



Milldene Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY224523
Inspection date	19 June 2006
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith
Setting Address	c/o Milldene Primary School, Barbrook Lane, Tiptree, Essex, CO5 0EF
Telephone number	01621 816402 or 01621 817555
E-mail	
Registered person	Tiptree Pre-school Playgroup
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 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?

Milldene Playgroup is committee owned and run by Tiptree pre-school playgroup committee. It opened in their current building in 2002, but was previously registered about fifteen years ago and operates from a demountable classroom within school grounds. It is situated in Tiptree. A maximum of 20 children may attend at any one time. The playgroup is open from 09:30 until 13:00 on Mondays, 09.30 until 12.00 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; and afternoon sessions on

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 13:00 until 15:30. All children share an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 41 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 33 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding villages.

The playgroup employs eight staff. Five of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep healthy as they follow the staff's clear directions regarding hand washing before meals and snacks, when they have used the toilet and when they return from playing outside. Their medical needs, allergies and any special requirements are shared with the staff by parents which enables children's health needs to be well met.

Children's medical needs and accidents are very well met as all staff currently working at the playgroup hold first aid qualifications and follow clear and effective written policies on health and safety. Children's accidents are well recorded on accident record sheets and shared with the relevant children's parents.

Children have very good access to fresh air on a daily basis when they play in the outdoor area. They are encouraged to play outside throughout the session and are taken out in small manageable groups.

Children's nutritional needs are well met as staff and parents work well together to gain a good understanding of the children's likes and dislikes. They are presented with a range of mid session snacks which are varied and well balanced. Children bring a packed lunch one day per week and stay for a lunch club. Staff sit with the children for both snack and lunch time and share gentle conversation about their day, what they have to eat and whether they like particular foods. For example, a member of staff was telling children that she had apricots to eat the day before, she and the children entered into a conversation about what apricots looked like and how they tasted.

Children's physical skills are encouraged when they play outdoors and when they move to music inside the playgroup room. When playing outdoors children have opportunities to develop skills such as kicking, catching, throwing, running, jumping and skipping, as they are practising these skills for their sports day. They learn to ride sit on toys and bikes and negotiate space well. They move freely around each other and are developing an understanding of spatial awareness. Children develop their fine motor skills when they use small tools such as dough cutters and rollers, scissors, pens and staplers. They are proficient in their use of this equipment and need little assistance from adults.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a well presented, bright and attractive demountable classroom within the grounds of a local primary school. They have use of one room which has integral toilets to encourage children's independence with regards to personal hygiene. Their environment is made welcoming and interesting as staff display examples of their creative work on the walls and hang three dimensional models from the ceiling. Children and their parents are welcomed into the building by a member of staff and children begin playing immediately as staff set out a good range of activities and equipment before the children arrive.

Children safely access an interesting range of toys and play equipment which staff present for them. They play at child height tables and on the floor. They play with clean and hygienic equipment as staff are vigilant about checking toys for safety and washing all equipment to keep it hygienic; children sometimes participate in cleaning the toys when they have a large bowl of water in the garden and wash the dolls and other hard surface toys.

Children play in a safe environment as staff are committed to ensuring the room is free from hazards and addressing any safety issues immediately. Staff carry out thorough daily risk assessments and a Health and Safety Officer ensures that any issues identified are recorded appropriately and dealt with. Children have good opportunities to learn about keeping safe within the playgroup as they follow the staff's clear directions, they walk indoors and line up carefully to go outside. They understand how to carry out a fire drill and follow the staff's clear directions with regard to evacuating the premises.

Children are protected from potential harm as staff demonstrate a clear understanding about child protection issues. Some staff have undertaken recent training and they are aware of the changes which have recently occurred regarding the new Safeguarding Units. Volunteers and staff who have not been vetted and cleared do not have unsupervised access to children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enthusiastically participate in an exciting range of activities throughout the session. They have a good balance of free play and planned activities which help them to make progress and are appropriate to their individual stages of development.

