



Huntington Under 5's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305120
Inspection date	08 June 2006
Inspector	Suzette Butcher
Setting Address	Village Hall, Butterbache Road, Huntington, Chester, CH3 6DB
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Registered person	Huntington Under Fives
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Huntington Under 5s Playgroup is managed by a parents' committee. It has been operating since 1982 and is situated in Huntington Village Hall, in Huntington, Chester. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.15 until 12.15 during term time and for two weeks during the summer holiday period. A lunch club is available until 13.00 for children attending playgroup. Children all have access to outdoor play areas.

There are currently 44 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for early education. Children attend from the local areas. There are 10 members of staff and 6 members hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected from becoming ill because correct procedures are in place to recognise and reduce the risks of infections and cross contamination. All required documentation is completed to protect individual children and most staff have current first aid qualifications. Areas are cleaned regularly and staff implement adequate hygiene routines with toys and resources. Children are encouraged to follow good routines in their personal care when they are taken to the toilet and supervised by staff. Younger children are appropriately supported in nappy changing routines and encouraged to follow a basic toilet training programme. Children are encouraged to develop their self-help skills when they put on aprons to paint or choose to dress up in imaginative games. Every child enjoys making their hands clean with an antiseptic lotion as they sit at the table waiting for their snack. However, children do not develop a clear understanding of the purpose of following good health and hygiene routines because staff do not discuss and remind children of the importance and potential outcomes of activities, such as hand washing or drinking fluids on a hot day or after exercise. Consequently, children do not become independent learners because they do not develop an overall awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Indoor and outdoor activities provide opportunities for children to take part in regular physical play and make progress in their physical development. They gain confidence and learn to move with control as they use their bodies in different ways when they negotiate a path for their car or buggy outside or learn to pedal a bicycle. Whole group parachute games provide opportunities for children to learn to position themselves in space as part of a group as they have fun following instructions to go under and around each other. Children enjoy playing with different consistencies, such as play dough or water, and gain fine motor control with pencils and brushes.

Children learn about healthy eating as they choose from items at snack time. They are given a selection of healthy options, such as apple, carrot, cucumber or breadsticks and are offered a choice of milk or water to drink. Children also enjoy tasting foods from different cultures as part of topics on different continents. For example, poppadoms are available on a day when the topic is about India. Fresh drinking water is available for children throughout the session, but it is not placed where children can help themselves when they are thirsty. Children sit together at snack time in a social setting where they enjoy chatting to each other and staff. Independence skills are not actively promoted as children are not involved in preparing or selecting their own snack or pouring their own drinks. Children's individual dietary needs are recorded and met at all times to ensure that they are suitable for children with allergies and special diets.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are safe and secure inside the building where potential hazards and risks are checked on a daily basis. Checklists are completed in all areas to ensure that children are protected and staff have sound knowledge of the health and safety procedures. Risks are assessed and advice sought to minimise potential dangers. For example, staff request advice from the fire officer when they review their practice and want to make changes. All safety equipment is in place, checked frequently and fire drills are carried out on a regular basis. However, the outdoor play areas are not currently safe for children because they are surrounded by a number of hazards and potential dangers, such as an uneven gravel surface or nettles and brambles. This means that children cannot move about freely and safely outdoors without very close and restrictive supervision. Children's security in the setting is protected by locks on the gate and a bell to announce visitors. Parents and carers sign their child in and out each day and staff vigilantly ensure that each child is collected safely. Older children are encouraged to consider the consequences of their actions when staff gently explain that they may hurt themselves or each other if they run around. This helps children to become more aware as they learn how to keep themselves safe.

Different play areas and resources are clearly identified within the large hall with; for example, a cosy area for sharing books, easels for painting and a role play area with dressing-up clothes and house play. Children move about freely between play areas when they can choose their own games. A wide range of resources and play equipment is stored in units and staff select items for children on a daily basis. Safety standards are maintained and resources are cleaned and checked on a regular basis.

