



The Playbox

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251691
Inspection date	09 November 2006
Inspector	Nicola Mary Eileen Matthews
Setting Address	St Johns Church Community Centre, York Road, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 1ND
Telephone number	01787 373 185
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Registered person	The Playbox
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Playbox is run by committee of volunteers. It opened in 1995 and operates from one main room in St. John's Church Community Centre in Sudbury, Suffolk. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each week day from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:30 to 15:00 during term time only.

There are currently 41 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these 28 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the town and local villages. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs three staff all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well through clear and well documented policies and procedures to ensure health and hygiene guidelines are promoted throughout the setting. Children follow good hygiene practices and know they must wash their hands prior to snack-time, after messy play and toileting to minimise cross-infection. Their minor medical emergencies are dealt with appropriately by staff that have all completed first aid training. Children's parents give their written permission for staff to administer medication, however, they do not countersign the record once it has been given. Children who are ill are cared for well as staff have a clear policy to follow and can access a document listing many communicable diseases with incubation and exclusion times included.

Children's individual dietary needs are effectively catered for as they enjoy a varied snack-time menu such as, banana, apple and carrot sticks. Their parents are very well informed of the snack they have each session as the staff use an attractive small display in the entrance hall where they stick laminated pictures of the day's menu. Children are able to self-select a drink of water during the session to quench their thirst. Children are learning about healthy eating and good practices when the dental hygienist visits with her 'friend' Cheryl the Crow.

Children are developing their balance and coordination very well as the more able confidently climb the large frame and slide down the slope. They experience a physical education session once a week where they creatively move around the large hall using the space well and expertly manoeuvre around each other. Children are developing an awareness of body changes as staff take opportunities during physical exercise to talk about being hot and 'out of puff'. Children show great levels of enthusiasm as they lift up the parachute canopy and then run underneath it. They are encouraged to be active several times during the session to make up for the lack of outdoor space. Children enjoy participating in songs and rhymes with actions jumping like frogs and marching around the book area imitating elephants, all of which enables them to let off steam.

Younger children's emotional well-being is supported through the effective practice of settling the two and a half year olds into pre-school. They start to develop a real sense of belonging straight away as they are assigned a key worker and can see their photographs added to The Playbox family tree.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure setting. They benefit from a well maintained and clean building which is warm and safe as hazards are identified and minimised by the church and the pre-school staff who conduct a daily risk assessment. Children's security is effectively promoted as the staff ensures the outer door, with a double lock is shut so children cannot leave unsupervised and nobody can enter unless invited in.

Children safely access the very good quality play resources and activities, presented daily, as they are attractively set out on table tops, the floor and in boxes before they arrive. They play with clean toys and resources that are carefully checked over each time they are displayed for broken pieces to ensure they are safe for children to handle. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as staff use opportunities that arise during the normal daily routine, to support the less able such as, when accessing the climbing frame. They are developing awareness of road safety as they go out for walks to the local beauty spot and the fire station. Children use the designated pedestrian crossing areas and listen to the staff explaining about the red and green man.

Children's welfare is paramount as the child protection policy is clear and staff know how to implement it should children's welfare be compromised. The staff have attended child protection training which has given them the knowledge of the signs and symptoms of abuse to ensure any concerns are dealt with effectively.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are effectively encouraged to feel settled and confident by the extremely warm and welcoming child-centred play environment they enter each session. They all confidently leave their main carer and take a very active part in the session. Children experience a well paced relaxed but stimulating routine which they are all very comfortable with. They self-select activities throughout the session and come together for a story which is followed by snack-time which fosters their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

The younger children participate in all the activities available and enjoy persevering with the jigsaws and exploring natural materials like sand and water. They are making positive relationships with each other and the older ones. Children play, displaying high levels of enthusiasm, alongside others in the imaginary play areas, such as the home corner and travel agents and enjoy participating in large group collages and junk models. They use the latter in their creative play pretending it is a tree for squirrels to climb or a drinks machine.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. They benefit considerably from the well planned curriculum that is based on topics each term to encourage their exploration and experimentation by using all their senses. Children's play experiences are simply but effectively documented each week enabling the staff to understand what the children should be learning. If individual children do not achieve the desired results then this is used to formulate their next step document which informs future planning. Therefore, children effectively progress towards each early learning goal. Children's assessment records are regularly updated by their key worker. Children's achievements are recorded using the stepping stones in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance document to ensure they are making progress towards individual early learning goals.

Children experience an innovative, extremely attractive and stimulating environment indoors which encourages them to confidently and easily self-select from a wide range of interesting

activities throughout the session. They benefit from staff that are very skilled at extending the children's play and provide a challenge to support their natural curiosity and progress in their learning. For example, at the nature table children spotted insects crawling amongst the plants so they looked at them closely using magnifying glasses then recorded their observations using paper and appropriate coloured crayons. Children are able to make connections in their learning as they play with the themed activities as staff are creative, resourceful experts at ensuring activities link in with others. They handle yellow and orange items on the colour table and explore orange pumpkins and yellow leaves on the nature table, similarly the play dough is coloured yellow and smells of lemons.

Children are expertly encouraged to recall facts from past topics to consolidate new learning as staff link in creative activities like movement to demonstrate children's knowledge of such things like hedgehogs food, for example, slugs, snails and worms. They confidently solve problems as staff are highly skilled at asking open ended questions such as, 'how can they move across the room without using their legs like the hedgehogs food, worms?'. Children enthusiastically squirm on their tummies across the floor with outstanding levels of perseverance to reach the other end.

