

INSPECTION REPORT

BUSHY LEAZE EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Alton

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 130861

Headteacher: Mrs Liz George

Reporting inspector: Mr M S Burghart
20865

Dates of inspection: 13th – 14th May 2002

Inspection number: 230451

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 - 4
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Eastbrooke Road Alton Hampshire
Postcode:	GU34 2DR
Telephone number:	01420 87675
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Sue Meekings
Date of previous inspection:	July 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bushy Leaze Early Years Centre incorporates a nursery school with outreach, parent and toddler groups, opportunities for parent classes, and a toy library. It is situated in Alton in Hampshire. The nursery has places for 30 (full time equivalent) children aged between two years nine months and four years. Children all attend part time, 30 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon. Half the places are designated for specific support for children identified as having complex special educational needs and half for mainstream children. The latter are drawn from the immediate locality, whilst special needs children travel from a wider area of north Hampshire. The school provides very good accommodation for two classes, with a variety of extra rooms and areas for sensory and practical activities. There is an average of 15 children per class with a child to adult ratio of 3 to 1. Children's attainment on entry to the school varies widely depending on the needs of individuals, but overall is below average. The headteacher has been in post for five years. She is supported by two full time, and one part time, teachers, and eight nursery nurses and assistants. No pupils require extra support as a consequence of having English as an additional language. The school's work was recognised with a DfES award for supporting children's achievement in March 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bushy Leaze Early Years Centre is an excellent school. Children and staff get on very well together. Provision for both mainstream and special educational needs children is very good and all children benefit from being in the nursery together. As a result of good and very good teaching, children make good, and frequently very good, progress, and all children achieve well for their ability and experience. The school maintains excellent links with parents and the community through its outreach and pre-school work. Under the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher the centre moves from strength to strength. With over 50 per cent special educational needs, costs per child are understandably high, but the learning environment and the levels and quality of support are very good. Consequently the school now gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities and makes excellent use of play.
- The school is fully inclusive with all activities equally available to all children. It makes very good provision for special educational needs and helps children of all abilities to achieve well.
- Relationships are very good and provision for children's personal development is excellent.
- The school is very well led and managed and teaching is very good
- The school takes excellent care of children and maintains excellent links with parents and the community.

What could be improved

This inspection raises no key issues for improvement. In its own development plan the school intends to continue to raise the quality of teaching and learning, and further develop its professional relationship with local infant schools.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection in July 1998 raised three key issues for improvement. The school has made very good progress in addressing these. Procedures for assessing and recording children's performance have been revised and now provide good information to gauge progress. Provision for higher attaining children is carefully planned and documented. Children are well challenged, whatever their ability, and daily planning very effectively identifies learning objectives. In addition, all but two of the classroom practitioners are new since the last inspection. The school's policies and procedures have proved very successful in supporting this high level of staff change. As a result of very good joint planning and clear educational direction, the school is very well placed for future development. This is entirely consistent with the DfES¹ Achievement Award Bushy Leaze received in March 2002. Selection for a short inspection is completely justified.

STANDARDS

The combination of half mainstream and half special educational needs children makes an overall judgement on standards a compromise at 'satisfactory'. This gives a false picture. The undoubted success of the school is in enabling all children to make at least good progress against their previous experience and ability. As a result children are achieving well. The clear majority of mainstream children, and some of those with special educational needs, are on line to reach the Early Learning Goals² for the Foundation Stage³ by the time they complete Year R in the infant school. Improved provision for higher attainers has resulted in a significant proportion of children likely to achieve the goals, particularly for communication, language and literacy, and mathematics, well before the end of Year R. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Overall children make very good progress in personal and social development with the effect that behaviour as a whole is judged very good. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory. Standards of physical and creative development are good for the nursery age group in response to good provision, notwithstanding those children with complex needs, which make such activities difficulties.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: children like school, show interest and enthusiasm and often sustain attention for relatively long periods.
Behaviour	Very good: despite the occasional outbursts of some children who are not as mature as others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: children respond very well to excellent opportunities to make choices, show initiative and take responsibility. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Good: children attend regularly.

