



The Blue Coat School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY309405
Inspection date	21 September 2006
Inspector	Valerie Fane
Setting Address	Somerset Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands, B17 0HR
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Registered person	The Blue Coat School (528805)
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

The Blue Coat School is an independent Church of England Preparatory School and provides education for girls and boys. The Pre-Preparatory Department was established in 1965. The Pre-School and the Out of school service registered with Ofsted in 2005. The school is situated in its own extensive grounds in the Edgbaston area, close to the centre of Birmingham. At seven years of age the majority of children transfer to the Preparatory Department on the same site.

Funded children are accommodated in Buttons Pre-School group, three parallel Nursery classes and three parallel Transition classes.

The Pre-Preparatory Department is open each weekday during school term times. The school day is between 08:30 to 15:15, but the school is open from 08:00 until 18:00 each day. The school operates a before and after school club and a holiday club. Children in Buttons Pre-school

attend on a sessional basis, children in Nursery may attend part time during the first two terms and children in Transition Forms attend full time.

There are currently 278 children from two to seven years on roll. Of these 123 children receive funding for nursery education. Children who attend come from mixed cultural backgrounds and from a wide catchment area. The school currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The school employs 17 staff who work with the children in the Foundation Stage, together with a number of specialist teachers. Of these 15 staff hold relevant teaching or early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene routines as they learn to wash their hands with increasing independence after using the toilet and before eating. Staff check that the older two-year-olds have washed their hands properly. Children receive good care in the event of an accident or needing medication because all staff have current first aid knowledge. Children with specific medical needs receive excellent care because the school nurse draws up an individual care plan in conjunction with their own medical practitioners and ensures that this is made known to all staff. Children are protected from cross-infection because the school has a clear policy not to accept children who are unwell and this is made known to parents before their child attends.

Children have good opportunities to develop healthy eating habits at lunchtime as they enjoy an interesting range of meals from menus that take into account children's preferences as well as providing food of high nutritional quality. They have healthy snacks of either fresh or dried fruit between meals. Children in Buttons Pre-school learn to exercise control over their eating habits because they are able to choose their portion size. Children attending the Out of School Club have a healthy tea with a variety of sandwiches made with a choice of brown or white bread followed by fresh fruit. Children who require special diets receive good care because they have meals that fully comply with their dietary needs and are served separately when appropriate. Children's well-being is safeguarded because staff have relevant food hygiene qualifications.

Children understand the benefits of fresh air and exercise because they play outside every day in most weather conditions. The youngest children have a playtime both morning and afternoon in the enclosed playground where they use a variety of age-appropriate toys and equipment. They develop their climbing skills on the large slide, with support from staff when needed. They improve their balance and co-ordination on a range of bikes and other wheeled toys or on the fixed equipment such as the train. Children in the Foundation Stage take part in regular, well-planned physical education sessions in the school hall. They learn to warm up their bodies before they start the session. They develop balancing and jumping skills as they experiment with different ways to move across the apparatus. They have opportunities to show other members of the class different movements they have tried. Children attending the Out of school

club play outside each day whenever possible. They enjoy a game of football or use the slides, platforms and climbing bars on the 'climber'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where all risks have been identified and minimised. The school has carried out general risk assessments and staff in the pre-school have carried out a specific risk assessment for walks in the school grounds. Children learn to keep themselves safe when they are out on walks because staff remind them of the rules before they go out such as not to touch plants without asking and to stay near the staff at all times. The pre-school has clearly defined collection procedures that ensure children are only collected by named adults, a password system is used if parents need someone else to collect their child in an emergency. Children in the Out of School Club are also safe because parents are required to notify the school if someone different is collecting their child and this is recorded in the club diary.

Children use a wide range of very good equipment that is suitable and safe. This is because the staff provide child-sized furniture, equipment and toys that are appropriate for their purpose, are of suitable design and condition and are very well maintained. Children in the Out of school club use an interesting and varied range of equipment that is stored in either the classroom or the room in the sports hall and is kept exclusively for their use.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because the staff have a secure understanding of child protection issues and the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child in their care. Children in the pre-school learn to protect themselves because they listen to stories about topics such as what to do if they get lost and things that should not be kept secret. Staff use the book as a starting point for appropriate discussions.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled in Buttons Pre-school. They are developing good relationships and talk confidently to each other, to staff and to visitors. They benefit from a wide range of free play and planned activities linked to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the expertise of staff who are well-qualified and experienced. Staff have recently attended training that has enabled them to develop a secure understanding of child-centred learning. Children take part in creative activities. They paint freely on the easel or sponge paint at the table. They play with the water with different toys such as underwater creatures. They widen their vocabulary as they learn to name animals such as lobsters and crabs. They improve their hand control as they fill the fish with water and squeeze them. Children develop a love of books. They look at books on their own after snack time. They enjoy listening to group stories and they improve their listening and communication skills as they confidently answer questions about the story. They join in enthusiastically with the words and action of favourite songs such as 'From the top of my head to the tip of my toes'.

Older children enjoy the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the Out of School Club. They develop good relationships with the staff and with each other. They choose whether to attend a wide variety of clubs, such as ballet, chess, gym or tennis, or to stay in the out of school rooms. There they enjoy activities such as junk modelling, or bubble painting or play with the toys available; construction toys, role play, books, a train set and many others. The oldest children use a separate classroom where they play table football, use age-appropriate games on the computer or play table-top games together.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from the staff's sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage that they use to inform their planning, assessment and evaluation of activities. Staff are aware of each child's starting points because they work with parents to assess their child when they join the pre-school or nursery. Children are then grouped within their class to enable them to take part in appropriate activities for their age and stage of development. Staff make regular and comprehensive assessments of each child's progress and evaluate activities carefully. They use the assessments and evaluations well to inform future planning. This enables children to make good progress towards, and in many cases beyond, the early learning goals.

Children in all classes are developing excellent social skills. They play and work very well together and have good relationships with their teachers. During times of free play they are independent learners who are confident to select activities for themselves. They develop good self-help skills as they learn to change for physical education lessons with support from staff, who help them manage their clothing. Children often help themselves to drinks and biscuits at snack time and they all learn to clear away afterwards. At circle time each morning children complete their 'Weather bear' weather chart. They develop their understanding of different weather conditions as they decide what the weather is like and discuss what clothes the bear needs to wear today; giving reasons for their choices.

Children develop a love of books. They look at books on their own or as a class. Younger children look at books without words with their teacher and confidently talk about what they can see in the pictures and about what is happening. They learn new vocabulary as they talk about a 'pair' of shoes. The younger children learn to recognise letters and to hear initial sounds while older children begin to blend sounds together to make words. Children take part in a wide range of planned mathematical activities that provides a good mix of practical and written work. They develop their understanding of mathematical concepts well because staff plan open-ended activities, such as making sequencing patterns with cubes, that provide a challenge for all children.

Children enjoy many creative activities. They use tools such as glue sticks and pens to make a collage of a ladybird and choose different ways of using the tissue paper. They print with a variety of fruit and vegetable shapes and they create pictures of their own faces for a class display; looking carefully at the detail of the colour of their hair and eyes. However they have fewer opportunities to develop their imagination and creativity by experimenting freely with a wide range of different media.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children develop a good awareness of our wider society because the school provides a range of toys such as puppets, dolls and bilingual books to support their learning. They learn about different cultures and religions as they celebrate a variety of different festivals such as Chinese New Year where they taste Chinese food, dance to tapes of Chinese music and find out about each child's animal year. Staff develop the children's interests well and extend their learning to find out about other countries represented in the pre-school. Children behave extremely well. They react very positively to the excellent role models provided by staff and their calm manner and clear expectations for their behaviour. When younger children occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour they receive clear and consistent requests from staff that are quietly and patiently repeated until the child responds and is rewarded with lots of praise. Older children are helpful and polite. They understand the reason for classroom rules because staff discuss the rules with them at circle time.

Children in Buttons Pre-school benefit from the good relationships that the staff have with their parents. Parents receive an informative brochure about the school before their child attends. They learn about the elements of the 'Birth to three matters' framework through posters in the entrance area. They receive ongoing information about their child's care through regular conversations with their child's key worker and they have access to their written development records.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Children benefit because parents complete a booklet entitled 'All about me' when their child moves into the nursery class. This gives staff information about each child's starting points, personality and individual needs. Parents are involved in their child's learning through regular conversations with staff, parents evenings and written reports. In the Transition classes the reading diary is used additionally for two-way communication about any concerns or achievements. Links with home are further fostered because children are encouraged to bring in items from home that they have made themselves or that are related to the current topic.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good care because the school liaises closely with their parents and, if appropriate, with outside agencies. They obtain extra funding if it is available and use information supplied by the speech therapist to support children's speech and language development. Staff in Buttons Pre-school meet the needs of individual children well by allowing them flexibility during the school day to play freely with toys while other children are taking part in structured or group activities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children flourish in the well-organised school environment. Children are protected from harm because the recruitment procedures are thorough. This ensures that all staff have been vetted and are suitable to be in contact with children. The head teacher is also aware of the need to inform Ofsted of any changes to the premises or to senior staff. Children's welfare is safeguarded

because all required policies and procedures are in place. Staff keep accurate records of children's attendance. This is particularly thorough in the Out of School Club where children's attendance and different sports clubs is carefully recorded so that staff are always aware of exactly which children are in their care at a given time.

Leadership and management of the funded children is good. Children make good progress because the head teacher has a clear vision for the nursery education that provides children with a balanced and rounded curriculum to help them to develop their full potential. Children benefit from the expertise of a strong team of well-qualified and experienced staff who also attend regular training, both in-house and externally to improve and update their good practice. The head teacher provides strong leadership but involves all staff in decisions to initiate changes or improvements such as the recent introduction of the 'Jolly Phonics' scheme for children in the Transition classes.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was recommended to improve the recording of accidents, to improve the procedures to be followed in the event of a child not being collected from school and to maintain a log that conforms to Ofsted's regulations of any complaints made against the pre-school or Out of school care.

Children are now fully protected because accident records are completed with relevant details and are consistently signed by parents. The uncollected child policy is now very clear and is readily available to staff and parents and a complaints log is maintained that conforms to Ofsted's regulations.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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):

- make improvements as indicated in the nursery education section below.

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 a wider range of opportunities for children to express themselves freely through art and craft activities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk