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Busy Bees' directors and managers have set a clear strategic vision that is shared by staff and managers at all levels. The company has strong values and a positive learning culture that encourages everyone to contribute to improving the quality of services provided to babies and young children. Busy Bees effective management of change is evident in its dealing with difficult issues. For example, a large number of learners from another provider were integrated effectively and successfully completed their qualification.
23. Safeguarding is good. All assessors are Criminal Record Bureau checked and complete a yearly self-disclosure. Busy Bees has comprehensive policies covering, for example harassment, alcohol and drugs, whistle-blowing and personal relationships. The company covers safeguarding and associated issues in depth during induction. Safeguarding has a high priority within the organisation; staff are updated regularly. Updating on health and safety is planned frequently. Materials used to promote safeguarding issues are creative

and engaging. Busy Bees inform parents and guardians of learners under the age of 18 regarding any risk that may be involved in working within the different settings. The company has a named member of staff who is responsible for safeguarding issues.

24. Strategies to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills are ineffective. There are no formal lessons or workshops for learners working towards key skills qualifications in application of number and communication. Learners rely on past papers and mock tests to identify areas needing improvement and to prepare them for the external test. Assessors provide a good assignment brief linking key skills and childcare in the portfolio of evidence for assessment. However, assessors are insufficiently qualified and skilled with the underpinning knowledge to support literacy and numeracy development.
25. Equality and diversity within Busy Bees are satisfactory overall. All staff complete appropriate training and updates on relevant equality and diversity issues. Induction programmes generally provide satisfactory coverage of equality and diversity. Learners have an appropriate awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues related to working with babies and young children. The company uses relevant questions and scenarios for learners, during reviews, to raise and reinforce diversity and equality issues. The equality and diversity focus group oversee different initiatives to raise issues such as males working in early years settings, and putting equality into practice. During team meetings Assessors have active discussion of equality and diversity matters. Busy Bees do not use data effectively in planning to improve their promotion of training opportunities and recruitment to people from different ethnic groups.

## Information about the inspection

26. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's training operational manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Busy Bees Childcare Limited

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

| Grades using the 4 point scale<br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate                                     | Overall | Employer responsive |
|--|---------|---------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners  |         |                     |
| Full-time learners   | 61      | 61                  |
| Part-time learners   | 0       | 0                   |
| Overall effectiveness  | 3       | 3                   |
| Capacity to improve  | 2       |                     |
| Outcomes for learners  | 3       | 3                   |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?   | 3       |                     |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals?  | 3       |                     |
| How well do learners progress?   | 2       |                     |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?                              | 2       |                     |
| How safe do learners feel?   | 2       |                     |
| Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*   | 3       |                     |
| How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*   | 3       |                     |
| Quality of provision   | 3       | 3                   |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?   | 2       |                     |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?  | 3       |                     |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?                        | 3       |                     |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?                                    | 3       |                     |
| Leadership and management  | 3       | 3                   |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?                     | 2       |                     |
| How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*                                | n/a     |                     |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?  | 2       |                     |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 3       |                     |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?  | 3       |                     |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?                             | 3       |                     |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?                         | 3       |                     |

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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