



Pulford Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	306469
Inspection date	18 October 2006
Inspector	Jean Evelyn Thomas
Setting Address	Pulford Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside, CH63 2HN
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Registered person	Alison Robinson and Alison Haresnape
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Pulford Pre-school Playgroup opened in 1994 and operates from a self-contained mobile unit. It is situated in the residential area of Bebington in Wirral. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday during school terms from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 15.00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 56 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 34 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The playgroup supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs eight members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children learn to keep themselves healthy through following basic hygiene routines. They wash their hands independently after using the toilet facilities and messy play activities. The sick child policy ensures children are protected from the spread of infection by excluding children who are ill. Consents are obtained from parents to seek medical treatment in the event of an emergency. However, there are no qualified first aiders on duty to ensure the appropriate procedures are followed for children's well-being in the event of an accident. Staff have not received appropriate guidance on food safety and hygiene to protect children from cross infection through food handling.

Children learn about the benefits of a healthy diet. The snacks vary, they consist of a selection of fruit or a plain biscuit. Children have tasted a variety of fruits, including kiwi and pineapple, as part of the topic to help them understand the importance of eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Drinking water is available at all times, children drink either milk or water with their snack. Information is obtained from parents to ensure children's dietary needs are met and foods are not offered which may trigger an allergic reaction.

Children have access to exercise and, weather permitting, fresh air each session to encourage them to enjoy physical activity and to gain control of their bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment. The walls are attractively displayed with children's art work, including their self portraits and posters. The range of activities are set out on the children's arrival. There is sufficient space for children to play and move around. Children benefit from outdoor play activities throughout the year because the facilities provide both a grassed and hard surface areas. There is a satisfactory range of play materials to sustain and stimulate the interest of children. The staff check play materials to ensure they are not damaged and complete. Play equipment is replaced as required. The children enjoy the new dolls house and organise the furniture in the different rooms.

Safety procedures are in place and staff conduct a routine safety check before the children arrive to ensure their safety. Children learn simple rules to protect themselves, such as not running around play group and not to enter the kitchen. There is a secure door entry system which prevents unauthorised persons entering the building. Staff are vigilant at the beginning and end of the session and stand at the door to ensure children do not leave unsupervised. Staff know the evacuation procedure. However, there is no record that it is practised on a regular basis to help children become familiar with the procedure and to assess its effectiveness.

Children's welfare is generally safeguarded as staff are aware of child protection issues. They know the procedure in place and where to seek help in order to protect children. The procedure does not state what has to be done in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer. Although the manager knows what to do, the procedure does not ensure all staff are aware of the course of action to be followed which compromises children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled, they enter the playgroup eagerly. Children form good relationships with the staff. Staff are gentle and sensitive in their approach, taking time to listen to what children say and respond accordingly. Children enjoy their play. Most children confidently make choices about which activities they wish to pursue, such as jigsaws, the climbing frame and home corner. Some children benefit from the gentle guidance from staff to ensure they experience the full range of activities, while still being encouraged to make their own choices. Children have opportunity to develop their own ideas. For example, using the small world play resources, the children construct the rail track and use cars and play people to represent their play idea. They follow their natural curiosity and become increasingly confident with new experiences, such as programmes for the computer. However, the 'Birth to three matters' framework is not used to plan for the younger children and to assess their progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound knowledge of the early years curriculum and how children learn, such as responding to spontaneous situations and giving children choice in what they do. Children experience a suitable range of activities to help them make progress in all areas of learning. However, systems are not used to establish what the new children to playgroup already know and can do or ongoing observations and assessments to chart their progress. Consequently, the planning does not identify the next steps for individual children's learning.

Children separate confidently from their parent or carer. Children are relaxed within their peer groups and with the staff. They show interest in what is taking place and confidently express their needs and wishes, asking where the hospital kit is, telling the staff they are hot. Most of the time children concentrate on the activity of their choice. For example, a group of four children enjoy a lotto game, although initiated by staff, it continues successfully without adult support. The children count out the game cards to each player, play when it is their turn and help each other if needed to find the matching card.

Children explore different mediums, such as sand, home made dough and water. In water play, children use different shaped piping and discover the effect the shape of the pipe has on the flow of water. Children learn that changing the angle of the pipes alters the speed objects travel. There is a selection of toys and containers available for children to experiment with in water play. Children develop their self care skills, such as putting on aprons and pushing up their sleeves before starting certain messy activities. At registration and circle time, children listen to what is being said and eagerly anticipate what might happen. For example, the staff give clues about the song they are going to sing outlining shapes, using their fingers to represent

numbers and encouraging the children to compare the sizes they make, big, small and medium. The children enthusiastically put together the clues and know the song is Goldilocks and the Three Bears. This is followed by the children singing and doing the action rhymes.

Children's mathematical development is intrinsic in many activities and staff use mathematical language to encourage children's understanding. Many children count accurately to ten and are recognising the written numeral. Cutting up the play dough, children count the number of pieces they have made and know shape and size. Lining up for snack, children compare the different lengths of the two lines. Children learn problem solving. For example, they discover that the amount of dough they have rolled out for the ginger bread man shape is too small. Staff ask questions to prompt children's thinking about how they can resolve the problem, resulting in the children increasing the size of the dough ball sufficient for the shape.