Children are excited, interested and motivated to speak in large familiar groups recalling the story, 'Peace at Large' and working out how many fingers are needed to represent the sixteen children present today. They respond with enjoyment to songs and rhymes and explore letter sounds when playing with novel activities, such as the table tennis balls with letters on in the water tray. They thoroughly enjoy manipulating the puppets using the puppet theatre and use language to describe and explore their imaginative play such as, in the home corner making meals and in the travel agents discussing a journey to Disney Land. Children experience an environment rich in number, labels and writing. They are becoming skilful mathematicians as they count and develop simple calculation skills and explore shape in their everyday play. Children have good opportunities to develop their emergent writing skills as they write out travel tickets, captions to drawings and record observations such as, mini beasts.

Children are highly motivated to investigate objects and materials using all their senses as appropriate which are supported really well by the current topic of autumn. They find out and identify features of living things as they confidently scoop out the flesh and seeds from inside the pumpkin and smell scented plants like rosemary and lavender. Children extend their investigations as they count reliably the pumpkin seeds and use tools effectively to promote further observations such as, magnifying glasses. They enjoy exploring colour as they spend time creatively using paint to represent their own ideas of family members using the brush strokes expertly to paint curly hair.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are making a substantial contribution to their play and learning opportunities as they independently choose from a wide range of good quality activities, throughout the session. They very confidently enter the setting each day and are extremely conformable with the routine. They take responsibility for the environment as they help tidy up and meet their own personal needs at snack-time.

Children are learning about their local environment and the wider community as they visit the river side, fire station and go further afield on trips to a farm. They handle a very good range of toys and other resources that show positive images of the wider world and participate in activities based on their own and other's cultural festivals. They are learning about the wider world as they play with a very good collection of animals and the world map. Children place the animals on the country of origin whilst being sensitively supported by an adult who also uses an appropriate reference book with them. They are developing good awareness of similarities and differences in people as they play alongside each other, look at many positive images of a multicultural society in posters and books and handle the play resources.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported very appropriately as the nominated special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) follows the guidance set out in the Code of Practice 2001 to ensure they progress in their development. They are effectively encouraged to concentrate and complete a task as they play and benefit from her knowledge as she has attended the SENCO training and more to increase her understanding of children with learning difficulties such as, Portage.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They clearly know what is expected of them and demonstrate a good understanding of this as they go about their busy play sharing and taking turns amicably. They are developing a very good understanding that there needs to be an agreed code to work harmoniously together. Children are empowered to sort out their own minor disagreements amicably by staff who ask them what they would like to happen. Children play alongside and with each other negotiating roles and developing friendships. They are encouraged to respect the environment as they help tidy up and then sit quietly carefully handling books and experience play alongside adults who are effective role models. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, cultural, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Staff encourage parents to provide written details about their children as they start at The Playbox. Children's assessments records are effectively shared with the parents so they can see what their child has achieved and contribute to this if they so wish. They are invited to parents' evenings where the staff diligently set out the hall as if it was a pre-school session so those who work during the day can see the play environment their children regularly experience. Parents can become involved in their child's early education by volunteering to be part of the management committee, help out during the sessions and share their expertise such as, being a policeman. Children take home books to enable parents to participate in their early learning. Parents are provided with clear well written information and policies and procedures to ensure they understand the organisation of the preschool and what their children will be doing. They receive frequent newsletters and participate in several fund raising events throughout the year. Parents speak very highly of the setting and staff and are extremely appreciative of the lunch session organised by the church to meet their children's needs before the start of the afternoon session.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's health, safety and well-being are supported by clear and well written policies and procedures that are readily available for parents to read. Children are looked after by staff that

are caring and extremely sensitive to their individual needs as they know them so well. Their updating of knowledge to enhance the settings care and education takes high priority as staff endeavour to attend several workshops a year. Children benefit from management and staff who are enthusiastically developing the learning environment with support from their liaison teacher from the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). Clear evaluation documentation is used, this explains what is required to improve specific areas and how this will be done to provide an even wider range of activities to support children's overall development.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The management committee are very supportive of the work the staff do and dissolve the responsibilities of the day to day running of the sessions confidently to the manager. The manager provides knowledge and expertise to the management committee to ensure the smooth running of the group and continually strives to add to the play resources to enhance children's progress. The staff work very effectively as a team and tirelessly work with high levels of commitment each day to set up the bare hall and make it a vibrant attractive, stimulating environment to motivate young children to learn through their play.

The standard of records is very good which ensures children's individual care needs are met well. Records are confidentially kept on the table during session time so they can be referred to quickly. The high levels of a sense-of-ownership in both children and staff is fostered by clearly labelled photographs of everybody such as the two displays of facial features depicting feelings where staff have joined in as well and the family tree. The staff also join in many activities with the children like physical education where they also take their shoes off and crawl round the room or jump on the spot. The preschool has an effective system to record children and staff's attendance. Overall, the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to improve children's experiences of physical activity. Children enjoy independently climbing on the large apparatus crawling underneath and through the doorway. They participate in songs and rhymes with large muscle movements, such as holding an arm above their head and marching around in circles like elephants which enables them to effectively let off steam during other activities than using large apparatus.

The setting was asked to give consideration to children's independence skills and taking more responsibility at snack-time. Children confidently pour their own drinks and choose from a selection of fruit, vegetables and cereals which fosters their independence and pouring skills.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any actions 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:

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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 parents countersign the records of administered medication.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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