



Toybox Pre School Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251699
Inspection date	29 September 2006
Inspector	Moira Oliver
Setting Address	Sports Field Handford Hall PS, Gateacre Road (Town), Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2LP
Telephone number	01473 216477
E-mail	
Registered person	Toybox Pre School Group
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?

Toybox Preschool has been operational since the 1980's. It was originally called Burlington Road Playgroup and met in a church hall. In 1997 the group moved to their own building at The Sports Field, Hanford Hall Primary School. The group was renamed, Toybox Pre-school Group. It operates from a portacabin consisting of a playroom with toilet and kitchen facilities. Children have access to a fully enclosed outside play area. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:15 to 15:00 during term time, children attend either for the whole day or on a part-time basis.

A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 44 children from two years to five years on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for nursery education. The majority of children attending the group come from the surrounding residential areas which reflect a range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven staff. All of the staff, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the Local Authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow current and appropriate health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, when children are sick they are calmly cleaned up and sensitively comforted. Staff wear gloves and ensure all areas and equipment are disinfected before any other children use them, therefore limiting the spread of infection. Parents are contacted and children are taken home when they are ill. Nappies are changed and disposed of appropriately, children are encouraged to wash their hands and tissues are provided for them to wipe or blow their noses on.

Children are beginning to understand good health and hygiene practices, they routinely wash their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating. Children are nourished with healthy snacks, they enjoy raisins and apples and sometimes have other foods depending on the topics. They are offered milk or water at snack time and have access to a water dispenser at all times during the session to ensure they are hydrated. Children's dietary needs are met because staff work closely with parents to ensure they are aware of all allergies and food intolerances. Some children have lunch at the group which parents provide. All packed lunches are stored in the refrigerator to ensure they are kept at the appropriate temperature.

Children have daily opportunities for fresh air and exercise, they use the garden area all year round. They delight in marching round playing musical and percussion instruments and enjoy ring games such as 'The Farmer's in his Den'. At present the group do not have a climbing frame, however, children have some opportunities to climb using the ladder on the small slide and to balance on a bench. They are developing the outdoor area to include opportunities for children to dig in soil as well as in sand and shingle. Children scoot along on ride-on toys and practice their pedalling on the bikes. They enjoy rolling, thumping and patting the play-dough and can use cutters to make shapes. Children are becoming skilled in threading as they thread beads onto strings and take their time to remove them when it's tidy up time. They use glue sticks effectively and some can manage scissors and pencils independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. Staff ensure all areas and equipment used by the children are safe before the children arrive by carrying out a formal daily risk assessment. Informal checks are carried out by all staff and they check toys and equipment as they use them and tidy away. The premises are very secure and

are monitored closely when children arrive and depart to ensure children do not leave unsupervised. All visitors are recorded and children are supervised at all times. The premises are light, bright and welcoming and parents and children are greeted as they arrive. Accurate registers are kept recording the times of arrival and departure.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they walk with a member of staff from the nursery to the pre-school. Staff remind them to go down the slide and not to jump off the top. They take part in fire drills to help them to become aware of the procedures to follow, however, they have not had a recent practice therefore some children and staff have not taken part. This will impact on the effectiveness and timings of an evacuation in the future.

Children use safe and suitable furniture and equipment. All toys are appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children present. There is a safety surface outside in the garden for use with large equipment and also enables the outdoor area to be used all year round, even in wet weather.

Children are protected because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put relevant procedures into practice when necessary. Children are cared for by staff who are vetted, have relevant experience, knowledge, skills and qualifications in childcare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they move freely around the premises choosing their activities from those set out and independently selecting items from low level shelving units. They show interest in their chosen activities, watching the sand pour through the sand mill, shaking it to get the small stones out and to make it run faster. They become engrossed in role play as they take their 'babies' out on the pretend bus and then back to get the dinner out of the play oven, remembering to put the oven gloves on first.

Children make positive relationships with each other and the staff as they come together for weather-board time and discuss the weather and the thunder storm that they heard the day before. They enjoy each other's company as they share books in the book area, pointing out things in each other's books and discussing them.

All children, including the younger ones are provided with a stimulating and balanced programme. The programme is adapted to ensure it is appropriate for all ages and stages of development and staff observe and assess the younger ones using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the different age groups by incorporating both the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage in their planning.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Teaching is rooted in the staff's knowledge and understanding of the

Foundation Stage. Children have positive attitudes to learning, they are happy, settled and purposefully engaged in their play.

Children are getting to know each other, they seek out their friends to play with and chat with ease to the staff. Children are developing self-help skills and manage the toilet and hand washing well. They are beginning to pour their own drinks at snack time and learning to wait for their turn. Games such as lotto help children to learn about turn taking and sharing resources. Children are learning to take responsibility for their environment as they help to tidy the toys away and put the boxes back on the relevant shelves.

Children are developing their speaking and listening skills, staff encourage them to chat about their experiences and ask them questions, helping them to put their thoughts into words. They listen while staff read stories to small groups, becoming involved in the stories and offering comments. Children are learning how books work and share books together, turning the pages one at a time. They use language in their play with others and involve each other in role play. Children also use other forms of communication such as picture cards to help staff understand and meet their needs. Children have opportunities to learn letter sounds and enjoy beating out the syllables in their names on the drums which they have made. Writing materials are available both indoors and out to motivate children to write and are usually available in the role play area to encourage the children to write for a purpose.

Children have lots of opportunities to count and use numbers, they discuss the date daily and children see and handle the written numbers. The staff support the children to count the beads as they thread their string, talking about shape and colour and introducing sequencing cards to reproduce pattern. Children take part in number rhymes and are developing an awareness of simple subtraction in songs such as 'Five Currant Buns' and 'Ten Green Bottles'. They include calculation in every day play such as deciding how many plates are needed for lunch.

Valuable learning takes place when children explore the different properties of a range of play materials such as dough, sand, soil, shingle and paint. They find worms in the garden and use descriptive language to describe how they feel on their hands. Photographs and displays on the walls show how the group has included the wider world and other societies in their planning. Children have opportunities to celebrate a range of festivals. Maps, books and post cards make good introductions for discussions and children are becoming aware of the wider world and their part in it. Some children know how to operate a cassette player and delight in walking round listening to the music. They have some opportunities to use computers, however, these are limited to once a week, therefore children do not get sufficient time to develop their confidence in using a mouse or a keyboard.

Children enjoy role play, they dress up with hats and bags and go on pretend bus trips taking their 'babies' shopping. Children's musical awareness is developed, they have lots of opportunities to play musical and percussion instruments and make their own shakers and drums to take home. They sing familiar nursery rhymes and songs as a group and also to themselves during play. Children experiment with a range of creative media through planned activities and have opportunities to choose and stick items from the craft trolley including pasta, lace, buttons, glitter, shells and paper.

The staff work as an extremely effective, supportive team with a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They observe and assess the children on a daily basis, using a key worker system which is working well. Parents provide information about their child when they first start ensuring staff are aware of what the children already know and can do. Staff take turns to plan a balanced range of activities across all six areas of learning and children are involved and engaged in the variety of play experiences on offer. Staff work closely with the children, recording achievement, using these assessment records to inform future planning. They work directly with the children, extending them and asking questions to encourage the children to think. Inclusion for all children is planned and monitored extremely well, staff have attended training and work closely with parents and other professionals to provide a consistent approach where all children's needs are met.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are able to settle and most cope with separating from their parents because the staff work with parents to meet each child's individual needs. For example, they reassure and comfort the child, acknowledging what the child wants and helping them to get to know the routine, learning what comes next. Children quickly learn that their parent will be back to collect them after story-time. Parents have the opportunity to stay with their child to help them to settle and some choose to leave them for short periods to get them used to being without them.

Children understand reasonable behaviour, staff promote positive behaviour and speak to the children calmly, using language and gestures that the children can understand. Children, on the whole, play harmoniously together, learning to share the resources and the attention of the staff. They make choices and decisions throughout the day, for example, they confidently come out to the front of the group to choose the song they want the group to sing. Children choose their activities and the group run a snack bar where children can choose when they want to sit and have their drink and fruit.

Children receive support from staff who work directly with them at all times, they listen to the children and are genuinely interested in them and their lives at home. Several children speak English as an additional language and staff support the children to communicate effectively by learning a few words in the child's home language. They use gestures and picture cards to help with understanding and work closely with the parents. Staff are skilled at planning for children with special needs and they receive high levels of individual attention. Staff attend a range of training courses to increase their knowledge and understanding and they put ideas learnt into practice. For example, they use a resources box with a range of games and activities to support and extend the children's language. Extra toys have been purchased to ensure they have a range for all ages and abilities.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share in their children's learning at pre-school. They are invited to help on a rota system, however, few take up this offer. Staff have attended a course about working with parents and are putting into practice several ideas they learnt from it, including up-dating their information leaflet and children's initial records. Parents are very happy with the care and education their children receive at the pre-school, they speak highly of all the staff, their friendliness and approachability.

Some parents do not know much about the Foundation Stage, however, they are aware that staff are happy to discuss it if they want to know more. Information about the group, the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage is available to parents in the form of notices and displays around the room. The staff are happy to discuss individual children's achievement with parents at any time. Parents are invited in to discuss their child's assessment records once a term and the staff are flexible with the appointments enabling working parents to attend. Staff work with the parents to provide flexibility in the sessions children are offered, trying hard to meet their needs.

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

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff who are vetted, experienced and have a sound knowledge and understanding of child development. The staff work as a highly motivated team, they are enthusiastic and have a high regard for the well-being of the children. They are conscientious and work together to provide the children with a range of stimulating activities and experiences.

The group size and staff deployment contribute to the children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff work directly with the children at all times and do not leave children unattended. Policies and procedures are in place, they are known by all staff and are available to the parents. Children's records are filled out by the parents and all permissions are completed and signed. A well written operational plan is in place including all aspects for the smooth running of the group.

Leadership and management is good. The leadership and management of the nursery education contributes to the children's progress towards the early learning goals. The committee know their role and are very supportive to the staff. Annual appraisals are carried out on all staff, identifying strengths and areas for development. Staff are valued and involved and regularly take part in the planning of the sessions, utilising their knowledge and skills of the Foundation Stage. The committee support the staff to further their knowledge by attending courses, staff are proactive and use the courses and workshops to improve their good practice further, bringing back ideas, trying them out, and absorbing them into their practice. The committee have taken on important roles, freeing the staff to concentrate on the children and the day to day running of the group. The group leaders have opportunities to monitor and evaluate the sessions and complete evaluation questions on a weekly basis, using the information to feed into future planning. The group effectively identify their strengths and weaknesses and are continually developing and improving their practice. For example, they are developing the outdoor area to increase the children's activities and experiences, revising their paperwork and information for parents and building more effective links with the schools which they feed into.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

The pre-school has carried out recommendations effectively, the operational plan is complete and includes a very effective procedure for the recruiting of new staff. Staff induction procedures work in practice, new members of staff are aware of their roles, all policies and procedures. Staff appraisals are carried out annually and staff have found them beneficial in identifying strengths and training needs.

The group was asked to improve the toilet facilities to respect the children's dignity and privacy. Curtains have been fitted which children can choose to pull if they want privacy when using the toilets.

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.

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):

- ensure fire drills are carried out at a frequency agreed with the Fire Safety Officer

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):

- increase opportunities for children to become confident in the use of Information Communication Technology.

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