



## Whitehouse Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119537
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 November 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Janette Elaina Lockwood
<b>Setting Address</b>	Benvenue Avenue, Eastwood, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS9 5SJ
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<b>Registered person</b>	Whitehouse Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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?

Whitehouse Playgroup opened in 1973. It operates from one room in a pre-fabricated building close Heycroft Primary School and the park, in the residential area of Eastwood. A maximum of 21 children may attend the setting at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday morning from 09.00 until 11.50 during school term times.

There are currently 29 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for early education.

The setting employs seven staff. Of these, five hold an appropriate early years qualification and two are working towards a further qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very hygienic environment as the hall is regularly cleaned by staff using a daily checklist to ensure it is done thoroughly. Some staff have basic food hygiene training and information about good kitchen hygiene practices are displayed as reminders. Children are encouraged to wash their hands properly with warm running water and soap before eating, making food and after going to the toilet, to help keep themselves healthy.

If children are ill the staff follow their effective policies and refer to information about infection. Staff have first aid certificates and anaphylaxis training to help them manage serious illness or accidents. Accident and medication books are completed properly.

Children are offered interesting, healthy food choices, for example, tangerines, bananas, dried fruit and apple. Most children bring their own drinks from home and there is water available for children to help themselves. As a result they learn to respond to their own thirst. Children are encouraged to learn about healthy eating through activities, such as painting 'bowls of fruit' and chatting with staff about the fruit. Parents have received a letter about the setting's healthy eating policy accompanied by a booklet regarding the benefits of eating five fruit and vegetables a day. Consequently children are learning to make healthy food choices.

Staff provide a wide range of exciting activities to encourage children's physical development. For example, to help develop their finer skills, children are encouraged to use a finger pincer movement to pick up tiny beads to make a picture. Children are encouraged to practise and acquire useful new skills within the daily routines. For instance, at snack time they use cutlery to serve food, or attempt to peel their fruit. Each day they try to put on their own boots and coats to wear in the garden. The garden is used everyday and offers children planned opportunities to learn ball skills, ride on bikes and scooters or use a parachute for games. They also learn to manage a range of movements and actions, for example by following the leader. As a result, children develop their physical skills and become more confident in their ability.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well-ordered environment which is suitable for their needs. The premises is a demountable type building with an enclosed outdoor area which has some grass and a large safety surface area offering outside play in most weathers. There is a kitchen area in the room where snacks are prepared and the children can access the toilets and washbasins independently.

Children have access to plenty of good quality equipment, stored at a low level for independent choice to help them make decisions about their own play. Furniture is child sized and steps are available to help them reach the washbasins.

Staff have taken active steps to make the environment safe and daily risk assessments are carried out and logged. Fire drills are practised and contingency plans for an extended evacuation of the premises are available. As a result, children are kept safe.

There are systems in place to ensure children are secure on the premises and there is a lost child policy, however there are no written details to show what staff would do if a child remained uncollected after the session. Consequently, although staff would ensure children were safe, children could become upset whilst staff decided what procedure to follow.

Children are safeguarded because staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection and some have been on child protection training. Staff keep up to date with current practices through sharing any changes learned on training and following the comprehensive policy.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children under three years are settled in their environment. They arrive confidently, and feel self-assured and supported by staff. These children are happy to try new things such as sharpening their own pencils. Some of the staff have had basic 'Birth to three matters' framework training and have devised a separate planning folder with specific goals based on the framework. Staff skilfully record observations of the children under three years to link to the aspects and components of the framework to ensure children are progressing well.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage through training or experience. They are very familiar with the stepping stones and early learning goals, using these imaginatively to write the plans. Staff recognise important factors about how young children learn, so children effectively learn through practical and immediate experiences.

Staff plan the curriculum to promote progress towards the early learning goals and the inclusion of all children. The children's ability varies and this is recognised by staff so there is a separate section in the planning detailing differentiation for children. Therefore, children can enjoy their activities and learn at their own pace.

Children are challenged, staff expect the most from them and it is evident that they understand how they learn. Children participate in well-planned activities that are supported very well by staff. Staff take every opportunity to ask open ended questions to make children think about what they are doing or what they need to do. For example, children looked at bugs through magnifying glasses and in 'bug catcher jars'. Staff asked children numerous questions such as how big the bugs were, which was the smallest and what were they doing. This helps children to question what they are doing.

