

Blues Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127805
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Inspector	Julie Ann Birkett
Setting Address	London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3LU
Telephone number	01279 755 422
E-mail	bluespreschool@tiscali.co.uk
Registered person	The Trustees of Blues Pre-School Nursery
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Blues Pre School is run by trustees. It opened in 1979 and operates from a mobile unit in the grounds of Bishop's Stortford High School close to the centre of the town. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday morning from 09.15 to 11.45 and from 12:15 to 14:45 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons during school term times. The setting also provides a holiday club for under five year-old children for two weeks in the summer holiday from 10:00 to 13:00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 72 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 38 receive funding for early education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area.

The pre-school employ five staff, of whom four, including the manager hold appropriate qualifications. Two members of staff are working towards a qualification or higher qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is promoted well because staff follow good health procedures in the setting such as cleaning tables before snack time. Staff's awareness of good hygiene procedures is demonstrated through practical examples such as a chart in the kitchen showing colour coded cleaning cloths to be used to ensure the risk of cross-infection is minimised. All the required documentation to promote the children's health is in place. For example, allergies and medical conditions are recorded so that staff can meet the individual children's needs. Staff are first aid trained to enable them to deal with minor incidents promptly and accidents in the setting are recorded so that parents and carers are aware of any after care that may be required.

The children learn about their own health and personal care through effective daily routines. For example, pictorial signs on the bathroom remind children to wash their hands after using the toilet. The children are able to access tissues themselves to wipe their noses and dispose of them in the lidded bins provided and they learn that this is to stop germs spreading.

The children enjoy healthy snacks each day at the ongoing milk bar and talk confidently about fruit being good for them. Children enjoy a number of activities to further promote their understanding of the importance of healthy eating such as food tasting and cooking. They also take part in topics about the importance of health and exercise on their growing bodies. All these measures promote the children's awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle for their future well-being.

Children's physical development is promoted well. They move confidently around the room and enjoy space inside to sprawl out in the comfortable book corner. They climb in and out of large cardboard boxes stretching and moving their limbs. The children benefit from fresh air each day when they have scheduled play time outside where they develop their physical skills through a good range of equipment. For example, they bounce energetically on the trampoline and balance across stepping stones and ramps. The children notice the effects that exercise has on their bodies as they become hot after running around and decide to unbutton their coats. When the weather is inclement the children enjoy physical activities inside such as obstacle courses.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children play and learn in a very bright and stimulating environment full of attractive displays pictures and posters which foster children's interest. Low-level display tables encourage the children to freely explore and investigate a range of items such as soft furry fabrics and smooth and shiny Wellington boots. The garden is an exciting area where children are able to enhance their skills and understanding. For example, the children develop their co-ordination as they walk with 'big feet' stilts and see how the wind blows the fallen leaves into piles.

Security systems are robust to ensure children are not able to leave the premises and unauthorised persons do not have access to the children. All visitors are carefully checked and sign a visitor book and parents and carers give consent for collection of their children. There are extensive health and safety policies in place which ensure all staff work within current guidelines to promote the children's well-being. Daily checks are made on the premises to ensure children are able to play freely and in safety. For example the garden is risk assessed

before children go out to play. The curriculum planning includes a written risk assessment of planned activities to ensure potential hazards are minimised.

There is a very broad range of good quality toys and equipment which are checked regularly to ensure they are still safe for children to use. Children's enjoyment and learning is also enhanced by the staff's creative use of natural and household materials and items. For example, the children explore soft and silky shaving foam and use play dough alongside bottle tops and pine cones. Outside, old tyres become platforms, stepping stones or hidey holes and old plastic tubs and tubes make excellent drums.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe through their daily routines as they are reminded of the 'rules'. For example, only two people on the trampoline and to hold the hand rails on the steps down to the garden area. Children are helped to use equipment in a safe and controlled way so that they learn the safety rules such as when using scissors and woodwork tools. The children take part in topics such as road and water safety to further enhance their understanding of how to keep safe in the wider world.

The children are protected because staff understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. Many staff have undertaken child protection training and all staff are clearly aware of the setting's written child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are settled and happy in the calm atmosphere of the setting. They enjoy a good range of activities and experience which capture their imagination and interest and therefore play busily and with purpose. Children develop warm and trusting relationships with the caring staff who show that they value what the children do and say. Children's confidence is fostered very well because staff have a good understanding of when to support and guide the children and when to allow them to work things out for themselves. Children are provided with ample time to engage in their own play which fosters their independent exploration and learning. Adult focussed activities with a particular leaning intention are carefully planned to ensure individual children can all take part and enjoy them.