¹ Department for Education and Skills.

² QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals' for children in this stage of education. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of six. There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.

³ The Foundation Stage refers to children from entry to the nursery up to and including age six when they complete the reception year in the infant school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Quality of teaching	Very good.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

None of the sessions observed were unsatisfactory and nearly nine out of ten were good or better. Over half were very good and two lessons, taught by teachers, were formally judged excellent. All classroom practitioners (teachers, nursery nurses, and nursery assistants) were observed and all were judged as teaching at least at the good level for most activities. Both class teachers recorded sessions that were very good and excellent. Clear strengths are in the quality of planning; very good use of play; very good relationships; challenge for more able children; and good use of appropriate language to match children's understanding. Teaching designed to enhance children's personal and social development and improve communication skills, is consistently strong. Provision in the form of teaching and support for children with special educational needs is very effective and as a result children achieve well, and often very well. The quality of children's learning as observed during the inspection was consistently good. This is a direct result of the interventions of staff and the effects of their teaching. A minor area in this very good profile for improvement is in developing the language structure some support staff use to encourage children to respond orally during some activities. The quality of teaching has been improved since the last inspection through good analysis of strengths and weaknesses and very good support through in-service training.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: the school provides a relevant, broad and balanced curriculum, in many cases tailored directly to the needs of the individual. This work is very positively supported by the excellent links with parents and pre-school children, skilfully provided through outreach and parent support groups.
Provision for children with special educational needs	Very good: excellent links with outside agencies and very good assessment of children's performance and potential, to set targets. Very good management of, and very good support from, nursery nurses and assistants.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: with excellent moral and social opportunities. Children from both mainstream and special needs placements benefit enormously by working and playing together. Very good spiritual and good cultural provision.
How well the school cares for its children	Excellent physical care, now systematically supported by very good assessment, tracking and recording procedures. Staff know children very well.

Parents support the school very well and there are excellent links created between home and school. The centre sets out to involve parents fully in their children's education and succeeds.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: under the excellent leadership of the headteacher the school's vision, drawn from the contributions of staff, governors and parents, is particularly clear. The school's educational direction is an undoubted strength. Staff manage their responsibilities very well, especially for the curriculum, special needs, outreach, and pre-school support.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive of the head and staff. Governors' work is effective in supporting the head's management of finance, and in confirming priorities of the development plan. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent: the staff, very successfully led by the head, analyse the effectiveness of policies and procedures, and have an excellent grasp of strengths and relative weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: very efficient use of finance has produced a very good learning environment, very well stocked with a good range and quality of resources. A very generous number of staff is very well deployed. Time is used particularly well.

In terms of children's good, and very good, achievement, and the high quality of provision on offer, the school gives very good (and improved) value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoy coming. • Expectations are high. • The school takes very good care of children. • It is well led and managed. • Children make good progress. • Special needs provision is very good. • The school is approachable. 	There was no consensus of negative views.

Twenty-five parents returned the Ofsted questionnaire and eighteen attended meetings with the registered inspector. The overwhelming response of parents is very positive towards the school. Inspectors are pleased to support this view.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

'The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities and makes excellent use of play.'

1. Planning is a strength of the school. All practitioners are involved in translating the national recommendations of the Foundation Stage curriculum into the school's own schemes to cover the six specified areas of learning. All children receive the same entitlement to the curriculum and all are fully included in all activities. Very good tracking of individuals ensures that all children are involved in a suitable range of activities each day and that these address the targets of both individual education plans and those set for higher attainers. The structure of the day allows for both child and teacher initiated activities and demonstrates the school's strong commitment to learning through play.