Children's well-being is protected because staff have clear knowledge and understanding of child issues and procedures. They attend training on a regular basis to update their knowledge, and policies are reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in required procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children join their small key-worker group each morning where some children happily greet each other, and others take a little longer to settle with cuddles and extra support from staff. Everyone enjoys gathering together to sing their 'good morning' song and learn about the day's theme and events. Young children enjoy exploring and investigating the selection of play opportunities available. They rush to put on their favourite dressing-up clothes to become a tiger for the morning or they join their friends at the painting easels to paint a colourful picture. Children happily make their own choices in free play sessions as they move around the different areas. Staff offer appropriate support and guidance when children lack the confidence to move on or cannot decide what to do next. However, opportunities are restricted because staff have limited knowledge and understanding of the Birth to three matters framework. Consequently, there is no effective planning system in place to differentiate activities

for younger children and to enable staff to build on current good practice and develop meaningful learning opportunities for children.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make sound progress through the early learning goals because key staff members have a basic knowledge and experience of the Foundation Stage framework. However, staff do not have a thorough understanding of the principles for early years education, which means that there is no joint vision or direction for children's learning. Planning is in place, but it is activity-led and does not meet the needs of individual children. Planning is linked to the six areas of learning and staff recognise the learning outcomes that they are working towards. Staff have recently started to complete relevant observations on children's play and learning to record individual progress, but this does not inform future planning. Consequently, the observation, assessment and planning cycle is not effectively linked to identify and prioritise what each child knows and can do to plan the next steps for individual children.

Children enjoy participating in imaginative and interesting topics on subjects, such as 'Friendship', 'Animals' or 'Under the Sea'. They learn more about the world around them when the group visits a different country each day in a 'Holidays' topic. Each child happily helps to make their own passport with their photograph and a relevant stamp for each country that they visit. They find the country on the map of the world and learn about different flags and how to say hello in different languages. Children have fun trying to play different musical instruments and making Indian music. They learn about Indian dancing and how to put on a sari. Daily creative activities are linked to the topic. For example, children help to decorate a Japanese lady's dress or make a pattern with Indian wood printing blocks. However, most creative activities are controlled and directed by an adult and children follow instructions and do not make their own decisions. This inhibits children's creativity and progression towards independent learning.

Group circle-time provides an opportunity for children to gather together and decide what day it is. They proudly take turns to count how many are present each day and establish which adults are present. Children gather together for stories and songs during the session. Mathematical language and concepts are introduced and reinforced informally throughout the session. For example, children count how many pieces of fruit they have left at snack time or compare and name the different shapes and sizes they create with play dough. Children learn to recognise colours when they join their colour table for snack or play a matching game together. Sounds and letters are introduced when children attempt to copy letter shapes or select their name card each morning. Children are confident communicators and staff take time to listen and respond with interest as they ask questions that extend children's experiences and learning. Older children initiate conversations with adults as they happily recall past experiences, such as when they went on holiday in an aeroplane like their friend. Children enjoy role play games in the home corner where they play imaginatively together and invent their own characters as they dress up in different costumes. Staff offer appropriate support as they gently redirect the game or introduce new ideas to maintain children's interest. Children have fun playing energetic games with a parachute together where they take turns to run or hide underneath.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally well behaved and considerate towards adults and each other. Young children learn to share, take turns and play together cooperatively with support and guidance from staff. Minor disagreements are skilfully dealt with in a way that is appropriate to each child's age and stage of development when, for example, staff negotiate and eventually resolve an argument through discussion when two older children want the same car outside. Children learn to follow rules and listen to instructions when they gather together at the end of a play session and eagerly help to tidy away the toys. They respect boundaries when, for example, they stay in one designated area outside or do not go on the stage in the hall. However, children do not always understand the purpose of the rules because they are not actively involved in discussing and reviewing rules and boundaries. This means that they do not learn to accept responsibility for their own behaviours as they develop independence and maturity. Staff offer regular praise and encouragement to help children to gain confidence and positive self-esteem.

