



Margaret Lloyd Playgroup & Holiday Playscheme

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129368
Inspection date	21 February 2007
Inspector	Kim Wailling
Setting Address	Washington Avenue, Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 6NG
Telephone number	01442 217859
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Registered person	Margaret Lloyd Playgroup & Holiday Playscheme
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Margaret Lloyd Playgroup and Holiday Playscheme is a registered charity managed by a voluntary management committee. It opened in 1985 and operates in a purpose built building. It is situated in the Grovehill area of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 31 children, from two to five years, may attend the playgroup at any one time and a maximum of 39 children, from three to six years, may attend the holiday playscheme at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday, in term time, from 09.15 to 11.45 for three to five year olds and 12.30 to 15.00 (except Fridays) for two to three year olds. The holiday playscheme is open during the Easter and summer school holidays from 09.15 to 15.15. All children share access to an enclosed play area.

There are currently 50 children aged from two to five years on the playgroup's roll. Of these, 16 receive funding for nursery education. There are currently 39 children aged from three to

eight years on the holiday playscheme's roll. Children come from all areas of Hemel Hempstead. The playgroup and holiday playscheme support a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also support children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs seven members of staff. Of these, four hold an appropriate childcare qualification. The holiday play scheme employs five members of staff. Of these, five hold an appropriate childcare qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment. Staff follow good hygiene procedures to prevent the spread of infection, such as carefully changing children's nappies and ensuring the safe disposal of soiled materials. Children are made aware of the importance of good personal hygiene through the daily routine, for example, washing their hands before eating snack. Children's independence skills, such as toileting, are fostered because the staff are very encouraging and give children sensitive support. As a result, children's health is well protected.

Comprehensive procedures are in place to help staff act in the children's best interests, should they require medical attention. All members of staff, including supply staff, hold a current first aid qualification. The first aid kit is well stocked, regularly replenished and easily accessible. This means that children's health, if they have an accident, is well protected.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks which are freshly prepared. They eat snack together. They are offered a varied selection of foods including plain biscuits, fruit and toast topped with savoury or sweet spreads and are able to make independent choices. This means that children are given an opportunity to widen their tastes. Children take part in snack time discussions and cookery sessions, which increases their understanding of the importance of following a healthy diet. Individual children's specific dietary needs are known and accommodated. Consequently, children are helped to gain an understanding of nutrition, develop good appetites and are well nourished.

Children's physical skills are very well nurtured. Children have use of the playgroup's outdoor area throughout the year. Here, children are involved in planned activities, such as using wheeled toys alongside free play. There is a wide range of indoor apparatus, such as an air walker, exercise bike and a tread mill, which promote vigorous exercise. In addition, the designated 'ball pool' room provides children with an opportunity to jump, roll and 'swim' in the colourful plastic balls. On the days of inspection, children enthusiastically used the indoor equipment which developed their coordination and confidence.

The room lay-out of the hall used by the playgroup offers space and appropriate areas for quiet play. Staff often sit on the comfortable child-sized sofa with the children, for example when sharing a book, creating relaxed sessions which younger children particularly enjoy. The daily routine has a good balance of active and quieter activities, particularly in the afternoon session, so that children do not become over-tired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a purpose built premises which has been thoughtfully designed and well maintained. For example, children use toilet facilities which are child height, well ventilated and scrupulously clean. In addition, sufficient tissues, soap and paper towels are all easily accessible to children as well as small nail brushes. The playgroup liaises effectively with the management committee so that adaptations and improvements, such as the installation of outside lights, are made. On an everyday level children are kept safe as staff are vigilant and follow effective procedures so that accidental injury is minimised. For example, the manager carries out daily safety checks following a comprehensive risk assessment procedure.

Children can move around freely to play and are able to access resources safely. Children use a wide range of good quality, developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. These are cleaned and often checked so that they are safe for the children to use, during both playgroup sessions and at the holiday playscheme. Staff are well deployed so that children are kept in sight or hearing at all times. The end of session, in particular, is well-managed and orderly. Consequently, throughout the daily session children's safety is effectively promoted.