Children are confident and settled, they joyfully enter the group and head straight for their favourite toys or activity, waving happily goodbye to their parents or carers. They enjoy the warm friendly interaction of the staff who demonstrate a good understanding of child development.

Children thoroughly enjoy free play and guiding their own play whilst also participating in the planned activities on offer each day. They access a good range of

messy play materials, most of which are freely available in the craft area.

Children have fun outdoors, running around, accessing the exciting range of outdoor equipment and taking care of the plants and flowers they have planted. They paint various pieces of equipment and fencing with water and large paintbrushes. They explore the natural world by digging the flower beds for worms and weeding the garden area.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage. They keep up to date with current thinking through training and through support from the Early Years Partnership and the Pre-school Learning Alliance. They work closely with two other pre-schools which are supported by the same committee and sometimes share training events and ideas about activities.

Planning covers all six areas of learning, long, medium and short term planning is in place and displayed on the wall for parents and staff to view. All staff work together to plan effectively. Plans show what resources are required for each activity, how they differentiate for more and less able children and how they evaluate the activities to assess the suitability and learning outcome.

Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the children's individual needs and stages of development, they offer sufficient challenge to enable children to make good progress. They use their observations to determine the children's stages of development and to plan effectively for their next stage.

Staff use a variety of teaching methods, some worksheets are used, however children are mostly provided with hands on, first hand experiences. The worksheets are generally used to back up the practical activities, for example, children plant sunflower seeds, then colour a picture of a sunflower and some children write their names and a short caption on it.

Staff manage children's behaviour very well, using clear methods of explanation. They encourage them to be nice to each other and to apologise if they hurt or upset anyone. The calm, relaxed atmosphere enables children to learn effectively.

Staff make good use of the resources within the playgroup; they organise the premises and resources in a welcoming and attractive way. The majority of outdoor play available offers children the opportunity to develop their physical skills, however, does not cover the other five areas of learning. Staff are considering ways in which they can extend children's learning in the outdoor classroom.

A well developed system of assessment is in place which enables staff to identify children's individual stages of development and use their observations and records to plan for each child's next stage. Staff use the stepping stones document to record children's progress and to show how children achieve.

Children are very settled in the group, they are confident and show real enjoyment in each other's company. They enthusiastically show care and consideration for each other and are willing to help each other out, for example, a child's sun hat falls off of her head whilst running in the garden, another child picks it up and places it on her head. Children are interested and keen learners, they concentrate for appropriate periods of time and ask questions about how things work. Children talk confidently about their homes and where they live, they are happy to share their experiences both real and imaginary with the other children. Children have some opportunities to self select toys and resources, however, this is limited as many of the resources are stored in a cupboard and presented each day. Their independence is encouraged at snack time when they pour their own drinks.

Children are very confident speakers; they joyfully chat between themselves and are happy to enter into discussions with adults. Their language is extended as staff offer clear explanations and support their language for thinking by asking them open ended questions. Children actively look at books, recognising that they must take care of them and recalling some of their favourite stories. Some children are beginning to write their own names and are proficient at copying letters and shapes from pre-printed worksheets. They have some opportunities to make marks at the drawing table. Children recognise their own names when they identify their name at snack time. They are beginning to link sounds and letters when they enthusiastically participate in naming objects from the 'sounds box', for example, the letter 'a' is displayed on the front and all of the contents such as an apple, an alligator and an ant are in the box. Staff describe the object and the children guess what it might be.

Mathematical skills are developed through general play and when the children count in large groups. The equipment available enables them to sort through colour and shape, to assess larger and smaller and to weigh items of differing weights. They use puzzles daily and learn about weight and measure when they play with sand and water.

Children have excellent opportunities to learn about growing and the natural world when they plant bulbs and seeds. They care for the playgroup goldfish and have regular visits from the staff's pets, such as, a rabbit and some guinea pigs. They help to care for them and learn about how they grow and what they eat. Children happily dig in the flower bed, weeding the area and finding worms. Children construct with a varied range of junk modelling equipment making both planned models and models created from their own imagination. Children have some access to programmable toys and information technology. Children learn about the local area when they go for walks and when visitors come in to the group, for example, they will soon be visited by a guide dog for the blind and his owner. Children enjoy learning about other people's cultures when they celebrate festivals and special occasions.