Staff use methods that help all children to learn effectively, taking account of their age, capability, special educational needs, home language and other relevant factors.

Staff teach children in small and large groups and regularly on a one to one basis so they can effectively level the activity for each child. In this way, children are able to learn at their own pace and concentrate on developing the basic skills. The routine offers plenty of free play whilst some more focused activities are taking place around them. This appeals to children's different styles of learning.

Staff manage children well and have high expectations for behaviour. In circle time, children's behaviour and concentration was exemplary. The time was spent very well and really productively for learning shapes and calculation. Children are gently encouraged to try new experiences and are able to say no if they do not wish to take part.

Staff use assessments of children's progress to guide their planning and teaching. Regular, detailed observations are carried out using appropriate evaluations of how children are progressing towards the early learning goals. These are used to record progress and to inform further planning so children's next steps in learning are identified.

There are numerous opportunities for children to make independent choices and to begin to develop their independence everyday. For example, children confidently answer their names to staff during registration, they choose their drinks and snacks and when they want to try an activity.

A 'writing area' is available everyday with stencils, crayons and pencils. The area is well-used because there is always an adult to skilfully guide and encourage the children. They often try to write their names on their paper and there are other effective means to practise pre-writing skills, for example, in the role play area. Children are beginning to understand that text has meaning because there are clear labels all around the room and on the equipment. They use their name cards for self-registration, choosing their drinks or finding their place at the table. There is a comfortable book area which is well-stocked with good quality books. Children benefit from smaller story times to appeal to different levels of concentration and ability.

Children enjoy using equipment to experiment with patterns and shapes, learning about measuring through well-planned practical and purposeful activities such as making Angel Delight. Children accurately count how many children there are in the setting and take part in mathematical songs and rhymes to illustrate simple calculation. In addition, one-to-one activities include an element of counting. For example, children compare the number of cards they put into sets.

Children have regular access to a computer, located on a low level desk so they can independently select and manage programmes to begin to learn about technology. They also learn about their environment and everyday situations by going shopping in small groups. Children benefit from visitors, who bring things of interest to children, for example, a pet snake. This helps with their confidence and feeling safe in a familiar environment. Children are beginning to understand how mixing ingredients together can bring about changes to the mixture such as colour and consistency changes. They use their senses to help them make decisions about new things.

Children use their imagination to act out real and imagined experiences in the role play area which can represent any number of situations, for example, a home corner or a surgery. They

have frequent opportunities to practise different artistic skills such as printing and using different painting techniques. Although children are learning new skills and have opportunities to make some choices about their work, templates are often used for painting and collage. As a consequence, children may sometimes have less frequent opportunities to use their own artistic ideas.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children learn about the wonder of nature through growing flowers and looking at bugs. They develop an understanding and appreciation of different celebrations, for example they made friendship cards for the Chinese Moon Festival. Children look at how other people live and are encouraged to be charitable by taking part in projects such as collecting for homeless people at harvest time.

The setting ensures a range of equipment represents diversity and helps children to value others. Children taste foods from cultural festivals during activities planned to help them learn about particular festivals such as Diwali. When children take part in these activities, parents are given information about what the festival entails and what their children are learning from the project.

There is a comprehensive special needs policy and several staff have undertaken the special needs co-ordinator training. Staff understand the importance of working closely with parents and regularly consulting with other professionals such as speech therapists. As a result, children with special needs and disabilities, are cared for accordingly.

Children have written some of their own simple 'house rules' to observe which are displayed on the wall. They receive rewards for being helpful or caring and they are given praise in circle time and consequently their behaviour is very good.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with good quality information about the setting and it's provision with posters displayed regarding forthcoming topics and plans, along with information about the Foundation Stage. Each day, a board is written up and clearly displayed to parents what their children have learned in relation to the early learning goals. Home to setting link books are also regularly completed with valuable information and sent home once a half term with reminders for parents to add their comments and signature. This helps children to begin to make links between their home and the setting.

The setting invites parents into a session where they can join in with their child's craft activities, so they can begin to be involved in their child's learning. As a result, children are able to share something new with their parents. During these craft sessions, the staff encourage the parents attending, to view their child's records and chat to them about progress. Parents are able to share what they know about their children in addition to the information already gathered. This also helps to establish informal channels of communication with parents but may mean that some miss the opportunity to find out about their child's progress if they cannot attend. A written report is prepared as children leave the setting.