2. The curriculum is very well co-ordinated and monitored by a member of the teaching staff and continually evaluated. Planning is presented in a way which makes learning objectives clear and outlines how staff will interact with children to encourage, advise and, in particular, promote the development of communication skills. For example role play following a visit to the vet includes children and staff in making appointments, carrying out 'operations' and discussing treatment and fees! This develops speaking skills as well as very effectively enhancing children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

3. During the course of the morning and afternoon sessions there are many opportunities for children to work and play together. These very successfully develop personal and social skills and children's appreciation of how their actions affect others. There is a high degree of consideration for each other, staff, resources and the building, and children are very tolerant of differences and the varying needs of individuals. Children were observed taking turns, sharing, and helping each other, especially in outdoor play where they obviously understand that they will have to wait sometimes to ride or climb. Excellent use of sand timers by staff to show children the passing of time makes for smooth changeovers and turn taking. Staff are very skilled in coaxing children to activities in addition to their favourites, whilst still allowing them choice and independence.

4. Personal and social development is very effectively complemented by activities designed to encourage mathematical understanding: for example playing as shopkeepers selling groceries, and in matching, sorting and classifying games. Close contact with adults and good questioning reinforces children's concepts of numeracy and awareness of value.

5. Appropriate use is made of modern technology to help children appreciate that they can control equipment and computer programs. For example good manipulation of the mouse for this age group was observed with a variety of children of all abilities dragging icons across the computer screen to classify different types of animals. This was a very good extension to work with lenses and plastic creatures, designed to identify characteristics.

6. Very good focus activities, where children play directly with an adult as part of a group in constructing, making, and decorating in art and craft sessions, enhance children's dexterity and use of tools and joining techniques. Children were seen to concentrate for relatively long periods in response to very good support whilst making space ships, in handling playdoughs of different consistencies, and building with large and small construction sets. These activities challenged children's physical skills as well as encouraging them to express themselves. The use of colour and texture in art work makes a very good contribution to children's spiritual development as well as creativity.

7. Reading activities have a high profile with set times each day when adults and children focus on books. Shared 'reading' from familiar texts encourages children to begin to associate letters with sounds and many can retell what they have 'read' in the correct sequence. The school sets a very good example and clearly intends to inspire children to enjoy reading. There is a very successful emphasis on getting children to make marks on paper which begin to emerge as 'writing'. Some higher attaining children are already able to write simple sentences and many will be able to write their names before they leave the nursery. Very good use of times when children of different abilities are grouped together, primarily for communication, language and literacy activities, has very positive impacts on work towards individual targets.

8. Staff are very well prepared, and equipment, toys and materials are very skilfully laid out ready for the start of sessions to stimulate and attract children when they first arrive. It is to the school's credit that opportunities are equally fresh for children in the afternoon as the morning. The centre is very well resourced and the very good accommodation is used very effectively to encourage children to extend themselves and respond to a variety of stimuli and situations. As a result children are growing in confidence and make good, and often very good, progress. There is a very close relationship between the provision on offer in terms of learning opportunities and children's very good achievement, and excellent attitudes.

9. The school's very clear commitment to learning through firsthand experience is evident not only in its planning but in what happens in everyday sessions. Policy is turned into practice to the benefit of all children and their performance against the Early Learning Goals for this age group.

'The school is fully inclusive with all activities equally available to all children. It makes very good provision for special educational needs and helps children of all abilities to achieve well.'

10. Regardless of ability, gender or background all children have full opportunity to take part in everything the school has to offer. Very good tracking, assessment and evaluating procedures, improved since the last report, ensure that staff know what children have been involved in and how well they have done. Although half the children have been awarded places at Bushy Leaze on the basis of their special educational needs, there are many times when it would be very difficult to tell them apart and it is very clear that children do not think of themselves, or others as anything different. At the Ofsted parents' meeting with the registered inspector more than one parent declared that children of all abilities mixed together both in and out of school. This is an excellent example of the inclusive nature of the centre.

11. Both those with special needs and mainstream children benefit enormously by being fully integrated in their work and play. Staff are very skilled at encouraging children to mix with a variety of classmates and this is clearly an extension to the very good work started in the parent and toddler groups when very young children meet with their parents as part of the centre's provision.

12. Provision for special educational needs in both quantity and quality is very good. With excellent links with outside agencies children with additional needs are identified very early, often before they arrive at the nursery. Very good planning and consideration, based on very good understanding of educational and personal needs, results in very good individual education plans which highlight sequential, achievable targets. Programmes of experiences are catalogued to ensure that children make progress. These are well known to all staff and parents and are self-perpetuating in that they are a good measure of success as well as providing goals to aspire to. All requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs are met and all financial resources (and more) designated for such support are well used. As an entity, provision for special needs, although on the face of it very expensive,

gives very good value for money, given the good, and frequently very good, achievement of children against their previous experiences and abilities.

13. In their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and in their meetings with inspectors, parents made it exceedingly clear that they are very happy with the centre's support for all children, but with special educational needs in particular. Many spoke of some trepidation when Bushy Leaze was first proposed for their children, but of absolute confidence once they understood the school's philosophy. It is to the school's undoubted credit that parents of mainstream children feel the same and that places are always oversubscribed.

'Relationships are very good and provision for children's personal development is excellent.'

14. Throughout the inspection it was very evident that:

- Staff function very well as a team, working very closely together for the benefit of children's support and development;
- Children get on well together because of the example and intentions of the centre;
- Adults respect for children means that they are prepared to listen and give individuals the opportunity to make choices of what to do and what to use to do it, and give young children the chance to show initiative and take responsibility;
- Children's response to the centre is excellent. Children are usually keen to attend, show interest and enthusiasm (often wanting to show parents and friends what they have done);
- Standards of behaviour are very good, notwithstanding the fact that some children are relatively immature and prone to be self centred, which occasionally leads to outbursts. Some of these children have been placed at Bushy Leaze to help them overcome this. The school's excellent management of strategies to help children and parents from this point of view is a significant part in the very good outreach support on offer and is very effective;
- Children, although very young, have a good sense of right and wrong and are already beginning to appreciate the effects of their actions on others. Children achieve very well in terms of their personal and social development and provision designed to help them to do this is excellent;
- Staff set an excellent example to children in their relations with each other.

15. When the very good quality of relationships is considered against the very high commitment to raising and maintaining standards, both personal and academic, it is possible to judge that Bushy Leaze has a very good ethos. This is underpinned by the very clear educational intentions and direction, just as much as the excellent level of care for children's physical needs. It is not surprising that 95 per cent of the parents returning the Ofsted questionnaire declared that they think the school helps their children to become mature.

'The school is very well led and managed and teaching is very good.'

16. The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. She ensures that the school maintains its high quality levels of care, and seeks to further improve through strong educational direction. There are very good procedures to collect suggestions and ideas from staff, governors and parents, which subsequently feed the priorities of the Centre Development Plan. This plan has a three year overview broken down year on year to deliver tangible targets for improvement. It is appropriately costed and identifies criteria for success which the head and governors use to measure progress.

17. The head leads the staff very effectively as a very good team. She ensures they are clear of their responsibilities, have appropriate terms of reference and, where areas are

featured as targets in the Centre Development Plan, have time available to cover the task. There is a very strong commitment to raising and maintaining standards, with very good relationships common throughout, and this gives rise to the school's very good ethos. Each teacher plays a significant part in some aspect(s) of management; with notable success in developing the curriculum, supporting special educational needs, and maintaining links with parents and the community.

18. Overall the quality of leadership and management enables the school to evaluate strengths and weaknesses very effectively. Over a period of four years since the last report the impact of this is that potential weaknesses have been addressed and this inspection raises no key issues for improvement.

19. The last inspection reported that teaching was a strength of the school. Because of very good management of induction and professional development in staff training it remains a strength, even though all but two of the classroom practitioners have changed.

20. Teaching was at least satisfactory in every session observed and nine out of ten lessons were good or better. Over half of all lessons were judged very good with two excellent. All practitioners had at least one lesson at the good level or better. This constitutes improvement since the last report where, "13 per cent of lessons were very good".

21. The overall profile of teaching is very good and this has very positive effects on children's learning. Because of this children make very good progress and achieve consistently well and on many occasions very well. The most marked progress is for children with special educational needs and for higher attainers (the latter being an improvement since the last report). However, considering all children, the school demonstrates that it adds at least good value to both children's personal and academic development in their short time in the nursery.

22. Strengths in teaching are in very good relationships, good questioning which prompts children to express themselves, provision and support based in targets of individual education plans for those with special educational needs, very good planning and record keeping. For example practitioners making very good reference to intentions for individual children during 'free play' time to coax children to be involved in role play 'at the vets' to extend speaking skills.

23. The school is aware that teaching could be even further developed by improving the range of language used by some assistants during child originated activities: for example aimed at developing oral skills during ball crawl and outdoor play. Such improvement already forms part of planning for the future and this is part of the very successful ongoing management of change. The quality of teaching continues to be a strength of the school, with very positive effects on learning.

'The school takes excellent care of children and maintains excellent links with parents and the community.'

24. This inspection found no cause for concern over the physical welfare of children. There are no health and safety issues to be addressed, and levels of care are regarded as excellent as a result of high quality planning and consideration. Whichever session children attend for, and whatever their ability levels, staff take excellent care of them. Very good records are kept of children's needs and staff work hard to get to know children.

25. There are excellent procedures to receive and release children at the start and end of each session and very good arrangements concerning supervision and first aid. The centre has excellent links with all outside agencies, such as speech therapists, physiotherapists and

educational psychologists. Parents are kept very well informed about children's performance and made well aware of targets and success rates.

26. Since the last inspection the use of assessment to identify individual targets for improvement has been further developed and is now a strength. Practitioners make good evaluations of children's levels of attainment soon after they arrive and carefully track not only what children are involved in on a day to day basis, but how well they are doing. This particularly benefits those with special educational needs and is now geared to challenging children who could be higher attainers. The overall success of this in raising standards is evident in that the overwhelming majority of mainstream children are on line to at least reach the Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage before the end of Year R in the infant school. A significant proportion of children with special needs are likely to be close to doing so, given that the level of support they receive is continued in the next phase of their education. With this in mind the centre has targeted the further development of links with infant and, where appropriate special, schools to ensure continuity.

27. Links with parents are securely rooted in the very good work of outreach support, which seeks to help children at home, and in the morning and afternoon parent and toddler groups, held in the excellent community room. Parents are encouraged, and shown how to best help their children, and resources in the form of toys and games are available through the very well run toy library based at the centre.

28. There is little doubt that the excellent levels of care, and partnership with parents and carers make significant contributions to children's achievements and truly reflect the centre's aims and objectives. Provision is especially well managed and very effective in pursuing children's personal as well as educational development. Parents are extremely pleased with such support and were careful to bring this to inspectors' attention.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

29. This inspection raises no key issues for improvement. In its own development plan the school intends to continue to raise the quality of teaching and learning, and further develop its professional relationship with local infant schools.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

30. There are no key issues for the school to address. The school has very good planning in hand to ensure its continued development, which includes continuing to develop further the staff's use of language to encourage children's communication skills during play activities; extend links with local infant schools; and develop the part governors play in managing the centre.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	11	9	3	0	0	0
Percentage	8	44	36	12	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	N/A
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	N/A

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/A

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	174

Number of pupils per FTE adult	2.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 – 2002
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	£
Total income	233527
Total expenditure	226353
Expenditure per pupil	7546
Balance brought forward from previous year	19292
Balance carried forward to next year	26466

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	60
Number of questionnaires returned	25

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	20	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	71	25	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	38	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	50	12	0	19
The teaching is good.	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	44	12	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	36	0	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	42	17	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	12	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	60	36	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	43	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	35	10	0	15

Due to rounding percentages may not total 100.