



Comberton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221789
Inspection date	06 October 2006
Inspector	Heidi Falconer
Setting Address	The Old School, Green End, Comberton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB3 7DY
Telephone number	01223 262373
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Registered person	Comberton Playgroup
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?

Comberton Playgroup is a management committee run setting. It opened in 1969 and operates from three rooms in an old school building. It is situated in the village of Comberton, on the outskirts of Cambridge. A maximum of 48 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 16.00 term time only. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 110 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 43 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The playgroup currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup employs 13 members of staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young children are learning about the importance of good personal hygiene because staff supervise them well, showing them how to carry out simple tasks such as, washing their hands and how to use the hand dryers. Older children are very independent in their personal hygiene routines. For example, they wash their hands, using soap, before eating and after using the toilet. They say that they wash their hands 'to make them clean, so you don't get germs and get poorly'. Children receive appropriate treatment if they have an accident or become ill at the setting. A high number of staff hold first aid qualifications and in response to allergies within the setting all staff have received epi-pen training. In addition the staff keep accurate accidents and medication records, which are shared appropriately with parents.

Parents are given clear guidance about the exclusion of sick children, through the settings sickness policy and through the posters they display on head lice, communicable diseases and meningitis. This awareness helps to reduce the risk of spread of infection amongst the children. However, the setting's practice for nappy changing does not sufficiently protect children from the risk of cross infection. This compromises their health.

The setting promotes children's health and development by ensuring that staff are aware of all children's dietary needs and any parental preferences. Staff are very conscientious in ensuring that these requests are respected. For example, at snack time staff check their dietary requirements list before giving out any drinks or food. This practice helps to keep children safe. Drinks are always available to the children in their rooms and staff are aware of the importance of encouraging children to take regular drinks. As part of the settings involvement in a 'promoting healthy eating in early years settings' project staff are currently monitoring the amount of fluids that children have, to ensure that they remain well-hydrated and healthy.

Children enjoy daily opportunities for energetic physical play, fresh air and exercise, which contribute positively to them leading a healthy lifestyle. For example, the setting have recently implemented an all weather outdoor play system, allowing children to play outside each day, regardless of the weather. When children use the outdoor area, they use a wide range of equipment to promote their physical skills, such as scooters, go karts, bikes, wooden balancing beams and climbing equipment. To develop their fine physical skills, children weave material in the garden fence, paint with water using rollers and paint brushes and use tools such as scissors and hole punches.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a bright and welcoming indoor and outdoor environment. The premises have been attractively decorated and the rooms in which the children are based are named Blue, Green and Orange. The rooms are painted in these colours, which helps children to easily distinguish their room. Toys and resources are stored on low open shelves to enable the children to access them independently, selecting additional resources as they require them. For example,

whilst a small group of children played with the house, they developed their play by adding horses to the equipment which was already out. Staff regularly check equipment to ensure that it is in good condition and safe for the children to use.

Children play in a safe environment where risks are minimised, so that they can move around freely and independently. For example, staff are extremely vigilant at ensuring that the premises remain secure. Each morning a staff member greets parents and children as they arrive and then the door is locked and entry can only be gained via a doorbell. When the children use the outdoor area, staff are deployed effectively near the garden gate to prevent any visitors entering the playground unaccompanied. This practice enhances children's safety. To help children to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe, staff explain safe practices, such as the fire evacuation plan with them.

Children's welfare is protected because staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection and would be able to put appropriate procedures into practice if they had concerns about a child's safety. The setting's designated child protection officer has attended a child protection training course, which has ensured that her knowledge is up to date and in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board guidelines.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children throughout the setting are very confident and have built secure relationships with the staff and their peers. Children settle quickly and separate with ease from their parents and carers because staff greet all children warmly and create an exciting environment, which children are keen to explore. Young children particularly enjoy the opportunity to participate in free painting. They explore the texture of the paint as they rub their hands over their pictures and then fold them up. Staff's calm response allows children to be confident in directing their own ideas on how they use the materials which are available. However, some art activities are over directed by staff and restrict children's ability to express and interpret their own ideas. All children spend their time purposefully engaged in activities and are well supported by staff. They play well together and enjoy using resources from the home corner to extend their play develop their imagination, going on trips and having picnics.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress because staff use their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage to plan and deliver a balanced curriculum. Children's experiences are broad because staff use planning systems consistently to ensure that all areas receive sufficient attention. This means that children are offered plenty of choice and variety of activities. However, at times staff miss opportunities to develop children's skills in everyday. For example, staff pour all drinks for the children and routinely write children's names on their art work. In addition some activities do not provide sufficient challenge for the older or more able children. Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones, and spontaneous and planned observations inform children's assessment records, which show that they are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children spontaneously incorporate mathematical language into their play and can confidently count to ten. For example, as one child drives cars in the sand tray he talks about the patterns he is creating and how the car is under the sand and going round and round as it races up and down the track. Children are able to recognise patterns and group sets of compare bears according to their size and colour.