Children follow safety rules, such as handling implements safely, which staff reinforce. Children, for example, are helped to use plastic knives safely when cutting up pieces of fruit and while spreading butter on scotch pancakes. The reasons why rules, such as not running indoors, are in place, are carefully explained to children and time is taken to check children's understanding of them. In addition, topics such as road safety are introduced. For example, children sing a rhyme about traffic lights which reminds them about the importance of waiting for the green light before crossing the road.

Children's welfare is safeguarded. Staff members have a good understanding of the playgroup's child protection procedures and what to do if they have concerns about a child in their care. Current policy fully incorporates the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. However, no record is kept to confirm that health and safety and child protection procedures are included in the induction procedure for new staff. This impacts on the effectiveness of existing systems to protect children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and have fun in a supportive and caring environment. They settle quickly, become confident and make friends. They take part in a range of interesting and stimulating activities which are also offered at the holiday playscheme. They receive good adult guidance and encouragement. For example, children are sensitively helped to complete tasks, such as jigsaws. Recognition and frequent praise is given for perseverance, effort and turn taking. Children's language development, in particular, is very well fostered. Staff members engage children in conversation, listen to their answers, question and introduce new words to extend children's vocabularies.

Younger children are offered a good balance of experiences. This is facilitated by the organisation of the main playroom which is attractively arranged. Children benefit from the presence of experienced staff. They take into account the children's curiosity and build on this. For example, daily plans are changed to take advantage of events like the recent snowy day. In addition, individual children's interests, for example in writing, are skilfully extended. Alongside this, new activities and equipment, such as the recently purchased gym equipment, are regularly used.

Children's abilities and independence skills are consistently fostered as staff implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework well. Children's achievements are recorded, the digital camera in particular being used very effectively. Overall, staff spontaneously adapt activities to suit the learning needs of individual children. However, this is not currently recorded. This hinders the playgroup's ability to monitor how effectively they are planning the next steps in children's learning, which applies both to younger and older children who receive funding for nursery education.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children who receive funding for nursery education are progressing well because staff members have a good understanding of the Curriculum guidance of the foundation stage. Comprehensive planning covers all six areas of learning. This is linked with an assessment procedure which is ongoing and evaluative. Both children's assessment and weekly planning are linked to the stepping stones and the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. Staff interaction with the children is high. They use every opportunity to reinforce children's learning, particularly during everyday events such as the daily registration session and snack time.

Children are busy. They receive individual adult support as well as opportunities to work as part of a group. Children's independence is effectively fostered. For example, children are encouraged to choose toys to play with and use their initiative. Consequently, they develop their own games, particularly when using the role play resources, which are rewarding and satisfying to them. Children eagerly participate in planned activities, such as learning how to play a new board game, and work well together. Children enjoy using the nursery's outdoor area. Good deployment ensures there is sufficient staff to support children's learning. This means that children are able to gain full advantage of being outdoors.

Children respond with enjoyment to stories, songs and rhymes. They are able to concentrate well during whole group times, as the staff make these sessions fun and interesting. Effective use of resources, for example use of a bright weather chart, enliven these sessions. Children are able to explore and discover because staff recognise the importance of this. Topics, such as mini beast, are well resourced and capture children's interest. Alongside this, the celebration festivals, such as Shrove Tuesday, help build on children's knowledge and understanding of the wider community. The playgroup has a wide range of interactive toys and equipment, including a computer, which supports children's learning. Children have free access to art, craft and drawing equipment. They produce pictures and models which are attractively displayed around the playgroup and later taken home. Overall, children are making good progress in all areas of learning and towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children quickly settle into the playgroup routine as staff are friendly, attentive and caring. Parents are asked to complete an initial registration form about their child. This is effectively used to identify any extra support that children may need. The playgroup has established good links with outside agencies, such as the community health visitor, from whom guidance can be obtained. The playgroup is committed to ensuring that there is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability. The playgroup's prospectus states 'the group will help your child develop a strong sense of belonging and of being part of a group as well as being special and respected for what they can offer and bring to the group'.

