

Inspection of Ferndene Nursery

64 Elton Parade, Darlington, County Durham DL3 8PQ

Inspection date: 20 August 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are very happy and settled in this inviting, welcoming nursery. They arrive and are greeted warmly by kind and caring staff. Staff spend time building, nurturing and trusting relationships with children, which helps them to feel safe and secure. Children behave well and benefit from staff's high expectations. Staff help children to learn about good behaviours, such as sharing and turn taking. Staff have developed the environment to enable children to independently select their own activities and resources. Children demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning and behave well.

Children really benefit from the vast outdoor area. Staff set resources to encourage children to be physically active in a range of ways. For example, staff help and guide children to learn to climb on the different frames and equipment. They carefully step and balance along planks. Babies develop their small-muscle skills as they paint with a variety of flowers, leaves and petals. The garden provides children with a wide variety of opportunities to investigate nature. They find a beetle and a fly when they go on a bug hunt and excitedly ask staff lots of questions. This helps children to understand the world around them.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Staff are very efficient at helping children to develop their language skills. Staff use simple words and introduce new vocabulary. For instance, staff introduce 'pterodactyl', 'lobster' and 'limousine' as children play. They model good pronunciation and ask age-appropriate questions. This helps to extend children's speaking and listening skills.
- Children's independence is encouraged. For instance, babies learn to feed themselves. Older children serve their own lunch and manage their own personal needs. Staff provide lots of positive feedback and praise to children for their efforts and achievements. This helps to build children's self-esteem and confidence.
- Staff join in make-believe games to support and extend children's creativity. For example, a group of children alongside a member of staff make soup and cookies in the mud kitchen. They actively look for leaves and bark to use as ingredients. This helps to develop children's imaginative skills.
- Staff provide many experiences to encourage children to expand their understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, younger children count as they climb the stairs. Older children develop their understanding of measurement, estimation and positional language as children build local landmarks, such as the Angel of the North. This helps to develop children's early mathematical skills effectively.
- Leaders are passionate, ambitious and knowledgeable. Overall, arrangements for

monitoring the quality of teaching and practice throughout the nursery are generally good. However, leaders recognise there could be more coaching and monitoring of staff's practice to ensure their teaching skills support children's learning at every opportunity.

- Children learn the importance of keeping healthy through daily routines. For example, they have a range of nutritious snacks and meals. Children often collect fruit from the garden and use them to make dessert. Children have regular fresh air and exercise daily as they play in the garden. They understand the need to wash hands before eating, and when they have used the bathroom.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Staff plan interesting and exciting experiences that support all areas of learning. They demonstrate that they are familiar with the overall 'Bee Curious' curriculum. However, at times, they do not always implement the intended learning during activities. This means that children's learning is not fully maximised.
- Parents comment positively about the nursery. They say that staff are warm, attentive and truly dedicated. Parents receive regular communication about what their children have been doing and how to support learning at home.
- Children use good manners as they say 'please' and 'thank you' to one another during play. Staff are positive role models. They introduce expectations clearly and consistently to children. Staff offer full explanations to support children to understand what type of behaviour is expected. Children's positive behaviour is promoted through positive praise and encouragement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen opportunities for coaching and monitoring of individual staff's teaching skills, to improve their knowledge of how to consistently maximise children's learning experiences
- develop staff's understanding of curriculum intentions to enable them to focus specifically on what children need to learn next, to ensure that all activities challenge children's learning more effectively.

Setting details

Unique reference number	508025
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10398716
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	78
Number of children on roll	101
Name of registered person	Busy Bees Nurseries Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP900821
Telephone number	01325 468774
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2019

Information about this early years setting

Ferndene Nursery registered in 1987 and is located in Darlington. The nursery employs 18 members of childcare staff. Of these, 17 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including one staff member who holds a level 5 qualification. The nursery opens Monday to Friday from 7.30am until 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Julie Campbell

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed how staff implement the curriculum.
- The inspector observed the quality of education during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- Children spoke to the inspector throughout the inspection.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the area manager.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

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