Children enjoy books, they handle them respectfully and many follow the wording with their fingers knowing they carry a meaning. Story time stimulates children's imagination and interest through the staff's enthusiastic storytelling skills. Children understand the sequence of story and predict what happens next; they consider the feeling of the characters, happy, sad, scared and interpret these emotions in facial expressions. Older children recognise their written first name and there are some opportunities to develop their early writing skills. Children use descriptive language well, such as describing the weather as "foggy" and "the golden autumn leaves". Children are aware of the passage of time, the sequence of the weekdays and talk about forthcoming celebrations.

Children develop an understanding of the wider world, different cultures and beliefs through some theme work, resources and discussions with staff. At story time, children heard the Urdu language and repeat the numbers up to five. Children learn about the natural world as they grow and care for plants in their outdoor play area. Children are developing their computer skills and an understanding of every day technology, such as telephones, cameras and play microwave cooker. Children have access to resources to develop physical skills, using large and small equipment both indoors and outside. They are able to run, pedal, climb and hop. Children are able to manipulate one handed tools, such as paint brushes, pencils and scissors. Children play imaginatively in the role play area and express themselves, playing musical instruments and moving their bodies to the rhythm of the music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into the setting which makes them feel valued and special. Staff respect children's individual needs, they give comfort and reassurance if children become unsettled to help them feel secure. Children have equal access to equipment therefore, they all benefit from the full range play opportunities and activities in a non judgemental environment. Children's awareness about the diversity of society is raised through a selection of resources used in all the play sessions and specific activities.

Children are well behaved. They learn to act responsibly, for example, to help tidy away equipment, to share, take turns and develop an understanding about the need for the playgroup rules. Staff act as positive role models, they use praise and allocate special duties, such as

leading the children to snack, to reward and encourage children. Overall children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Limited information is displayed about the early years curriculum. Staff keep parents informed about future activities and themes in the newsletters and involve parents by asking them to send in various items to support their children's learning at home. Children choose books to take home to share with their parents. There is opportunity for parents to talk to staff at the beginning and end of the session. This helps to keep parents up to date and to ensure children receive consistent care. Parents receive written information about the playgroup and the full set of policies and procedures is on display in the entrance area.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff work well together as a team and deploy themselves effectively. The adult-child ratios ensure staff give children attention to support their learning. However, there is lack of consistency in staff's knowledge of the learning objectives for activities to ensure these are fully promoted and achieved. The manager's self-evaluation of the planning of the early years curriculum has resulted in it currently being reviewed. Space and resources are soundly organised to promote children's safety, care and learning. Team meetings are organised to inform and train staff. The majority of the staff have worked at the playgroup for many years which offers children continuity in the staff they relate to. An induction procedure is in place for new staff to ensure they understand procedures for children's well-being. The existing employment procedure is not robust enough to ensure persons appointed are suitable to work with children. For example, the medical suitability of proposed staff is not taken into consideration. The complaints procedure and recording system do not reflect the revised National Standards. Parents are not aware of the current investigation process and the access to information pertaining to complaints. Documentation, such as accident recording, children's details, children and staff registers are maintained. Confidential information is securely stored for children's protection and privacy.

Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection the registered provider was asked to make sure planning gave opportunities for children to develop an awareness of other cultures and beliefs and an understanding of their local environment. Since then the provider has organised specific activities and purchased resources to promote children's awareness of different cultural celebrations, including Chinese New Year and Diwali. Members of the community visited the playgroup to talk to the children about the Chinese New Year and a parent gave staff guidance about the Hindu religion. Local police officers have also visited. The provider was also asked to monitor the planning to ensure appropriate coverage of the early learning goals. Plans identify the different areas of the early years curriculum and systems have been devised to track the activities children participate in to ensure all children benefit from the range of activities.

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to consider the safety surface requirements for the climbing frame. The provider has since repositioned the safety mats, deploys a member of staff on the frame when in use and limits the number of children to four to use it at any time to reduce the risk of an accident. The provider was also asked to improve recording systems. The provider now obtains consents from parents to seek emergency medical treatment and information about children's dietary needs to ensure the appropriate care is provided. Finally, a recommendation was to ensure the nutritional value of the snack food. Fruit has now been introduced to the snacks at most sessions to develop children's understanding about healthy eating.

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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- make sure enough staff are trained in first aid to ensure that at least one member of staff with a current first aid certificate is on the premises or on outings at any one time and staff comply with regulations relating to food safety and hygiene
- ensure the vetting and recruitment procedure of staff is thorough to make sure suitable persons work with children and that the complaints procedure and corresponding recording system complies with the National Standards.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- develop systems to observe and assess children from when they start the early years curriculum and as they progress through the stepping stones. Extend the use of the information to inform the future planning for individual children and ensure all staff understand the planned activities learning objectives.

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