

The Big Top After School Club

Meryfield School, Theobald Street, BOREHAMWOOD, Herts, WD6 4TJ

Inspection date	22/10/2014
Previous inspection date	20/05/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- The highly motivated manager and staff continually update their professional development by attending purposeful training courses. They skilfully incorporate what they learn into their practice so that their teaching and children's experiences are enhanced even more.
- Staff know the children well, they are vigilant in managing and monitoring children as they play. They have a strong understanding of safeguarding and how to ensure children are protected from harm.
- Children's needs are quickly identified and exceptionally well met through highly effective partnerships between the setting, parents and other agencies.
- Children are expertly helped to behave well. They are extremely well supported by staff in making decisions and sharing their feelings about situations that they find challenging.
- Children are at the centre of this vibrant club. Their voices are heard through discussions, questionnaires and accurate observations. Their ideas are highly regarded showing that there is a strong caring attitude towards the children.
- Parents speak highly of the service the club provides and the varied range of activities that their children take part in. The staff provide a wealth of useful information for parents, including details of staff training.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector spoke to children and staff at appropriate times. She observed children take part in a range of activities.
- The inspector looked at children's records, planning, assessments and evidence of suitability of practitioners working within the setting.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector obtained views of some parents on collection of their children.

Inspector

Maura Pigram

Full report

Information about the setting

The Big Top After School Club and was registered in 1999 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It is committee run. The club serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from a large school hall within Meryfield Primary School in Borehamwood. Children are also collected from nearby schools. There is an area available for outdoor play. The club opens Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions are from 3.15pm to 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 70 children on roll, of these, nine are in the early years age group. The club employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, three have a relevant early years qualification at level 3. Four staff members hold appropriate playwork qualifications at level 2.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- enhance the use of the outdoor area so that it is reflective of the wide range of experiences indoors and children have even more opportunities to use it all year round

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

The exceptionally committed manager and her dedicated team have created outstanding provision for children. The majority of the staff, including the manager, are long term teaching assistants within the school. They endeavour to know each child very well so that they can meet the individual needs of all ages of the children who attend. The flexible planning contributes effectively to this. As the children arrive, they are greeted by friendly staff who are pleased to see them. The soothing music playing in the background means that there is a calm atmosphere. Children enthusiastically take part in the relaxing session. They lay or sit on the floor, following instructions to breathe deeply and stretch 'those arms and legs'. This gives children an awareness of their bodies and helps them to be relaxed and ready for play, after their busy day at school. Following this, they play an interactive and fun name game. All children enjoy this activity, a play leader purposefully leads this game to help new children feel welcome. Children listen to each other with interest. Lots of giggling takes place showing that children feel happy and settled. Consequently, children develop their communication and listening skills. This is further supported during all aspects of play and at tea time when staff members sit alongside the children. They join in with conversations about the children's day and listen attentively to what they say. Any issues that arise during discussions or from observations made by the staff are skilfully incorporated into the child's play. For example, during imaginative play of

ordering food from the play cafe children are helped to increase their understanding of numeracy. This highly supports children's learning and effectively raises children's self-esteem, as they say 'I get it now'.

The quality of teaching is exceptional. Staff use highly effective methods to support children's learning. They tune into children's needs and expertly use their experience to facilitate and inspire children's independent learning. For example, younger children are helped to read complex words from the various menus at the play cafe. As a result, they busy themselves taking orders for 'food' from other children and adults. This further supports children's language and communication skills. The learning is enhanced when life-size dolls are introduced as potential customers. Children have opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities. Some listen to favourite stories at the listening post, some join in with the cooking activity of the day. Children are also able to choose to draw, paint and make models. This supports children's coordination and promotes the development of their interests. Others join in with building complex construction structures using a varied range of materials including yogurt pots and wooden blocks. Outdoors, during fine weather, children love exploring in the 'wild area'. They run and build dens, play hide and seek, and enjoy purposeful stories linked to favourite characters. However, the already good practice outdoors is not consistently offered all year round.

Staff harness children's interests and ideas very effectively, and are excellent role models for children. For example, they ensure children are heavily involved in the flexible planning of the exciting activities. Staff sensitively support and encourage children. They know how children learn and how to motivate them. In addition, they work closely with children's school teachers and parents to complement and support their learning. The manager and her staff assess children's learning and development extremely well. For example, they effectively monitor children's progress who are in the early years age range. From this, any gaps in their learning are quickly identified. Discussions take place with the school teachers, so that they can work together to support children's ongoing learning, so that they can make outstanding progress, given their starting points. Parents receive frequent information about their children's progress and welfare needs. The dedicated team sensitively support families so that any guidance and advice is purposeful for their child's needs. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning through daily discussions and the sharing of information about their children's achievements outside of the club. In addition, photographs of activities show parents a wide range of activities that their children have enjoyed, such as playing with bubbles and visits from a range of animals and their handlers from the 'pet zoo'.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The experienced staff work extremely well together to ensure children are sensitively supported to settle happily into the club. New children are warmly welcomed to the club so that they soon join in with the stimulating activities of offer. Children are highly supported so that they feel safe and secure. This is because the key-person system is well embedded. Children actively involve the staff in their play. For example, older children invite them to play complex board games. Younger children delight in seeking out their key worker and other staff to show them their construction models or their dance moves.