Children build on their natural curiosity as learners as they play and discover new ideas and experiences through both planned and spontaneous activities indoors and out. For example, they learn about size, colour and number as they sort and match graded bears and make observations of the plants they have grown in the garden. The children benefit greatly from playing outside and taking part in activities and experience on a larger scale than is possible inside. More frequent use of the garden area has the potential to further extend the children's knowledge and skills across all areas of their learning.

Staff use both the 'Birth to three matters' and Foundation Stage frameworks to ensure that all age groups attending are provided with appropriate and purposeful play opportunities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. The early years practitioners have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the developmental needs of the children they care for. Consequently the quality of teaching meets the needs of the children overall. The staff work together well

to develop the curriculum planning to ensure children are provided with balanced and varied activities and experiences to promote their development across the six areas of learning.

The level of constructive communication is very good and staff use good, open ended questions to make children think and to work out things themselves. This has a very positive effect on the children's confidence and attitudes to their play and learning. Staff make constructive written observations of the children at play and these contribute to the children's record of progress. More frequent observations of the children has the potential to further inform the staff about what the children already know and can do to help them more effectively plan for the individual child's next learning steps.

Children enjoy what they do and sustain interest in a range of activities which promote their understanding and learning. Children are motivated and concentrate well at activities which capture their imagination such as detailed role play games in the home corner and making 'Arctic' pictures.

Children are becoming confident speakers and they listen attentively to each other and staff. They enjoy listening to stories and being actively involved as the story unfolds; finishing off repeated refrains with enthusiasm. The children also enjoy looking at books by themselves in the comfortable book corner. Children are introduced to a wide vocabulary which enhances their language skills well. The children see lots of text around them which fosters the children's understanding that words have meaning and can be used for a variety of reasons. Children have many good opportunities to practise their emergent writing skills.

Children's mathematical skills are developed very well. They are beginning to recognise numerals and they count confidently in their everyday play which demonstrates a good understanding of the concept of number. Children work on planned activities to reinforce their understanding such as making an eye colour chart and recording information on clipboards to 'tally up'. The children enjoy practical mathematical experiences. For example, they explore capacity and volume as they play in the sand and water trays filling different sized containers and working out if they are full or empty. They learn about measurement as they weigh cooking ingredients and compare the size of play dough balls. The children's early understanding of patterns in number is fostered as they order and sequence during matching games. The children develop an understanding of geometry as they use two and three dimensional shapes during their play such a building with construction toys and junk modelling.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first-hand experiences. For example, they discover how to care for living things as they feed the pet fish and help to clean out the tank. The children learn about the passage of time when they discuss the weather and talk about the days of the week and the changing seasons of the year. These discussions are then consolidated by actually experiencing the changes in their environment through playing outside and on local walks. The children's early science skills are fostered well through a wide range of activities. For example, they explore blocks of ice, and plant and tend herbs in the garden.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them develop their confidence and skills when using large and small apparatus. Children have lots of opportunities to develop their fine motor skills which include using single handed tools and utensils such as scissors and pencils.

Children have good opportunities to express their individual creativity through a wide range of art and construction activities. For example, they begin to communicate their own ideas as they draw, paint and design, and make collages and models. The children use their imagination freely in role play and when playing with 'small world' equipment such as train sets. The children use props and play items to support their imaginative play such as play kitchen equipment and dressing up clothes. However, the children also have the imagination to completely pretend to change a doll's nappy without any resources. The children take part in drama and music and movement sessions to further enhance their creativity and imagination. Children also enjoy experimenting with sounds as they sing and access instruments and household items to make sounds and music independently.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children develop a strong sense of belonging to the group as they find their name cards when they arrive and see lots of photographs of themselves all around them. The children are encouraged to take an active part in the pre-school through daily activities such as helping to tidy away and having choices about what they do through free play and self-selection. The older children are also able to contribute to future planning of experiences as they select activities they would like to do by putting pictures of equipment into named pouches.

The youngest children develop their blossoming social skills as they are encouraged to play alongside each other and to join in small group activities by the sensitive and caring staff. As the children grow they develop positive relationships with their peers and play amicably together. The children learn how to share, take turns and to negotiate verbally with each other and the staff. For example, a three-year-old says to a friend 'you can have it first but then it's my turn, OK?' and another child explains to a member of staff that they would like to tell a friend what has happened. The children learn about emotions and how others feel through their daily routines and planned topics. For example, they discuss why the bear might be sad when everyone runs away from it in the story. Such experiences help the children put into words their own feelings and develops a sense of care and concern for others.

The children are encouraged to show care and respect for others and their environment through everyday routines and planned experiences. For example, the children are encouraged to 'show and tell' at group times and learn to listen to each other. The children take walks into their local environment where they learn about their immediate community. The children also take part in celebrations of world festivals so that they begin to develop an understanding of our differences and similarities. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are appropriate systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An appropriately trained Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator works with parents and carers, other staff and any outside agencies to develop effective learning programmes for the children.

The children benefit from the setting ethos of valuing the partnership they have with parents and carers. There is an excellent range of information available for parents and carers about the setting and their aims. For example a very informative welcome pack offers practical advice and reassurance for all new parents and carers and there is a pre-school website for parent and carers to visit. Good settling in policies and procedures enable children and their families to take the difficult step of separation and foster a smooth transition from home to pre-school

life. For example, parents and carers complete a child profile so that staff are aware of their child's needs, likes and dislikes from their first day. Ongoing communication is promoted well through daily verbal exchanges and the vast amount of information displayed in the reception area. Use of a 'home and pre-school' link book enables parents and carers and staff to exchange information more formally if they choose. Parents and carers are very supportive of the group and take part in fund raising activities and attend social events organised by the pre-school. The setting actively seeks parental opinion through varied questionnaires regarding the services provided.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Good quality information about the setting and the educational programme is provided in the pre-school prospectus and on numerous notice boards throughout the premises. This ensures that parents and carers are well informed about how their children develop and learn through their play. Parents and carers are informed about their children's progress and achievements through daily conversation with staff and sharing of home link books. There are some opportunities for parents and carers to have access to their child's assessment records. Parents and carers are encouraged to take an active part in the pre-school through a parental helper rota. Parents and carers are informed about the coming themes and activities and curriculum planning is displayed so that children's learning in pre-school can be supported at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are protected and their welfare promoted because there are appropriate systems in place to ensure adults working with the children are suitable to do so. Recruitment and induction procedures are in place and ensure that all staff are aware of working practices in the nursery. There is an ongoing system for staff appraisal which includes their future professional development plans. These measures foster staff and pre-school development and ultimately promote positive outcomes for all children.

There is an ethos of reflective practice in the setting, instigated by a hands-on and dynamic manager, with staff making clear and regular evaluations of what they do in order that children continue to flourish. The group's ongoing self evaluation process celebrates their achievements but also identifies further improvements for the care and education of the children. This evaluation forms the basis of the group's action plan which they work on together to continually improve and expand their service to families and children.

Children receive lots of individual care and attention because there are good staff to child ratios. There is a stable team of well qualified and experienced staff who work very well together for the benefit of the children. All staff demonstrate a commitment to ongoing training to continually develop their skills and knowledge. This ensures that children are cared for and supported by staff who are knowledgeable and motivated by new ideas.

Organisation of time is good and enables children to engage in both adult focussed activities and their own free investigative play. Overall, space is used well to enable children to work and play productively. Grouping of children by use of colour coded groups ensures that group activities are conducted in small groups where children's abilities and needs are more effectively met. For example, small separate groups at story time enable all children to take part and contribute as appropriate to their level of development.

There is an operational plan which clearly outlines the aims of the pre-school and how these will be achieved to promote the children's safety, care and learning. The written policies and procedures underpin the good working practices in the pre-school. All the required documentation is maintained efficiently to ensure the efficient day-to-day management of the provision.

Leadership and management is good. Staff, committee and trustees are positive in their approach and work hard to achieve constant improvement and good results with the children. There is good recognition of individual staff skills within the team, resulting in confident staff who are proactive in ensuring an inclusive environment where every child matters. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the setting has improved the children's ability to play freely and safely by removing discarded items from the garden and by improving the ongoing written risk assessment system.

The nursery education for funded children has also been improved. The more able children now have more opportunities to develop their early calculation and problem solving skills through activities which encourage them to think about how many or less. Children's independence and decision making skills have been greatly improved by use of easily accessible storage units where children are able to select what they need to support their own games and ideas. For example, children choose construction toys from low level storage and access art and craft materials organised at their height.

The staff have also worked hard at developing new short term planning and assessment records which are more clearly linked to the stepping stones of learning. This enables staff to see the children's next steps more clearly and assists them in planning for the children's ongoing progress towards the early learning goals.

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.

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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):

- plan and provide more frequent play opportunities to develop the children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities in the outdoor area.

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 current systems for assessment to ensure children's next steps for learning are clearly identified and based on observations of what they know and can do and devise systems to include parental involvement in these records.

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