



Noah's Ark Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146066
Inspection date	16 November 2006
Inspector	Penny Wood
Setting Address	Beeches Family Centre, Bulford Road, Bulford, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 9AE
Telephone number	01980 672342
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Registered person	Army Welfare Service
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Crèche

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Under Fives was registered in 2001 and is situated at the Beeches Families Centre in Bulford, Wiltshire. The setting operates both a crèche and a pre-school within the building. The group has use of a variety of rooms on both the ground and first floor of the building. When not in use, they can also use the main hall for further activities. There is a secure garden for outside play.

The group currently operates five mornings per week during term time only. Opening hours are from 09:15 until 11:45 for children in the crèche and until 12:15 for those children within the pre-school. Numbers permitting, children within the pre-school also have the option to stay for a lunch club until 13:15. The group cares for children from 12 months of age through to five years old. Currently there are 42 children on roll, 14 of which are funded for nursery

education. The group has systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those children who have English as an additional language.

There are eight staff in total, all of whom hold a relevant qualification in early years care and education. The group receives support from the Local Authority, including the area special needs co-ordinator.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are developing positive attitudes during the routines of the day towards their personal hygiene routines. They know why it is important to wash their hands, for example, to 'stop the germs from going into their tummies'. Staff ensure the environment is clean and suitable for children, with the regular cleaning and disinfection of toys, particularly within the crèche. Good procedures in place ensure staff reduce the spread of germs and infections, such as wearing disposable aprons and gloves during the preparation of snacks and when changing nappies.

Children benefit from the staff's knowledge and training in first aid. All required health documentation is in place, completed with appropriate detail and shared with parents to inform them of events. Appropriate procedures, such as the exclusion of children when they are ill, reduce the spread of contagious illnesses and protect the health of all children and staff present.

Children benefit from regular opportunities to develop their physical skills and to promote a healthy lifestyle through exercise. For example, they enjoy the use of an enclosed garden during good weather or a large hall when the weather is wet or cold. Staff ensure children benefit from the use of equipment such as climbing frames, balls, tunnels and hoops. Children within the crèche enjoy the added bonus of a soft play area equipped with a range of age appropriate equipment, such as soft shapes and a small climbing frame.

Children enjoy free access to drinks throughout the session, ensuring they do not become thirsty. Healthy snacks of fruit, cheese and vegetable sticks encourage children to enjoy a healthy diet, in addition to the occasional treat during parties and at the end of the week. Displays of healthy foods within the areas where children eat encourage discussion and children's awareness of healthy options. Topics based on healthy eating encourage children to learn the importance of a healthy diet. At all times, staff ensure children only have access to foods that are suitable for their dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enter an environment that is safe, with measures in place to reduce the risk of harm, such as covers for the radiators and plug sockets. Throughout the group, children experience good levels of supervision by staff who move effectively to where children are playing, yet allowing children the freedom to move between their chosen activities. The appropriate use of safety gates within the crèche ensures children enjoy free access between the different play

areas without being able to leave the crèche area itself. However, the alarm system in place for announcing visitors within this area is not always effective, particularly when classroom doors are closed, allowing visitors to enter freely.

The staff are working hard to develop their areas and to maximise the space available to the children. For example, children within the pre-school enjoy areas designated to Information and Communication Technology, role play and crafts, with the crèche enjoying their soft play area, a craft area and a sensory room which is currently under development. During their play, children are developing an awareness of how to play safely. For example, staff explain to toddlers that they must use the steps to go up the slide in order to avoid a collision with children sliding down.

Children within both areas of the group enjoy access to a good range of resources that are regularly checked for safety. Risk assessments on the premises and equipment highlight areas that on occasion cause concern and require addressing. Children are developing their awareness of emergency procedures through practices of the evacuation procedure. However, these are infrequently practised to ensure all children and staff experience a balance of practices. Children benefit from the staff's understanding of the child protection procedures with steps in place to enable staff to take appropriate action in order to protect children's welfare and safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The majority of children enter the group with ease, with systems in place to allow parents to stay until their children are settled. Throughout the group staff are positive and enthusiastic with the children, offering consistent praise and encouragement. As a result, children are keen to play and take part in activities. All children experience a good range of activities, with opportunities for all children to enjoy planned activities and free choice. Children enjoy the staff's participation in their play, from waving their ribbon sticks to music to seeking adults to play a shopping game. Children are developing their language skills through discussion with staff and each other. Staff encourage the youngest children to use their emerging skills, giving them time to 'babble' and listening and responding well to their efforts. Staff use their plans well, particularly when using the Birth to Three Framework. Observations on all children are used within development records as a base to set targets for future development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making steady progress within the Foundation Stage as a result of the good quality provision of nursery education. Children benefit from the effective planning system in place which covers all areas of the early learning goals; ensuring children experience a balance of learning opportunities. Children enjoy a good range of interesting daily activities, most of which offer sufficient challenge, although the provision of some limits children's ability to independently explore. For example, when using scales to weigh a range of different sized objects, adult intervention limited the opportunity for children to explore and experiment at their own leisure.