This demonstrates that children have exceptionally close bonds with the staff who offer a nurturing environment, so that children feel extremely secure. In turn, children also demonstrate that they are developing caring qualities when they sit alongside new children and chat to them. In addition, older children state that they enjoy showing younger children 'how to do things'. Overall, staff support children's emotional well-being exceedingly well. As a result, children are extremely happy to attend. For example, some children say that they would love to come every day, as there is always 'loads to do'. Children of all ages demonstrate that they have high levels of confidence when they independently explore the extensive range of resources. Excellent links with children's teachers ensure children are emotionally ready for the next stage in their learning.

Staff are highly skilled in managing children's behaviour. They have implemented a variety of different techniques and strategies to meet and support individual children. For example, they praise children for all tasks; they listen attentively to children's feelings and respond effectively to them. Consequently, children are extremely confident, independent and self-assured individuals. Staff work very closely with parents, carers and teachers to promote a consistent approach and ensure continuity between home and the setting. In addition, they work extremely closely with outside agencies who are involved in children's lives. This means that staff are made aware of any situations that may have an impact on children's emotions. From this, staff are very sensitive in meeting children's needs. For example, they aid children to manage their concerns and any unwanted subsequent behaviour. Children learn to keep themselves safe and effectively learn to take risks in a safe manner. For example, they love exploring the nature area and learn, with the help of staff members, how to safely collect blackberries and then use these for their tea.

Children's health is promoted extremely well. They enjoy hot and cold food choices at teatime. These are nutritious and are freshly prepared on the premises. Children are highly involved in the preparation of meals. For example, they show tenderness and care as they give the friends sitting at their table plates, bowls and cups for their tea. They make their own sandwiches and display excellent self-care skills in managing their personal hygiene needs. All staff follow high levels of good hygiene practices. For example, all areas used by children are maintained to a high standard. Children take part in a variety of activities to promote their physical well-being. For example, they play a variety of team games to develop their skills, such as tennis, cricket and table tennis. They also take part in parachute games and enjoy using interactive dance games. Staff are always vigilant and close at hand to sensitively remind children of the importance of thinking about their actions. For example, when playing indoor ball games to ensure that they keep themselves and their friends safe.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The leadership at this club is inspirational. This is due to their strong drive and commitment to continually improve and maintain high standards for children. For example, the club has recently achieved a quality assurance award for the second time. Staff are very skilled and have a comprehensive knowledge of safeguarding procedures. They are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities to ensure children's welfare is protected. For

example, they are proactive in meeting the individual needs of the children in their care. They know what would give them cause for concern and the procedures to follow in a speedy manner. Comprehensive risk assessments and excellent awareness of staff regarding children's individual needs means that they are extremely safe and secure. Recruitment procedures are robust. All staff are checked thoroughly before being employed and detailed induction procedures are in place to help and support new staff. This includes information regarding the use of mobile phone cameras and the safe use of social media sites. Appraisals are very well embedded and these are used effectively to discuss and identify any areas for development.

Staff training is highly valued and they all attend purposeful events to update and extend their knowledge. As a result, they consistently improve their already first-rate understanding and practice. This actively contributes to the reviewing of day-to-day activities and how these can be even more beneficial to the children. Children are involved in the monitoring process through discussions and questionnaires, such as 'the children's voice'. These documents are actively used to develop action plans so that continuous improvements are made. Staff share a vision for the future and are passionate about providing excellent care for the children. They have worked closely together to address the recommendation raised at last inspection. This has had a positive impact on the continuous monitoring of the education programmes for children.

Staff work very closely with families and, if appropriate, other professionals to find out about children's individual needs, interests and previous experiences. They also work closely with class teachers so that there is continuity of care and learning. This contributes to ensuring children's individual needs are exceptionally well met. Parents are extremely happy with the service provided. They state that their children's social skills have developed since coming to the club. In addition, they make very positive comments about the care and nurturing that their children receive. They value the support they receive as families. The entrance area has a wide range of useful information for parents to read. The staff work closely with class teachers and show obvious enjoyment of being with the children. As a result, children have lots of fun in a safe and secure environment.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	130544
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	854221
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	70
Name of provider	The Big Top Committee
Date of previous inspection	20/05/2009
Telephone number	020 8953 2106 or 07930 338141

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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