Children with additional needs are welcomed into the group. Information is shared between staff, parents and relevant agencies to promote an effective partnership to support individual children and adapt activities to meet their needs. Staff identify and attend training on subjects such as Makaton and communication skills to enable them to support a wider range of children. Children enjoy opportunities to learn about the wider world in themes and topics. They are helped to consider and value diversity as they acknowledge cultural differences when staff promote a positive attitude towards equal opportunities. Everyone has fun learning about and experiencing Japanese or Indian rituals and celebrations as they join in a dance or sit on mats to eat their snack. This positive attitude and approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. A comprehensive booklet is available for parents and clearly outlines the policies and procedures of the setting. Parents are reassured by the sensitive settling in programme for their child and a key-worker is available to provide extra support. Parents, carers and grandparents are invited to take an active role as a parent helper in the group and offered useful tips to make this a more positive experience. Staff and parents share information about individual children's progress in informal discussions at the beginning and end of the day. However, there are few opportunities for parents to become actively involved in their child's learning in playgroup or at home and they are not invited to contribute towards their child's individual assessment programme. A noticeboard and regular newsletters keep parents informed about topics and events. A suggestions box is available and parents are invited to committee meetings to voice their opinions or become a committee member. Parents comment on their overall satisfaction with the quality of care provided and state that their children enjoy attending.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There have been significant changes in the management team over the past months and systems have been reviewed and updated to meet regulations and revisions to the National Standards. Management demonstrate a clear sense of purpose and a strong commitment to raise standards within the setting to improve the overall quality of care and education for young children. Regular committee meetings are held to identify strengths and weaknesses and written action plans are collated to prioritise and assign tasks to key members. For example, a comprehensive 'Human Resources' file has been created to clarify job roles and employment procedures. Systems are in place and followed to ensure that all staff are appropriately vetted and continue to be suitable to work with children. Clear guidelines identify procedures for staff induction and an appraisal system has been introduced to support staff and identify their future training needs. However, management have not established clear procedures to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, and to assess the impact on young children. This means that staff follow their own directions and do not acknowledge the underlying principles of early years education. Consequently, children's creativity and independent learning is not actively promoted and developed throughout the setting.

High staff ratios ensure that children are well supervised and supported. Key-worker systems are in place to help parents and children to relate to a familiar person, although most staff work on a part-time basis, which affects overall continuity. Staff attend courses to continually improve their knowledge and experience and the setting receives support from the Early Years teachers. The playgroup is situated within shared premises where all equipment and resources have to be put out and cleared away each day. This absorbs staff time and energy during the session and restricts the amount of time that staff work together as a team. Routines are focussed around the organisation and do not always promote a positive impact for children. For example, children wait for instructions instead of making their own choices and being actively involved.

Documentation is stored securely and well organised to support the care of young children. Confidentiality is maintained throughout and policies and procedures are readily available for staff and parents. They are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting agreed to amend a selection of policies and procedures to meet regulations. The child protection, equal opportunities, special needs and uncollected child policy have all been reviewed appropriately and understood by staff to meet regulations and protect children attending the setting. There has been an increase in resources that promote diversity and opportunities for children that promote diversity to widen children's experiences. Further amendments to documentation were required to meet regulations, and subsequently, risk assessments, registration information and appropriate details on every child

attending the setting are accurately recorded to improve the quality of care for children.

At the last inspection for nursery education, the setting agreed to plan how resources and staff are used on a daily basis to ensure that the curriculum is fully covered and create a system for monitoring and evaluating staff development. Planning systems and appraisal programmes are in place to improve the quality of nursery education. The setting also agreed to use assessments to track children's progress and plan for their next steps. The recording of observation and assessment systems are currently being reviewed by the new management team to meet the needs of individual children and their families.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- encourage children to understand the purpose of following good health and hygiene routines to develop their awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- ensure that the outdoor play areas are safe for children
- increase staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and the Birth to three matters framework to develop meaningful learning opportunities for children (also applies to nursery education).

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):

- complete the observation, assessment and planning cycle to identify what each child knows and can do and plan the next steps for individual children (also applies to care)
- provide opportunities for parents to become actively involved in their child's learning and to contribute towards their child's individual assessment programme (also applies to care)
- implement systems to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to promote and develop children's creativity and independent learning (also applies to care).

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