Children freely express themselves when they participate in dressing up and when they play in the role play area. They use musical instruments to make music and also make their own instruments. Children listen to a varied range of music and enjoy singing along to their favourite songs and rhymes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are shared with staff by the parents before their child commences attending the group. They complete registration forms which enables them to tell staff about their children's likes, dislikes and home circumstances. The children's key workers use this information to form a sound understanding of the individual children and to inform their practice with regards to meeting the personal needs. Children have good opportunities to develop an understanding about other people's cultures, religions and beliefs when they celebrate a good range of festivals and special occasions throughout the year. Children play with an interesting range of books and resources which reflect diversity.

Children who need additional help are supported and integrated into the group. Their needs are assessed and monitored by their key worker, who works effectively with the group SENCO and other outside agencies to ensure that they develop in an environment in which all children feel valued and important.

Children understand the boundaries within the group, they are learning about right and wrong as staff sensitively support them and help them to decide whether an action is appropriate or not; for example, when one child has hurt another child, they are asked to think about what they have done and how that action might have made the other person feel. Children's confidence grows as they are happy and settled in the playgroup, they are busy and active which helps to promote good behaviour.

Children's well being is promoted as staff and parents have developed a good working relationship, they communicate well and exchange important information about the children's lives and changing needs. Key workers work with individual children and their families.

The partnership with parents and carers is good.

Parents are well informed about their children's progress as they have good access to their children's developmental records and can discuss their children's progress with their key worker at any time. They are aware of the themes and topics being covered as they are provided with newsletters which detail what areas of learning are being covered and how the children will learn from the activities. A clear and well presented notice board contains effective written plans for the group's long, medium and short term activities enabling parents to gain an understanding about the Foundation Stage and how the group is implementing the six areas of learning.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children form very good relationships with each other and with the adults present. They are confident and happy children who settle well in their playgroup environment. They are kind to each other and older children are seen helping younger children to achieve tasks such as putting on their sun hat. Children are developing their knowledge of other people's cultures when they celebrate festivals, read books and listen to different types of music.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are effectively cared for by a team of caring and committed staff who have worked together for many years. Their longevity and well established team provides local families with stability and reassurance. The group is run by a joint committee covering three local pre-schools; the committee supports staff well and encourages all staff to further develop their knowledge through training. Robust procedures are in place to ensure that all staff working with children are vetted, that they hold appropriate qualifications and that they have experience of working with large groups of children.

Children's needs are well met as the committee ensures that a high adult to child ratio is maintained at all times. Staff are knowledgeable and up to date with current childcare practice and use their knowledge to provide an efficient and well organised playgroup. Well documented records and procedures are available and maintained to support all practices within the playgroup. These are reviewed regularly and amended to reflect any changes necessary.

The leadership and management is good.

The setting is led and managed by a voluntary committee mostly comprising of parents. The committee is strong and works well together to support staff. Staff are motivated, keen and interested in their work; they have developed an excellent team and know intuitively what each other are going to do and how they will handle each situation. Staff are valued by the committee and manager and have good opportunities to input ideas and suggestions about the way in which the group should operate. They hold regular curriculum planning meetings and work together on the long, medium and short term planning for the whole year.

Staff and management have identified plans for the future which include extending the perimeter of the outdoor area to include some of the grassed area and to access some training on 'Birth to three matters'.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Children's well being is promoted as staff follow a clear operational plan which details the group's day to day procedures and informs them of the written policies to follow. They are knowledgeable about the daily routines as a clear and effective induction programme has been implemented. Children now have some positive male role models within their playgroup life, as staff sometimes ask male visitors to come into the group and they display photographs and posters of positive male role models. Children now participate more actively with group story time as a good adult to child ratio is used to maintain their interest.

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 the 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):

- provide opportunities which enable children to develop independence through self-selection of activities, toys and resources

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):

- continue to progress and develop the outdoor classroom to enable children to experience everyday activities whilst playing outdoors throughout the year.

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