Children are keen and eager to participate in the activities provided, often asking if they can join in. Opportunities for children to re-visit activities throughout the morning allow them to consolidate their learning experiences. Children experience a good balance of planned activities and opportunities to choose options for free play. Observations made by staff during the session are used within children's development records as a record of their progress and their achievements. Staff identify children's strengths and target areas to encourage their development, based on the information recorded within their development records. However, not all planned activities are evaluated upon completion. As a result observations made by staff during the activity do not contribute to future planning, development records or children's individual learning plans.

Children are confident and display high levels of self-esteem as a result of the praise and encouragement given by staff. They are developing independence, for example, through opportunities to pour their own drinks at snack time and putting on their own aprons during craft activities. They join together well to play games and enjoy engaging each other in their play, particularly during role-play in the home corner. Children are encouraged to persevere at tasks, with strategies in place to try to hold their attention, such as finding their 'school legs' to encourage them to sit properly and still. Children are developing good language skills, with staff introducing new words to their vocabulary, such as 'migration' and 'hibernation' when talking about Autumn. Staff use most opportunities to use questioning techniques to extend children's thought processes and learning. Children are developing their recognition of letters, particularly through computer programs which encourage children to link the letters together. Some children are beginning to write their own names on their work, using marks to represent the letters within their names.

Children are developing good use of their matching skills through games with staff. They have opportunities to regularly count, with children counting to high numbers, particularly when counting the number of children present at circle time. Children are learning to compare different groups of items, for example, by weight, size and colour. Again, the use of computer programs extend children's learning experiences within their mathematical development. Further opportunities to investigate a range of items and their different properties, such as magnets, torches and telephones, encourage children to explore and develop their understanding of how things work. Children are developing a good understanding of time through familiar routines and regular visits to remembering the days of the week, the months of the year and the different seasons.

Within their physical development, children enjoy opportunities to move in a range of different ways, developing their body strength and co-ordination skills. They are gaining good control of their bodies, moving with a purpose and with spontaneity. Opportunities to use malleable materials and tools, such as dough and scissors, encourage children's small muscle control. During their crafts, children experience some opportunities to be creative, with opportunities to paint, glue and stick with a variety of different materials. Children enjoy a specific role-play area whereby they are developing their use of imagination. They can choose between a home-corner, an area currently made up as an igloo, access a range of dressing up clothes and other resources set out by staff, such as garages and cars. During the inspection, children enjoyed taking part in musical activities, such as singing familiar songs and using instruments when practising their nativity play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children play an active role within the group, for example by helping to tidy up at the end of play sessions. They are developing a strong sense of belonging through the provision of individual named pegs and trays that they put letters and artwork in ready to take home. Staff ensure activities are accessible to all children, such as storing toys at child-level to enable them to self-select. Staff are vigilant on providing children with opportunities to take part regardless of their age and ability. For example, when providing crèche children with colouring opportunities, they cover the whole table with paper reducing the requirement for children to colour within a confined area and allowing them to explore the space around them.

All children are welcome within the group, regardless of their backgrounds and individual needs. Staff take time to discuss children's requirements with their parents, both on admission and once settled into the group. When necessary, good relationships forged with outside agencies, such as the Area Special Needs Co-ordinator, enable the management to access specialist assistance to aid children's development and to support their parents and the staff.

