

The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

Nursery report on: Busy Bodies at Trellech Playgroup

Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Wendy Young, HMI

Date of inspection: 24 and 25 February 2009

Contract number: H/O90/O8N

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Report on the inspection of nursery settings in the non-maintained sector

Name of nursery: Busy Bodies at Trellech Playgroup

**Address: Babington Centre
Trellech
Monmouthshire**

Post code: NP25 4PA

Telephone: 01600 860298

Person(s) responsible for day-to-day management: Tracy Price / Jess Everett

Position: Supervisors

About the inspection

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five-point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

- Grade 1 good with outstanding features
- Grade 2 good features and no important shortcomings
- Grade 3 good features outweigh shortcomings
- Grade 4 some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
- Grade 5 many important shortcomings

1.0 Context of the setting

Context of the nursery setting

Busy Bodies at Trellech Playgroup was first established in 1973 and is a registered charity based in the Babington Centre in the village of Trellech, Monmouthshire. The playgroup caters for children from two and a half to school age.

The playgroup is open during school term times for five morning sessions and on Monday afternoons for older children who will start school in the following September. All children are welcomed to the playgroup and policies and procedures are in place to support the admission of children with additional learning needs.

The playgroup is registered for up to 24 children per session. There are 38 children on roll, including 15 three year-olds and 12 four year-olds, who are in receipt of funded educational provision. Most children live in Trellech and the surrounding areas and the majority of children are from advantaged backgrounds. All children speak English as their home language. At the time of inspection, eight three year-olds and seven four year-olds were present.

Over the past year, there have been a number of staff illnesses requiring the appointment of new and temporary staff. The playgroup now has two permanent supervisors who either hold qualifications related to early years education or have qualified teacher status. A further five practitioners also work in the setting. An elected committee of parents and other interested parties manages the playgroup.

The playgroup accommodation includes a large hall, an enclosed outdoor play area and adjoining grassed and tarmac areas. The playgroup is well suited to receive children with physical disabilities. The hall is next to the local primary school and the playgroup has free use of their playground and outdoor equipment when not in school use.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the nursery in January 2008.

Estyn last inspected the nursery in July 2001.

2.0 Main findings of the report

2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision and whether or not the provision successfully promotes the goals for children's learning

The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the Foundation Phase outcomes for children's learning.

2.2 Standards achieved by children in the seven areas of learning

| Areas of learning | Grade for under-fives |
|---|-----------------------|
| Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity | 2 |
| Language, literacy and communication skills | 2 |
| Mathematical development | 2 |
| Welsh language development | 2 |
| Knowledge and understanding of the world | 2 |
| Physical development | 2 |
| Creative development | 2 |

2.3 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

| Quality of education | Grade for under-fives |
|---|-----------------------|
| Quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| Quality of planning for children's learning | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress, and reports for parents and carers | 3 |
| Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community | 2 |
| The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing | 2 |
| Quality of the leadership and management of the setting | 2 |
| The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report | 3 |

3.0 The standards achieved by children in the seven areas of learning

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds

3.1 Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity

Children's standards in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children are confident on entering the playgroup, settle well and become engaged quickly in a range of activities. Routines are well established. Children know what is expected of them during group sessions, snack time and tidy-up time and are usually attentive and respond well to discussions.

Most children relate well to each other and often stay involved in activities for lengthening periods. All children have very good relationships with practitioners.

Children make good progress in becoming independent learners. They are keen to try out new experiences, show interest and curiosity, and begin to show care and concern for animals and the environment.

Children generally co-operate well, share and begin to take turns and gain increasing self-control. Many children take responsibility for their personal hygiene, such as washing their hands before snack time and after playing with the paint and playdough.

Children respond positively to cultural experiences and celebrations, including the Chinese New Year and to some Welsh traditions.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings but children are less aware of a wide range of other cultures and traditions.

3.2 Language, literacy and communication skills

Children's standards in language, literacy and communication skills are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Most children listen carefully to adults and follow instructions well. They readily talk and share their experiences and usually respond eagerly to questions and discussions.

In their play, children use language that is appropriate to the activity and begin to use the words that staff introduce to extend children's vocabulary.

Children handle books correctly as readers and look at pictures with interest. Most children recall songs, rhymes and the main events in a favourite story. Many older children can retell a story sequencing events accurately and predict what will happen next when sharing a book. Most children understand that words convey meaning and older children confidently recognise and read their own names.

Children enjoy mark making and use a range of different implements successfully, such as crayons, pencils and brushes. Older children usually write their name unaided.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

3.3 Mathematical development

Children's standards in mathematical development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children develop a good understanding of mathematical concepts through their experiences in play. Most children confidently join in rote counting to five while many older children recognise and name numbers and count accurately to six. Older pupils and a few more able younger children count beyond 10 and understand the concept of one more or one fewer.

Many children recognise 2-D shapes such as circle and triangle. Most children are beginning to develop an understanding of one-to-one correspondence. In their play, most children recognise and recreate basic patterns and sort, match, order and sequence familiar objects.

Almost all children are developing an appropriate awareness of the passage of time through the order of their daily routines. They are beginning to use mathematical language and talk about containers being empty or full in their sand and water play.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

3.4 Welsh language development

Children's standards in Welsh language development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Most children respond well to greetings and praise in Welsh. They are developing a basic understanding of incidental words and phrases used regularly by staff, and understand more words than they can speak. Generally, they repeat familiar words and phrases accurately.

Children enjoy Welsh songs and rhymes and join in singing 'Bore da' during registration. Many children are becoming confident in recognising colours and a few older children can name up to four colours in Welsh. Many children can count to five and a few older children can count confidently to 10.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings but children's reading and their mark making skills are underdeveloped as they do not look at Welsh books enough or experiment with mark making in relation to the Welsh language.

3.5 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Children's standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children are enthusiastic and interested learners and most develop a good understanding of the world around them through exploration, investigation and discussion. They demonstrate curiosity and excitement in their outdoor environment and understand the need to care for living things, such as being gentle and quiet with their pet hamster.

Children's problem solving skills are developing well. They confidently explore their environment and recall interesting facts about the seasons and weather. Older children understand the need to wear different clothes, such as why they had to wear warm clothes when it snowed.

Most children use technology confidently, such as when they use the computer to match numbers and objects. They enjoy using the digital camera to take pictures, often setting up their photographs carefully and take pleasure in looking at the results and sharing them with others.

Most children are gaining an understanding of the properties of materials and many children talk about how materials can change. For instance, older children use words such as melting to describe what happens when they combine water with sand; they know that wet sand does not hold a shape for making sand castles.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

3.6 Physical development

Children's standards of physical development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children handle a variety of tools confidently. They develop their fine motor skills well, using resources such as scissors, glue sticks and paintbrushes and materials such as playdough. They work with care and increasing skill and confidence to make effective products, such as their animal masks. Many children show skill and dexterity, for example, when they shampoo a doll's hair and when playing with small world equipment and jigsaws as well as through manipulating the mouse when using the computer. They listen to instructions and begin to follow the simple rules of a game.

Most children are developing appropriate gross motor skills through regular use of the outside play area. For example, many children climb the playground apparatus confidently, learn to keep their balance and steer accurately when riding and pushing wheeled toys, including bicycles.

The majority of children are developing good spatial awareness and they can change pace and direction with confidence; they walk, run and jump enthusiastically in their energetic play.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

3.7 Creative development

Children's standards of creative development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children explore and experiment well using a variety of techniques, such as cutting and sticking. They select materials independently to create different effects. Most children apply paint using bold brush strokes and choose colours confidently. They are keen to be involved in creative activities and concentrate very well, such as when making their chefs' hats. Children take pride in their finished products.

Children enjoy singing songs in English and Welsh and usually respond enthusiastically. During free play, a few older children readily choose to experiment with untuned percussion instruments and are increasingly aware of the different sounds that instruments make.

Most children enjoy and engage readily in role-play activities indoors and outdoors. They show imagination in their play, adopt the role of characters convincingly and use 'different voices'. Children usually engage well with adults in their role-play, which adds to their experiences.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

4.0 The quality of educational provision

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds

4.1 Quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

The policies and work of the playgroup successfully reflect positive attitudes and values. Staff treat all children with care, affection and respect. They consistently reinforce good behaviour and encourage children to work well together, co-operate, share and be sensitive to the needs of others.

Clear routines and the promotion of self-confidence and independence help children make choices, gain independence and respond well to the learning experiences provided for them. The good examples set by staff and the very positive relationships between staff and children and between staff and parents contribute effectively to children's moral and social development. Studies of the natural world, such as a 'snow fall' and visits to the Forest School help children to develop a sense of awe and curiosity.

Opportunities to celebrate festivals, such as Christmas and the Chinese New Year, and activities that promote Welsh heritage and culture, including celebrating St David's Day, help to promote children's understanding of different cultures. A small range of resources, including costumes in the home corner, contribute to children's understanding of cultural diversity.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings but staff do not utilise opportunities enough to reinforce children's knowledge of Welsh and the diversity of cultures in Wales.

4.2 Quality of planning for children's learning

The quality of planning for children's learning has good features which outweigh shortcomings.

Good features

Staff begin the planning process by gaining children's views to help them identify topics and themes. This approach helps to ensure that the work is relevant to children's interests, such as the current work on 'Me, me, me'. Staff share this information with parents, who are encouraged to contribute resources or offer their expertise.

All staff contribute to the planning process and use the practice recommended by the local authority. Staff identify the continuous and enhanced provision that will promote children's learning across the seven areas of the Foundation Phase. Most recently, planning for continuous provision in areas such as role play and sand and water, has been developed to include some identification of the learning intentions and the resources that will support children's learning.

The range of daily learning opportunities includes activities led by adults as well as activities that children choose for themselves, which helps to develop their independent learning. Children have good regular access to the outdoor environment, which they enjoy greatly. Staff make certain that there is equality of access for children to participate in all activities.

Shortcomings

The planning does not identify clearly the specific learning intentions or the next step for learning for children at different stages of development. Children do not have independent use of the outdoor environment.

4.3 Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

The supervisors are suitably qualified and experienced and most of the staff are also experienced in working with young children. Together, they have a good understanding of how children develop and the best conditions for learning. All staff interact very well with children. They provide a warm, friendly and supportive learning environment where children are valued as individuals and receive praise and encouragement.

Staff use a good range of teaching strategies and are particularly effective in developing children's understanding and language skills in English. For example, using accurate terminology when explaining how a muck spreader works or by modelling new vocabulary when talking about how to care for a hamster.

Most staff have undertaken recent training, such as training on the Foundation Phase, and all staff are keen to develop their knowledge and skills, including training towards a qualification in early years education and taking on the role of the special needs co-ordinator.

The advisory teacher provides good regular support for the playgroup. This support has helped staff to gain a stronger understanding of the Foundation Phase as well as the planning and assessment arrangements.

Staff make good use of the indoor and outdoor resources.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

4.4 Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports for parents and carers

The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports to parents and carers has good features which outweigh shortcomings.

Good features

Staff know the children well and have a good knowledge of their ongoing achievements. Informal meetings after sessions help all staff to contribute to the collation of assessment information for each child. Individual staff have begun to undertake observations and record notes of significant developments in children's learning in the areas for which they have responsibility. Staff also maintain a central record for each child that refers to his or her learning progress.

When children join the playgroup, parents are asked to complete an initial assessment form, which provides staff with information about children's early development and learning needs. This record and discussions with parents, contributes to the baseline assessment that is completed for each child. A further assessment using the same baseline proforma is completed when children leave the setting.

Parents are informed of their child's progress, informally on a regular basis as they collect their children as well as through the playgroup's 'open door' policy, which ensures that parents have good access to information from staff. When children leave the setting, parents receive a report that includes a copy of the completed baseline assessment, detailed information about what their child knows, understands and can do and often useful guidance about helping their child.

Shortcomings

Assessment comments do not focus enough on identifying what children have achieved in relation to learning intentions or include the next step for learning. Records for individual children do not identify information systematically enough for the seven areas of learning.

4.5 Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community

The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Staff enjoy the good support of parents who consider the team to be approachable and caring. All parents who completed the questionnaire before inspection expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the work of the playgroup. Discussions with parents during the inspection confirmed their satisfaction and appreciation of the work of staff.

Staff welcome children and parents at the start of each session and meet parents to return children to them at the end of sessions. These informal occasions enable staff and parents to discuss queries and share information about children's progress; parents value this opportunity greatly. Staff work hard and are successful in encouraging parent and carer involvement, such as attending sessions on a rotating basis or through helping to undertake improvements in the outdoor environment.

New parents receive an information pack, which briefly outlines provision and general procedures and all parents receive regular informative newsletters from the playgroup. A notice board in the main foyer and a file of playgroup policies supplies useful information to parents. A suggestion box enables parents to comment on issues and suggest improvements, which staff give attention to.

There are good links with the local primary school to which most children transfer, including visits to the school and sharing of information about children's progress. Visitors from the community, including the nurse, dentist and local policeman, enrich and extend children's experiences.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing

The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing has good features and no important shortcomings.

Good features

The playgroup provides a happy and secure environment where children feel safe and cared for. Staff know the children well and provide a high degree of care and support for each child. This contributes positively to children's self-confidence and esteem.

There are appropriate policies and procedures in place which contribute to children's wellbeing. For instance, careful checks of the premises are carried out before each session during the inspection and risk assessments are undertaken before visits, such as the recent visit to the Forest School. Accident and incident records are appropriate and fire evacuation procedures are undertaken regularly and suitably recorded. The recently updated child protection policy is based on the Whole Wales Child Protection Procedures, a supervisor is the named child protection co-ordinator and staff have received training.

Children are encouraged to eat healthily through their café snack time. They have regular opportunities to take part in physical exercise. The outdoor environment provides a good range of climbing apparatus; there are sufficient resources such as bicycles and pushchairs as well as space for running and exploring the natural world.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

4.7 Quality of the leadership and management of the setting

The quality of the leadership and management of the setting has good features and no important shortcomings.

Good features

The recently established management team of two supervisors are well qualified and experienced and promote positive aims, values and equality in the work of the playgroup. They effectively lead and manage staff, who together, have been successful in maintaining the good work of the playgroup under difficult circumstances due to staff illnesses and absence during the last year.

Staff work very well together as team. The supervisors provide clear direction for the work of other practioners. New staff have a suitable induction course with a supervisor so that they are well briefed about the playgroup's policies and their roles and responsibilities. All staff are keen to improve their skills through professional training. A well-established appraisal system helps to identify staff training needs and set targets for professional development.

Staff are supported well by the management committee, which has clear functions, including organising fundraising as well as supporting supervisors in the appointment of new staff. There are good working relationships between the playgroup and the local Early Years and Childcare Partnership advisory teacher and evidence to show that staff act on her advice. There are close links with the primary school to which most children transfer.

There is a keen desire to improve the work of the playgroup among staff. For instance, the supervisors have canvassed parents' views using a questionnaire and arrangements are in hand to improve the entrance so that access and facilities in the building are better for children and parents.

The playgroup is generally well equipped and staff make good use of available resources. The indoor accommodation is good, providing an attractive and stimulating learning environment for children. The enclosed outdoor area and large surrounding grounds also provide good opportunities for children's learning and development.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings, however, leaders and managers do not have a rolling programme of regular review for all of the setting's policies.

4.8 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report

The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report has good features which outweigh shortcomings.

Good features

Planning has improved to provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum.

Shortcomings

Work to develop assessment procedures so that children's progress and achievement can be measured against the requirements of the Foundation Phase (previously the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning) is not yet completed.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

- R1 continue to develop planning to identify the learning intentions for children and indicate tasks for children at different stages of development;
- R2 continue to develop assessment practices to help monitor children's progress and inform the planning of new work;
- R3 explore ways to provide children with greater independence in their routine and access to outdoor learning activities; and
- R4 introduce a rolling programme of regular review for all of the setting's policies.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to the Chair of the Early Years and Childcare Partnership or Children and Young Peoples' Partnership, as appropriate, and to the Local Authority. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.