Children behave well. They are beginning to form good relationships with their peers and play cooperatively. Staff help children develop an understanding of right and wrong. They deal with behaviour consistently, proportionate to the child's level of understanding and maturity. For example, older children are encouraged to think about the consequences of their actions for others. The staff have created an environment that encourages children to behave well. Children's helpful behaviour is recognised and children are given choice and responsibilities.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Topics, such as 'people who help us', are used effectively to help children gain an understanding of the wider community. The playgroup has a wide range of resources which present positive images of diversity and are constantly available for children to use, the role play area being well resourced and well used by the children. Children are involved in small and large group activities which help them learn skills such as sharing and turn taking. For example, staff explain the rules of board games but allow children to organise the games themselves. Significant events in the children's lives are celebrated, such as birthdays, as well as festivals and special events.

Children benefit from the good partnership between committee members, playgroup staff and parents and carers. Parents receive an information pack which outlines the services that the playgroup offers. The playgroup also displays additional information, such as details about how to make a compliment or complaint. Staff are available at the start and end of each session for parents and carers to share concerns, which are always treated as confidential. During the inspection period, parents and carers, such as foster parents, were keen to share their positive views of the playgroup.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Relevant information about nursery education is available which staff and committee members are happy to discuss with parents and carers. The current half termly theme is well publicised and involves parents and carers in their children's learning. Parents and carers receive detailed written progress reports, covering the six areas of learning, at the end of each term. This means that parents and carers are informed about their child's interests and achievements so that all can work together to foster children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is promoted because of the efficient and effective organisation of the playgroup. This is underpinned by the strong working relationship the playgroup staff have with the management committee. The playgroup staff and committee members are generous both with their time and skills to ensure that the playgroup's good reputation is maintained within the community.

Staffing ratios exceed National Standard requirements both in the morning and afternoon playgroup sessions and during the holiday playscheme. Consequently, a consistently good level of support is offered to promote children's care, learning and play. All policies and most procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and the ability to make a positive contribution. These are regularly updated, often prompted by staff attending training courses.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Children are offered a broad and balanced range of activities and play experiences. Staff work effectively together to make each day different and exciting to children. Consequently, children are busy, eager to learn and make good progress through the Foundation Stage.

The changing needs of children are well met. The manager has a sound understanding of the principles that underpin nursery education and a good knowledge of child development. She effectively evaluates practice and makes relevant changes, for example improving the way in which staff monitor children's achievements. Her infectious enthusiasm and commitment is evident in both the caring ethos of the playgroup and in the relationships she has built with children, their parents and carers, staff and the management committee. This has resulted in an effective partnership. Children attending the playgroup are offered a good quality of care and nursery education which is reflected in the services that the holiday playscheme offers. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the playgroup was asked to review a number of issues. This included including establishing a procedure for staff to follow in the event of a child being lost, increasing staff knowledge of helping children to manage their own behaviour and ways of promoting equality of opportunity.

The playgroup has reviewed all these areas. For example, there is a comprehensive procedure for staff to follow in the event of a child being lost or uncollected at the end of the session. In addition, the playgroup has changed ways of working to support children's awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity and to help them develop a sense of right and wrong.

At the last inspection for nursery education the playgroup agreed to look at ways of encouraging children to initiate their own learning and to develop an assessment system linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage.

The playgroup has made relevant changes to its ways of working, particularly in encouraging children to initiate their own learning by following the 'Birth to three matters' framework. It has also developed an assessment system linked to the Foundation Stage which it continues to monitor to ensure that it is a useful tool to support children's learning. Overall, the changes that the playgroup has made since the last inspection have had a significant impact on children's care, learning and play.

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.

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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):

- establish systems to show how activities are adapted to meet children's needs so that the next steps in their learning can be identified (also applies to nursery education).
- review induction procedures for new staff, students and volunteers.

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):

- make improvements as indicated in the care section above.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk