

Mulberry Bear Day Nursery and Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	141798
Inspection date	12 September 2007
Inspector	Sarah Fletcher
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Registered person	Open University Children's Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

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?

Mulberry Bear Day Nursery and Pre School opened in 1978. It operates from a purpose built premises, which is located on Open University complex at Walton Hall, close to Milton Keynes. The main users of the children centre are children whose parents are involved in the University. A maximum of 54 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.30 to 18.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 to 17.30 each Friday, for 50 weeks of the year. The children attend a variety of sessions and all children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 68 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 25 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery currently employs 19 staff working directly with the children. Of these, 15 staff including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines. They help children to learn about healthy living by following and understanding simple good health and hygiene practices. For example, all children wash or wipe their own hands, with staff helping younger children as they return from outside play before lunch. Staff provide good role models to children, washing their own hands often and wearing disposable aprons and covering their heads appropriately when handling food. Staff further protect children from the spread of infection by following a clear sickness policy and using anti-bacterial sprays to clean surfaces and changing mats. Nappy changing takes place in accordance with each individual child's needs, with staff disposing of nappies appropriately. Children who have toileting accidents are quickly changed into dry clothes with minimum fuss and their parents are informed on collection. Staff protect children from the hotter weather by applying suncream to their faces and limbs and by ensuring each child wears a sunhat while they play outside. Good systems are in place for administration of all medicines, with clear records shared with individual parents.

Children have their health and dietary needs met because the staff work well with parents. Staff ensure they meet parents' wishes and children's preferences, together with any religious or dietary requirements to nourish children in their care. Healthy cooked meals from rotating menus are provided by the nursery and include a variety of nourishing vegetarian options. Fruit is served for dessert and parents provide packed teas, which they are asked to label and store in the fridge. Clear notification of foods which are not to be included in their child's tea box and may cause allergies are on display. Children with food allergies have their cooked meals on brightly coloured plates for easy identification, which are carefully checked by staff before serving. Babies and toddlers eat together in a shared area with older children eating in their pre-school area. Hot food is served onto plates and given to children quickly to increase their safety and to avoid children waiting for long periods and becoming bored or restless. Photographs of young children are placed on tables for children to recognise their place, with older children finding their name cards before sitting down for meals. Younger children are learning to feed themselves with spoons and older children use cutlery appropriately. Babies wear harnesses in their chairs for security and staff sit with all age groups of children while they eat, creating a relaxed atmosphere that children enjoy. Children receive regular drinks of water and milk throughout the day and on request, with individual cups for each child. Older children are able to pour their own drink of water from a jug, with some children helping others, without prompting from staff.

Children learn about the importance of regular physical play and activity by going outside into the large playground several times a day. Those children aged under two years play in an enclosed play area which contains a wide range of equipment and resources suitable to their age and stage of development. Older children have access to a larger playground with ample facilities to promote their physical skills. They have daily opportunities to climb, slide, run, swing, pedal and push. Children rest and sleep according to their needs and parents' wishes in individual cots or on sleep mats with individual bedding. Staff stay beside sleeping children, comforting them by stroking their limbs gently for re-assurance. Sleep patterns are recorded to share with parents on collection and regular observations ensure children remain safe while sleeping.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in warm and welcoming premises, where they can move around freely and explore their comfortable surroundings. Staff provide a secure and safe indoor and outside environment, which is clean and well maintained. Children remain secure, as toys and equipment are appropriate for their age and stage, and babies and toddlers do not access resources that may cause them harm. Children safely access fully enclosed playgrounds, which have soft surfacing throughout to reduce accidents. The nursery provides an excellent range of toys, resources and equipment across the age ranges, with multiples of popular choices. Toys are regularly rotated on a daily basis and carefully checked for wear and tear by the staff, with good storage systems indoors and outside. Babies learning to walk are given support and encouragement, with ample space to crawl around or pull themselves up on suitable furniture. Walking aids help children who are gaining control of their movements, together with further equipment indoors and outside to help children develop appropriately. Older children take care to avoid the younger ones when moving around on the scooters and tricycles, with staff watching children closely to ensure their safety.

Children are safe and secure in the staff's care, as they reduce risks and hazards and minimises dangers across the nursery. For example, the open plan nursery has a low fence and gate separating toddlers and babies from older children's toys, together with high door handles and stairgates to prevent any children from accessing areas they are not permitted to enter, such as the sluice room, kitchen or office. Children receive close supervision by being within sight or hearing of the staff at all times. The staff ensure premises are secure during nursery hours; with outbuildings inaccessible and playground gates locked. Secure entry systems prevent unvetted adults from entering the premises unobserved, with visitors signing in and out.