Children are developing some understanding of diversity through the occasional celebration of festivals and events. Children have access to a range of resources which depict positive images of race, culture and disability, which enables them to build their awareness naturally through their play. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Generally children behave well, with appropriate strategies in place to manage their behaviour that are age appropriate and understandable to the children. However, during large group activities particularly within the pre-school group, children struggle to concentrate and participate when activities become drawn out. During shorter group activities, such as story time, children engage well and enjoy an active part in stories including 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents have good access to a range of information ranging from the groups policies and procedures to information regarding the provision of activities. Notice boards contain comprehensive information regarding both the provision of the Foundations Stage and the Birth to Three Matters Framework, offering parents a clear explanation of the provision of education for their children. Parents receive regular invitations to review their child's development files and opportunities to discuss their progress with their child's key worker. Parents play an active role within the group and respond to requests to provide items from home to extend topics and children's learning experiences.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit from the staff's knowledge and experience within childcare. Good systems in place ensure staff are suitably recruited and vetted, ensuring they are suitable to work with children. Those staff awaiting confirmation of relevant checks are never left alone with children. Thorough induction procedures ensure all staff joining the group are aware of their role and responsibilities.

A flexible approach to staff deployment ensures they experience all areas of the provision and meet the staffing needs of the group. Emergency strategies ensure that ratios are maintained during staff absences.

All regulatory documentation is in place and completed with appropriate detail. However, the system of parents registering their own children at the beginning of the day is not foolproof, resulting in a short period whereby records of children in attendance are not always accurate. All documents are available for inspection, stored securely and maintain confidentiality.

Leadership and management is good. Management have a clear direction of how they would like to improve the provision for children and their families. They value input from outside agencies on ways to improve the setting, for example through visits from a development worker from the Local Authority. Management and staff work together as a team, with management valuing and adopting ideas put forward by staff who have worked in a range of other settings. Regular meetings allow all staff to have input into the provision, in particular ideas for the planning of future topics. Staff have regular opportunities to apply for training courses in order to develop their own expertise, with staff appraisals used to identify areas for further development. The management fosters a committed team that works hard to provide good quality care and education for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

The group have made improvements based on the recommendations raised at their last inspections.

At the last care inspection, the group were asked to ensure the deputy is appropriately qualified, to maintain an appropriate level of cleanliness with playroom carpets and to ensure the tables and chairs are also suitably clean and adequately maintained. As a result, the deputy now in place holds a level 3 qualification and is currently studying for a level 4 in childcare and education. She is experienced and pro-active in improving her knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the group and children. The cleanliness of carpets is maintained at an acceptable level with a commercial cleaner used when required. Some carpets within the group have been replaced. As a result, children are free to play in all areas, particularly when exploring their role-play on the floor. Staff regularly clean the tables and chairs throughout the session and all equipment is in an acceptable condition. As a result, hygiene levels are maintained.

At the last education inspection, the group were asked to ensure planning covers all aspects of the early learning goals, with a particular emphasis on giving children opportunities to question how things work and why they happen. The system for planning activities has been and is currently being modified by the staff working within the Foundation Stage. The system covers all aspects of the early learning goals, ensuring children receive a balance of activities and opportunities. Children enjoy access to a range of items, such as binoculars and magnets, giving them the opportunity to explore and examine why and how things work. The group were also asked to ensure staff continue to develop their understanding of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, in order to provide a wider range of practical learning activities and improve the use of resources matched to the developmental stage of individual children. Staff have addressed this well. All staff are qualified and are gaining experience of working

with children within the Foundation Stage. They have implemented a good planning system which identifies how children are progressing through the stepping stones towards achieving the early learning goals, with targets in place to encourage their development. Children experience a good range of activities throughout the session with access to age and developmentally appropriate resources. As a result, children experience interesting daily activities, which they are keen and eager to participate in. Finally, they were asked to ensure that staff continue to develop an effective system to evaluate the educational programme, and to assess children's progress, so that children's individual needs are met. This is an area of ongoing improvement for the group. They have worked hard to improve the planning as a whole, with regular observations taking place on children and recorded within their development records in order to assess the child's progress. Individual learning plans are now in place which identify children's strengths and targets for development. However, by not evaluating all planned activities results in children's records not detailing all learning achieved, or where children have been unable to achieve the learning intended. Recording of such information will enable staff to revisit particular learning opportunities to allow children to consolidate their learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- continue to improve safety methods with particular regard to the system for raising staff awareness of visitors within the crèche and the regular practice of emergency procedures
- ensure large group activities are effectively managed to encourage children to engage and participate
- ensure the system for registering children's arrivals is an accurate record of all children present prior to registration time taking place within the groups

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- use information gained during planned activities to inform future planning, children's development records and their individual learning plans
- ensure activities stretch children to their full potential through the questioning techniques used by staff and by allowing time for independent exploration

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk