



Goslings Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146757
Inspection date	28 March 2006
Inspector	Kelly Eyre / Susan Ennis
Setting Address	C/O Whitehill School, Whitehill Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 9HT
Telephone number	01462 622662
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Registered person	Goslings Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Goslings Playgroup is run by a voluntary management committee. It opened in 1991 and operates from a purpose-built building located within the grounds of Whitehill School in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open each weekday during term-time only and sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:30 to 15:00. A lunch club is available between the two sessions. The group also runs occasional holiday clubs for children currently

attending the playgroup. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 84 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 42 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider catchment area. The playgroup is able to support children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs nine staff. Eight of the staff, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. They are learning good health and personal hygiene practices through following practical daily routines, such as washing their hands before snack time. Their understanding of the relevance of these practices is developed through discussions with staff and the use of resources such as books which present these issues in a child-friendly manner. An example of this practice is a child coughing and a staff member gently reminding him to cover his mouth, then finding a book about germs and hand-washing and reading this with the child.

Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are clearly documented and staff ensure that these are respected at all times. Their growth and development are promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of healthy eating and offer children a variety of nutritious foods at snack time, including fresh fruit, breadsticks, crackers and toast. Parents are given guidance about appropriate foods to be included in children's lunch boxes, ensuring that healthy eating is consistently promoted. Children's knowledge of different food types and where food comes from is developed through topic work such as growing tomatoes, eating these and discussing why they are healthy foods.

Children participate in a wide variety of physical activities which contribute to their good health. Good use is made of the outdoor play area, where children enjoy using the climbing frame, ride-on toys, balance beam and smaller equipment such as balls and hoops. They also practise and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in structured activities. For example, children participating in a parachute game learn control and co-ordination as they lift and lower the parachute, bounce balls on this, and make it move slowly or quickly. Children demonstrate good control and skill in smaller physical movements, for example, they competently choose and manipulate smaller pieces when involved in construction activities. They demonstrate a good level of independence in their personal care, for example, visiting the bathroom independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where there are colourful posters and displays of their work. Their safety is given a high priority and staff carry out daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. This area is further promoted as a comprehensive risk assessment has been completed and is reviewed on a regular basis. This helps to ensure that children are able to move around safely, freely and independently in all areas of the setting. The daily implementation of practical policies and procedures ensures that staff are aware of safety practices and are able to promote children's safety in all areas, for example, there is a clear procedure to follow in the event of a medical emergency. However, the emergency evacuation procedures are not practised frequently enough for children to become familiar with them and this potentially affects their safety in the event of a fire or similar emergency situation.

Children are developing their understanding about keeping themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by staff to help them appreciate the relevance of safety rules, for example, they understand why it is important not to run inside and are involved in activities and rhymes which promote their understanding of road safety. Children use toys and resources that are appropriate for their size and developmental stages. The maintenance of equipment is detailed in health and safety policies and staff follow these, checking items to ensure that they are clean and safe. Children's welfare is very well promoted because staff members have attended additional training and have a sound knowledge of child protection procedures, ensuring that all relevant details and paperwork are in place to enable them to identify, report and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They enjoy their time at the playgroup and enthusiastically participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. They are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff. Their personal development and self-confidence are consistently promoted because staff treat all children as individuals, interacting and offering appropriate support. Staff always remember to sit at the children's level and join in enthusiastically with their play and conversations, showing their genuine interest and further enhancing children's confidence and self-esteem. An example of this is a staff member joining in with role play, talking about feeling cold and encouraging the children to dress her in warm clothes such as a scarf, shawl and hat.

Children's interest is maintained and their natural curiosity encouraged because staff change the activities and play resources frequently, ensuring that there is always something new to try and children are purposefully occupied. Children confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Staff pay attention to getting to know the children and make good use of open questions and discussions to encourage them to think further and extend their knowledge. Children

are able to participate in all activities because staff continuously adapt these to suit individuals, working with children to make sure that their learning is promoted and they benefit as much as possible. An example of this is a group of children playing with a construction set, where staff help younger children to work out how the pieces fit together and to name the shapes, whilst older children are encouraged to follow a pattern sheet, working out which pieces are needed, putting them in the right place and checking back with the instructions.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and use appropriate teaching methods. Children spend their time purposefully because staff are skilled in monitoring them throughout the session, allowing them to develop their own ideas but quickly noticing when they need encouragement and direction. Children are able to access a range of resources. However, these are sometimes limited to those resources put out by staff members, which limits children's ability to determine their own play and learning. Children's progress in all areas is well-balanced as staff use appropriate planning and assessment methods and are skilled and experienced in assessing individual children. However, written assessments do not clearly show the progress made by children, and the planning methods do not detail how individual progress and learning will be further promoted. This would cause confusion for new staff members or lead to a delay in highlighting areas for concern.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in the wide range of activities. These include regular opportunities to engage in role play scenarios, the exploration of music and movement, the use of information technology equipment, reading and a wide assortment of crafts and construction. Children's knowledge is further extended as they participate in a variety of themed topics, providing opportunities for them to look more closely at subjects such as 'growing', where they grow cress, look at the life cycle of butterflies and frogs, and plant sunflower seeds, noting what the seeds need and the changes as the plants grow. Children interact well with others, confidently initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts and negotiate plans and activities. An example of this is a group of children using a construction set, discussing what they are building, passing each other pieces and proudly showing each other their finished items.

Children enjoy books and are beginning to show an understanding of elements such as main story characters and the use of print for instructions, for example, they follow instructions for the construction set and have participated in topics such as 'Favourite Characters' where they looked at stories and rhymes and identified the main characters. They have many opportunities for mark-making and enjoy activities such as small construction and sticking and gluing which improve early writing skills such as hand-eye co-ordination. Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them through opportunities to investigate and explore their environment. They use tools such as magnifying glasses, magnets and tweezers and participate in activities such as growing seeds and exploring melting ice.

Children are developing their understanding of simple mathematics such as adding or

subtracting two numbers and grouping objects according to size and colour, noting the differences in the composition of the groups. They understand and use positional and size language, for example, when involved in a parachute game, children confidently recognise concepts such as under, over, on top, left, right, taller and shorter. They are gaining an awareness of their own culture and that of others through activities and regular access to resources such as dressing-up clothes, books and puzzles, which provide both information and positive images.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are offered a variety of activities which help promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include celebrations connected with Saint David's Day, Easter and Chinese New Year. However, these activities do not consistently encompass a wide range of cultures and lifestyles which affects children's understanding and awareness of this area. Children are valued and respected as individuals and staff ensure that specific needs are clearly identified and consistently met. Children are kind and considerate to each other. Their behaviour is good throughout the sessions as they competently choose their activities and share the toys and resources. They respond well to staff, and the positive approach and good staff role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have special needs have their requirements clearly identified and met as there is a practical policy relating to this and staff have a thorough understanding of this, ensuring that it is implemented daily. Staff members have attended additional training and are experienced in identifying needs and in working with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support. The competent implementation of individual education plans, good teaching methods and a clear understanding of inclusion means that children are able to participate meaningfully in all activities and routines.

In connection with the provision of funded nursery education, the quality of the setting's partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given initial information about the setting and the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. There are informative displays which provide information about ways in which children learn and the importance of providing good quality play experiences and opportunities. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and activities through newsletters, final reports, informal discussions with staff and the use of notice boards. This positive attitude helps ensure that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care can be provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the needs of all children attending are met. Their daily welfare is enhanced by the setting's good organisation and they benefit from the care provided by

experienced, qualified staff. There are stringent procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. A clear staff induction process, regular supervision and ongoing monitoring ensure that the playgroup's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied.

Children's play opportunities are enhanced because staff pay attention to the organisation of space. This is well-planned to include provision for a range of opportunities such as group work, construction and craft activities. Good use is made of the second room, where children are able to access larger play equipment and participate in group sessions such as parachute games and music and movement. They are able to move safely and freely between activities, enabling them to feel confident and secure. Attention to detail and good organisation of all areas ensures that children are offered a wide range of activities and opportunities, for example, children are never left waiting between activities because staff plan ahead, setting up new activities whilst children are involved in snack time, group stories or outdoor play.

In connection with the provision of funded nursery education, the quality of leadership and management is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the managers have of their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that they are aware of all regulations. They have cross-referenced all areas of their work with the relevant regulations to ensure that they are able to meet these consistently and offer appropriate care to all children. Both managers act as good role models, attending additional training and demonstrating their continued enthusiasm for their work. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting and helps staff to feel valued and motivated. All sessions are well-planned and children are always given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and monitoring. Staff pay attention to the planning of future work, ensuring that the needs of individuals are met and the development of all children is promoted.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the group was asked to encourage children's independence in creative activities. Children are now encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves, promoting their independence and creativity. The group was also asked to produce a written behaviour management statement and to ensure that parents are informed of procedures relating to food and drink. The behaviour management policy has now been reviewed and contains procedures to be followed in the event of bullying. A food and diet policy has been implemented. Both policies are readily available to parents, ensuring that they are informed of all issues and procedures.

With regard to the provision for funded nursery education, the group was asked to give consideration to improving children's opportunities to use a range of tools, express and elaborate their ideas and encourage their interest in shape and positional language. Attention has been paid to these issues as part of the activity planning process and they are reviewed regularly at team meetings, ensuring that children's development in all areas is well-balanced.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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

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 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):

- improve fire safety by practising the emergency evacuation procedure more frequently
- further develop activities and opportunities for children to increase their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and ways of life.

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):

- improve children's access to resources so that they are able to make choices about their play and determine their own learning (this also applies to care)
- continue to develop the assessment and planning methods so that these clearly show the progress made, highlight potential areas of concern and show how children's overall progress will be further promoted.

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