Fire fighting equipment is available in each area of the nursery and staff are trained to use it appropriately. Older children are able to learn about fire safety and evacuating in case of fire because the nursery takes part in full university campus evacuations. However, the nursery does not practise evacuations independently on a regular basis to help staff and children become familiar with the routine. Children's welfare is protected because the staff clearly understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practise when necessary. Recent training ensures staff have a good awareness of their responsibilities and know the importance of recording information confidentially. Parents are made aware of the staff's role and their responsibilities to protect children because this is included in the detailed nursery policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence, independence and self-esteem, responding to the challenges the staff provide. They show interest in what they do and ask questions about the lives of people around them. Children use their initiative and acquire new knowledge and skills, with activities such as free painting or junk modelling, where children can express their own ideas using various materials. Children know the nursery routines well, putting aprons on before messy play and wiping or washing their hands before handling food. They make positive relationships with adults and each other, for example, forming small groups of friends and waving to each other across the nursery when differing groups move inside or outdoors.

Children begin to distinguish between right and wrong, understanding acceptable behaviour from an early age. They have their individual needs met, because staff get to know each child well through observations and talking to parents regularly. Children participate in activities, which further develop their existing skills and encourage new ones. For example, children playing with a farm on a countryside road map can use assorted animals to sort them into sizes and types; make enclosures for fields or drive tractors along the roadways. The staff plan a variety of activities, such as structured, group and individual ideas to ensure children have a variety of experiences that will challenge their learning and individual development.

The staff find out what children know and can do when they first attend by talking to parents and observing children when they are playing. They take time to settle children into the nursery gradually, over a period of several days or weeks, ensuring they are confident in their surroundings and parents start to build trusting relationships. The nursery is using the Birth to three matters framework well for children under three years. Staff are making regular observations on young children and creating individual folders to show parents how their child is progressing in relation to the different aspects of the framework. They ensure children benefit from positive experiences, such as heuristic play, and they are making good progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching successfully meets the needs, interests and requirements of the children and they are making good progress through the stepping-stones in all areas of learning. Children are confident learners and enjoy their time within the nursery, having freedom to choose activities and access to a wide range of resources. The senior staff have a good understanding of the Foundation stage and how children learn, which they share with all staff. They are enthusiastic and ensure children have excellent opportunities to progress towards the early learning goals. Consequently, children receive a balanced curriculum throughout the year. Children respond to challenge and receive good support in their learning, with good systems in place to gain information from parents about children's attainment on entry. Staff use time and resources well, allowing freedom and flexibility within the nursery routine to enable children's progress. Good quality planning includes all levels of ability and provides flexible starting points for children's learning. Assessment is in place, with records showing children's achievements through staff observations. However, planning does not record how the next steps for children's learning are linked to their individual assessment records.

Children enjoy the nursery and its activities and behaviour is generally good, with staff providing consistent and effective behaviour management strategies. The learning environment and programme of activities provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences across the areas of learning, which is suited to the needs of all the children attending. Children have good opportunities to become familiar with their written name through effective use of namecards. They are developing their own writing skills, using many opportunities to write in everyday and structured activities. Children are beginning to understand and use language to describe position and size through practical activities, such as in front of, behind, through, under and over when using outdoor equipment. Children experience many opportunities to develop their counting skills and learn about simple calculation through well planned and structured activities, such as the washing line game, which helps children recognise and order numbers, and learn to count forwards and backwards to 10. They explore shape, size and measure together using everyday opportunities, such as during water play, meal times and at group time. Children experience a varied range of activities to explore colour, sound and texture

to stimulate and promote their imaginary senses and skills, such as handling playdough, using musical instruments, painting and creating junk models.

Children access books and stories from a good range of quality fiction and non-fiction resources, together with specially selected books for topics, games and activities based around other cultures. Children choose books to read which are their favourites; handling them well and turning pages from left to right. Staff provide labels around the room on familiar objects to help children understand the meaning of words and apply children's names to coat pegs, art work and photographs to help children recognise and identify their name readily. Group stories or songs often take place throughout the day, which are both planned and spontaneous, with children often asking staff for additional stories or singing their favourite songs during free play. Children use a range of equipment to enhance their learning and develop their technology skills, with access to torches, cameras, magnets, magnifying glasses and kaleidoscopes, together with regular use of computers and appropriate educational programmes. Children enjoy water play in trays with assorted textured objects, such as chamois leathers, sponges and floating plastic numbers filled with glitter gel. Children begin to understand and respect the values and feelings of others and to form constructive and harmonious relationships. They play happily alongside each other and make small groups of friends. Children are learning to develop independence through everyday activities, such as pouring drinks of water from a jug; using cutlery appropriately and stacking their chairs after meals to help staff tidy up. Staff encourage children to share their time with the toys and resources, using sand timers and explaining the reasons for taking fair turns.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children become aware of wider society and understand the wider world through the developing range of toys and resources that reflect positive images of the wider world. For example, staff provide dressing up clothes and dolls from differing cultures; small world play figures with disabilities; puzzles, posters and books with a variety of positive images of other cultures. They also take part in celebrations of festivals, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, alongside celebrating Easter, Christmas and Bonfire night. Children feel a sense of belonging in the relaxed and friendly atmosphere. They are content and show confidence in their play, surrounded by examples of their artwork and photographs, which increases their feelings of self-esteem and builds their self-confidence. Children make choices and take decisions in their play as toys and equipment are accessible to all children. The staff treat children as individuals but with equal concern, meeting their individual needs. They encourage children to play and co-operate with each other and to treat others with respect and kindness. Children settle quickly and are content in their surroundings, although some younger children appear upset when changing from familiar rooms as they move up through the nursery. However, staff are skilled in settling these children with distraction and cuddles, which helps them to feel content and to get used to their new room gradually.

Children receive appropriate support and are valued as individuals. They are aware of their own needs and the needs of others, asking staff for support when required. The staff work with parents to meet individual children's needs and ensure they are fully included. Staff have a good understanding of children who attend with learning difficulties and disabilities. They are able to describe how they care for these children, using individual plans and increasing their levels of care where appropriate. Individual care sheets unique to these children are created and staff and parents worked together to provide continuity. Children with English as an additional language receive good levels of support as some staff speak several languages, and

they are able to help children learn through repetition and signs, asking parents for words they can use from their own language whenever possible. Staff are calm with the children, interacting with them on their own level and encourage them to learn through play. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children are beginning to understand responsible behaviour, knowing and understanding the nursery rules from an early age. Behaviour is generally good across the age groups, with all children responding to positive praise and encouragement from staff. Behaviour management is verbally agreed with parents and in the nursery's policy. Strategies in use are time out with the nursery staff, following diversion or distraction, with discussion and explanation as appropriate to the age and stage of the child. Children develop self-esteem and respect for others, working harmoniously during activities with each other. Incidents, such as biting are recorded, with individual behaviour plans written in consultation with parents to resolve the situation. Children benefit from the established two-way relationships between parents and staff. They often stay with the nursery through until school age, as most parents work on the university premises. The staff know most families well and care for children according to their parents' wishes, ensuring continuity. The staff talk to parents often to continue to meet their individual requirements. They take time to exchange sufficient information from parents on arrival and at the end of the day, sharing records for accidents, children's sleep times and food intake, maintaining confidentiality with individual families.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving funding for nursery education is good. Parents receive good quality information from the nursery welcome pack, many colourful noticeboards and regular newsletters. Photographs around the nursery show children of differing age groups participating in a wide variety of activities; including cooking, various types of painting and printing and outdoor fun, which helps parents to understand some of the activities on offer. Parents are welcome to talk to staff or management at any time to discuss their care and education and are invited to share their child's achievement and progress folders regularly.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff have a high regard for the welfare and well-being of all children. The nursery uses good systems for staff recruitment and induction, ensuring they employ suitably qualified and experienced staff to enhance the care and education the children receive. Thorough vetting checks ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff with a good knowledge and understanding of child development. The nursery is warm and inviting, with many artwork displays and photographs throughout the rooms and shared areas. This helps children to feel valued and builds their self-confidence; enabling parents to easily see the activities their children are offered. Staff use time, space and resources well, ensuring each child is cared for according to their individual needs and parents' wishes. The nursery employs separate staff to manage the domestic routines, leaving room staff free to provide children with good levels of care, teaching and learning. Correct ratios are maintained at all times throughout the day, with ample staff to cover busy periods. Staff have appropriate knowledge of individual children's development and spend their time interacting with them throughout the day.

The nursery holds all the required policies and procedures, which are clear, detailed and shared with parents. They work effectively together to promote children's health, safety and their enjoyment and achievement within the nursery. An informative welcome pack gives comprehensive details of the nursery to parents and all documentation including records and written consents on individual children are maintained confidentially. Daily two-way information

exchanges enhance children's continuity of care and ensure appropriate adults are informed of any concerns or worries. Attendance registers clearly record both staff and children's presence accurately throughout the nursery and detailed medicine administration records ensure children receive appropriate care. Staff record children's sleep patterns and their food consumption, together with any toileting details for younger children, to share with parents on collection. The nursery has an operational plan in place, which provides some details in relation to the National Standards and the nursery's policies and procedures. However, it does not yet fully include details of the way the setting runs to meet the needs of the children.

Leadership and management are good and contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. The manager and her strong team of staff support each other well, working with a committee of parents to make care and education of the children a high priority. Staff working with funded children are fully trained in the Foundation stage, cascading their knowledge amongst other qualified and experienced staff to ensure the smooth running of the nursery at all times. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the provision was asked to improve the record of attendance, develop the procedures for uncollected children and managing medicine, and obtain written permission for emergency treatment. The provider has now improved all the required documentation and obtained all required written permissions from parents to ensure children receive appropriate levels of care.

At the previous nursery education inspection the provision was asked to extend the balance of the education programme; increase staff's knowledge of the Foundation stage to plan effectively and to improve the observation and assessment of children linking it to the stepping stones. The provider has now improved the balance of the education programme and ensured the staff working with the pre-school children are appropriately trained in the Foundation Stage to plan effectively. Observations and assessment of children has improved, although this is not yet linked to children's next steps of learning through the stepping stones. Therefore this remains a recommendation at this inspection.

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

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 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):

- improve the knowledge of fire safety for children and adults with regular evacuation practices
- develop the operational plan to include detailed information on the way the setting runs and meets the needs of the children

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):

- develop the planning to show how children's next steps for learning are clearly linked to their individual assessment records

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