A regular newsletter gives parents information about activities and reminds them of their right to comment in the home link books. In addition, there are project sheets to encourage children's parents to learn with them at home. Parents are consulted through occasional questionnaires and there is an active parents committee supporting the group. The complaints procedure is thorough, with details of how complaints are logged and dealt with.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management are good. The staff monitor the progress children are making towards the early learning goals and the supervisor checks regularly to see that the delivery of the nursery education is consistently effective. Staff know what works with particular children and the key worker system is effective. Thorough evaluation of the nursery education, together with children's observations ensure any areas for improvement are identified and acted on in the next plans.

The setting regularly reviews and consistently evaluates its effectiveness in delivering a quality service. There are action plans in place to address any weaknesses identified through inspection or input from the Early Years Partnership. Evaluations from the plans are used to make improvements to teaching and learning, for example, using additional resources to support an activity. The staff team, lead by the supervisor and assisted by the committee, know the aims and objectives of the setting and are committed to improving care and education for all children.

Staff are committed to improving practice and take account of the aims stated in operational plan. Their own personal development is monitored through appraisals and records of courses attended. Robust procedures for checking staff and ensuring their qualifications are suitable and up-to-date so children are safeguarded.

Time is used effectively along with the resources and the accommodation. Staff work with the children all of the time, and children even help at tidy up time. The environment is organised cleverly to help children to be independent in taking themselves to the toilet, hand washing, getting coats, going in and out of the door and helping themselves to drinks.

The staff session plan ensures that staff are deployed effectively which in turn guarantees that they spend the maximum contact time with them. Staff constantly review their practice and detail improvements made, such as introducing a signing in and out book for children. There are on-going action plans which ensures that any issues are addressed. Overall, children's needs are met.

Records are very well kept and up-to-date with the National Standards. Policies and procedures are kept in a large operational plan which provides a good illustration of the setting's practice. Parents have access to the policies and procedures so they can see how the setting is organised.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

During the last inspection, the setting was asked to ensure that there are effective procedures in place for checking that all staff and committee have suitable clearances. There are now robust

checking procedures in place for staff and committee to safeguard the children. The setting also agreed to ensure the register accurately reflected the number of children, staff and visitors present at any one time. There are now secure systems in place to guarantee that children, staff and visitors are accurately recorded when present.

During the last inspection the setting was required to make sure that poisonous plants are inaccessible to the children, for example ivy. Children are now kept safe from poisonous plants and supervised closely in the garden. The setting was also asked to review the fire procedure, especially looking at the timing of the register, ensuring the safety of the children at all times. Regular fire safety drills now take place at different times and there are contingency plans in place.

During the last inspection, the setting was asked to review the policy to ensure that the child protection procedure for the playgroup complies with local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures and supporting documentation. Staff have since updated the procedure to fall in line with the Safeguarding Children's Board and some staff have had training.

The setting was asked at the last inspection to ensure that documentation is updated to include the required written parental agreement and consent forms. The documentation has been updated so all consent and parental agreements are obtained.

The setting was asked to seek advice and devise an action plan detailing how and in what timescale the required staffing qualifications will be met. Staff qualifications have been met and through training and employing new staff.

At the previous inspection the setting was asked to ensure that the Complaints Policy includes OFSTED's address and telephone number and these details are now available.

During the last inspection of Nursery Education in July 2005, the setting was asked to implement strategies to improve children's listening skills. Children are now sometimes split into small groups for stories or singing. They often have small groups for activities or are supported on a one-to-one basis. Children listen well to the staff, who are confident and assertive with them.

The setting was required to improve arrangements for parents and carers to view their child's records and talk to staff about progress made. There have been some improvements regarding this issue and open mornings are arranged so that parents can visit the group to take part in craft activities with their children. At these times, the staff encourage parents to speak to them and to view their child's records. There are also home link books which provide a two way communication, as well as the daily informal exchanges of information.

The setting agreed at the last inspection to allow children more freedom to make their own choices and ensure that staff do not over-direct play. Children are given plenty of choice and encouraged to become independent although there is still room for less directed creative activities.

At the last nursery education inspection the setting was asked to ensure that staff use open ended questioning to encourage children to think for themselves and the improvements in using these techniques were evident in this inspection.



### **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):

- devise a written policy to reflect procedures to follow in the event of a child not being collected from the setting.

#### **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):

- implement a system to ensure all parents are actively encouraged and able to view their child's records.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)