Children are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication, speaking listening, reading and writing. Children take delight in listening to stories, they sit down happily to concentrate, they join in eagerly to say what may happen next when questioned by staff. For example, children are very familiar with the Farmyard Tales stories and join in the familiar beginning of the story naming the characters. Children show an awareness that books and posters can be used to locate information. Children point and talk about posters on the wall as they describe how they are using the rocket to go to the earth. Most children confidently choose their name cards from wall chart as they arrive, showing they know the make up of their name. Children have some opportunities to write independently, writing tools are generally well deployed and available for the children to use throughout the session.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences. For example, in the garden they play with soil and look at changes as they grow runner beans and marigolds. Children show curiosity in how things work. They ask staff how play resources, such as the washing machine work and then experiment with the buttons to see how it works. Children use the computer confidently to support their learning. They have good control over the mouse and use it well to operate familiar computer programmes.

Children confidently explore all of the activities and show high levels of confidence, self-esteem and pride in their work. For example children excitedly explain how they have used papier-mâché to make planets for their solar system display. Children have established close relationships with staff and each other, and they share and co-operate well during their play.

Children have many opportunities to experiment with media and explore textures through activities such painting, corn flour, water, soil, spaghetti, cooked mashed potato and clay. Children enjoy singing familiar songs and rhymes, joining in with appropriate actions as they sing songs, such as dingle, dangle scarecrow.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about the world around them through the celebration of festivals, such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and at Christmas they intend to look at how it is celebrated around the world. Topics and resources, such as posters, small world figures and books help children to learn about other cultures and lifestyles. Staff know the children well and all individual needs are respected and catered for. Although there are currently no children attending with learning difficulties and disabilities, there are appropriate systems in place to support children with additional needs. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are very well behaved and polite in response to the expectations of the staff. They play together co-operatively, taking turns and sharing popular resources, such as the new space rocket. Whilst staff help support younger children in learning to take turns, older children happily negotiate their own play. For example, on the day of the inspection one child explained to another that their actions had upset another child and with this the child apologised immediately, and the children continued to play happily together. Children's self-esteem is developed as the staff use praise and encouragement to acknowledge good behaviour and achievements.

The partnership with the parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents are given good information about the Foundation Stage and the areas of learning. Laminated sheets on these are also provided on the parent's board so that they can be borrowed to further develop parent's awareness. In addition parents have formal and informal opportunities to discuss the progress that their children are making with staff. For example, whilst all parents talk to staff on a daily basis, regular parent's evenings are organised to ensure that they are fully informed about their child and how the setting helps them to make progress. Staff openly invite parents to add their knowledge of their children's progress to their assessments so that they have a full record of children's achievements.

The effective partnership with parents and carers contributes positively towards the children's care, well-being and feelings of security. Verbal feedback from parents demonstrates their high regard for the setting, the care staff provide and the support they offer to the children and their families. Daily discussions, newsletters and an informative parents notice board ensures that information is shared with parents appropriately.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the setting ensures that children are well cared for by staff who are experienced and qualified to meet the needs of all the children. Staff work very well together as a team to create a fun learning environment that promotes positive outcomes for children. A full range of policies and procedures protect children and are effectively implemented by staff to promote all the outcomes for children. These policies are regularly updated to ensure that they reflect practice. For example, the setting's policy for food and drink policy is being updated to ensure that it reflects the staff's commitment to helping children eat healthily. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are protected and that staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. The management and organisation of the setting is successful in ensuring that the practice of all staff contributes positively to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. The manager and senior staff demonstrate a commitment to developing the setting's practice to ensure that all children have access to good quality learning experiences. For example, when staff have attended training courses, time is made at staff meetings for them to feed back what they have learnt. Two members of staff have recently attended a training course on outdoor play and as a result all staff have adopted a positive attitude to extending the play opportunities for the children outside. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection, the provider agreed to develop and extend the use of the role-play area as a resource that will enable children to increase their opportunities for writing for a purpose and enhance their creative experiences. The setting has now ensured that writing materials are always available to the children and they now change the role play area into different scenarios to broaden children's experiences. The group was also asked to develop a system to identify staff training needs taking into account the overall needs of the setting. Through appraisals and monitoring staff's training needs are now identified and relevant training courses are offered to staff. This has ensured that the setting continues to improve and has improved staff knowledge and understanding of how children learn.

At the previous care inspection the provider was asked to improve staff knowledge of child protection procedures and update the child protection policy. Some staff have attended training and all staff are familiar with the child protection policy, which has been reviewed and updated. The improved understanding of child protection issues and a complete policy means that children's safety is suitably promoted.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the 1 April 2004 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

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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):

- ensure good hygiene practices are in place regarding nappy changing to ensure that children are protected from the risk of cross infection
- improve opportunities for children to develop their own creative ideas.

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):

- improve the use of everyday routines and activities to enable children to extend their learning across all areas of the curriculum spontaneously, and in meaningful contexts
- improve the teaching strategies used to provide challenges for all children in adult lead activities to enable children to practice new or more difficult skills.

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