



St Aidan's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509995
Inspection date	23 November 2006
Inspector	Margaret Bryant
Setting Address	St Aidan's Church Hall, Southcoates Avenue, KINGSTON UPON HULL, HU9 3HF
Telephone number	01482 374433
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Registered person	St Aidan's Playgroup Management Committee
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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?

St Aidan's Playgroup has been registered for over 20 years. It is situated in the east of the city of Hull some four miles from the town centre. It is based in a church hall which houses several groups, the playgroup having sole use of the main hall during its hours of operation. It opens from Tuesday to Thursday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 15.00. The playgroup is registered to care for a maximum of 26 children. Currently there are 37 children on roll, 20 of whom are in receipt of nursery education funding. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties.

There are six staff members, one of whom is the manager, and over 90% of the staff group have an appropriate childcare qualification. The playgroup is a church-run facility and is managed by a voluntary committee. It receives support from the local authority development worker and an advisory teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff working with children in the playgroup take positive steps to promote the health of children, for example, they introduce children to healthy eating. For snack time children enjoy a choice of fresh fruit and vegetables which include: pear; apple; cucumber; and carrots. They also enjoy raisins and other dried fruits. Children begin to learn about foods that are good for them through discussion, and notices near the snack area serve to remind children about what they learn. Children have milk to drink at snack times and also have their own individual water bottles which they bring from home. This means they can have a drink whenever they wish. Children enjoy the social occasion that snack time brings as they sit and chat together. Staff are aware of any individual dietary requirements children may have, including any allergies, and these are respected. Children's health is also promoted as staff encourage children with the washing of their hands throughout their daily routine. Children freely access the sink in the playroom after they hand paint or play with sand, or for any other reason which children decide warrants them cleaning their hands. Children say they need to wash the dirt off them and begin to understand about the importance of washing off germs after visiting the toilet.

All children show their understanding of the system for going to the toilet as they approach the staff member who wears the red sash. Children cannot go independently to the toilet as the premises have other users on site, however, this system works well and all children show awareness of it. As far as possible staff help keep the premises clean as well as all resources in use by children. They get plenty of exercise as they move freely and spontaneously with confidence. Children enjoy hopping, skipping and jumping with their friends. They also really enjoy the organised music sessions when they use batons to click together in time to the music and follow instructions which they sing along to. Children respond well to the rhythm and use their arms to click their batons to the front of them, behind them, above their heads and below. Children also enjoy the climbing frames and negotiate and judge the space well on the slides and in the tunnels. They begin to be aware of their own personal space and that of others. Children begin to know the effects of exercise on their bodies and that it is good for them too. They also begin to know they should rest and are supported by staff to sit quietly when they become tired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children begin to know about fire safety and the importance of taking part in drills, which helps them know what to do in emergency situations. They know they must wait for staff when going to and coming back from the toilet to keep them safe and staff supervise children well. All children are marked into the building through the register which is called when all children have arrived. The responsibility of recording children's times of arrival and departure is given to parents, however, not all parents enter this information. This means that numbers of children actually present at any one time is not always accurate. In addition the door into the playroom is not always secured and does not prevent, therefore, unauthorised persons from entering the group.

Risk assessments are carried out and all equipment and resources in use by children are regularly checked. There is a good amount of toys and play materials for children and there is a good selection available to children during any one session. They are stored away after use by staff who clear the room on most days and set it up in the mornings. The premises are bright, warm and welcoming to parents and children alike and all resources and activities children pursue help promote their development in some way. Activities are well spread out with separate areas for different activities and there is space for children to rest.

Staff knowledge of child protection is only satisfactory, however, the manager as the designated person with responsibility for child protection is aware of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. This means children's safety is satisfactorily protected. Also staff do not have access to the procedures nor does the playgroup child protection procedure make reference to these. Staff have attended child protection training but this is not recent.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

All children really enjoy being at the playgroup and there is a really happy atmosphere as they all play well together and have fun. Children show confidence as they approach each other as well as staff members and there are some firm friendships in place between children. Staff are very friendly and caring and this helps children when they arrive to easily settle and feel welcome. There is also a range of children's work on display and this helps children feel good about themselves as their efforts are appreciated. All children spend their time well and enjoy the good range of activities available for them. They engage in all types of play and have access to table-top activities which include: puzzles and play dough; imaginative play in a well-equipped home corner; creative play opportunities with sand, water, painting and construction; and book areas. Staff allow children freedom to play alone and with their friends as well as providing satisfactory intervention to aid and develop their learning.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have an adequate knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning which include the goals which they need to help children work towards. Staff are aware of what children can do as they commence at the playgroup and aim to develop their learning based on what children already know. Staff are all involved in the planning and long-term plans show the aim which is to cover all six areas of learning. Activities are evaluated in general terms of how they are received; however, it is not clear how individual assessments are linked to this. Staff also show limited knowledge of how to move children to the next steps of learning. This, therefore, means children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

All children happily arrive at playgroup and separate easily from their main carers. They take an interest in the many available activities and show confidence as they seek out their friends to play with them. Some children show firm attachments to others as they follow each other in their choice of activity. All children generally get along well together and show good levels of flexibility as they adapt to the routine. For example, when staff ask children to sit down whilst the register is taken or to listen to a story, children respond well to these instructions.

Some children show high levels of involvement during certain activities, such as reading books alone or being creative with the play dough. All children receive praise from staff in their efforts. Children develop a sense of community as they have opportunities through the timetable to learn about different people in the world and their ways of life. Staff engage children in discussions about their home lives, which includes holidays. Children also talk about their brothers and sisters, including new babies they have in their families.

Children are helped throughout their play to gain knowledge of colours, including knowing about different names for colours, such as royal blue and light blue, for example. They have opportunities to explore a range of materials including paints, which they enjoy, and use scissors and cutters. Children decide themselves how they will paint and some children paint their hands and make prints on paper. Children enjoy construction and build big towers and staff help them to see which is the highest and the lowest. Children also enjoy using their imaginations and play well in the home corner as they make pretend food and meals and put them in the microwave to cook. They sing familiar songs and rhymes and dance in time to the music.

Children happily and confidently interact with each other and with staff. Staff help children through most activities to develop their use of language and in particular positional language. For example, songs they sing help them know about left, right, below and above, and when they play in the water they learn about sinking and floating, heavy and light. Staff also engage with children in conversations when they do matching puzzles and this helps with their skills of memory and recall. Children enjoy stories, independently access books and know that print carries meaning as staff who read to them point to the text from left to right. Some children begin to recognise their own names, in particular the first letter of their name. Staff help children through the use of phonics to pronounce letters; however, there is little opportunity to help children recognise individual letters. Also there is little opportunity for children to develop handwriting skills as staff write children's names on their pictures.

Children have little opportunity to develop an interest in how things work through a lack of programmable toys and information technology available to them. Staff do, however, help children to make some sense of time as they talk to them about today and tomorrow and help them begin to learn the days of the week. Children have opportunities to learn about the natural world when staff bring in animals for them to see. For example, rabbits and chickens brought into playgroup help children understand about other living creatures and the care they need. Children show an interest in numbers and begin to know about different shapes; however, their interest is not sustained nor encouraged through everyday activities with regard to numbers.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff attend well to children's individual needs and show interest in them, which helps all children feel included. Staff help children to play co-operatively with each other, take turns, use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you'. Children are helped to recognise and value one another's differences and similarities. For example, a recent topic entitled, 'all about me', looks at how people have different coloured eyes, skin and hair colour. Children also begin to learn about disabilities through images in books and through discussions too. They also learn about emotions through puppets they have whose faces portray a range of different expressions,

which include happy, sad, surprised and cross. There are also puzzles and other dolls which reflect positive images of race and disability. Staff adapt the environment to ensure all children feel included and support children with learning difficulties as well as their families. Nominated staff members share information they learn on specific training courses with all staff. They also build good links with outside professional agencies to support children's learning. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural needs are fostered through a staff group who help children all feel equally important and valued as individuals. Also in helping them develop an understanding of the world around them.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive a warm welcome as they bring and collect their children and are verbally told about what their children have done during their session at playgroup. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage through the brochure they receive when their child starts playgroup. Parents show some understanding of what this means and know staff record information about their child. However, they seem unclear as to what their children are expected to achieve or be at least working towards in terms of the early learning goals. Comments from parents praise the staff for the work they do and how much they value the care they give to their children. However, some parents feel children's skills of writing, for example, should be developed. Parents are consulted as their children commence at the playgroup about what their children know and can do. This information is not only recorded but used by staff as a basis to further develop children's individual learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Organisation of the playgroup allows for children to choose from many and varied activities, all of which they can freely access. This helps them feel they belong and gives them confidence. Children enjoy having their own trays into which they put their belongings and include pictures they wish to take home. Staff show a commitment to improving their knowledge through training and work together well as a staff group. There are some policies and procedures in place, some of which are shared with parents. Those that are in place work well in practice and this includes, for example, the management of behaviour policy, where children are managed well by staff and are happy as a result. However, parents do not have all information relating to the playgroup's operation readily available to them. This includes the complaints procedure with the address and telephone number of Ofsted. Procedures for recruitment seem thorough though not all information in relation to recruitment is readily available on site.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager is newly recruited and has action plans in place which address issues she feels will ultimately benefit children, and this includes partnership with parents. She ensures all staff feel part of a team and are valued and this further motivates them in their work with children. There are systems in place which monitor and evaluate focused activities and some records of individual children's achievements. However, some staff show only limited understanding of the Foundation Stage and how what they do links to children's individual progress through the areas of learning. They, therefore, are unclear about how to further help children progress in their learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last care inspection the playgroup were asked to extend their child protection statement to include contact names and telephone numbers and the procedure to be followed if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff. The procedure now makes reference to the action to be followed if an allegation of abuse was made against a staff member and some contact numbers are also available. This ensures staff know how to safeguard themselves and protect children through having the necessary information readily available. There is also a complaints procedure displayed in the main hall; however, this is not readily available to parents. This ensures if there are any issues of concern which parents feel cannot be dealt with by staff, these will be properly investigated and this will ultimately benefit children.

The playgroup were also asked to improve the availability of drinks so they are readily accessible for all children. Children now all bring in their own filled water bottles and also have drinks at snack times. This ensures that all children have ready access to drinks without having to ask.

They were also asked to improve systems for recording children's progress towards the next stage in their development. There are now systems in place for all children including those in receipt of education funding. This information is shared with parents and lets them know how their children are developing in their learning.

At the time of the last education inspection the playgroup were asked to address the following.

They were asked to provide further opportunities for children to develop personal independence skills and the ability to write their own names, and to attempt writing for a variety of purposes. They were also asked to understand about addition through practical activities. All of this related to children who are four years old. All of these issues have been addressed apart from handwriting, in particular in relation to four year olds, and this is a further recommendation of this report.

The playgroup were also asked to extend the range of strategies used by staff to foster children's positive behaviour and regularly assess the group's strengths and weaknesses. Children's behaviour is promoted well as staff give children lots of praise and recognition in their play and for their efforts. This helps them feel good about themselves and want to further do well. The newly appointed manager shows a commitment to identifying not only her own strengths and weaknesses but that of the group. This means that the group's practices have benefited as a result and in turn children benefit too.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- develop staff knowledge of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and ensure the playgroup procedure has reference to these
- ensure policies and procedures are more readily available for parents including the address and telephone number of Ofsted
- improve security to ensure no one has entry into the room unless invited and ensure that the system for monitoring children's attendance is improved in case of emergency
- ensure information about recruitment is more readily accessible.

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 develop handwriting skills and letter recognition
- develop opportunities for children to use information and communication technology along with programmable toys to support their learning
- ensure all staff increase their knowledge of the Foundation Stage, to ensure that planning and assessment are clear and show the progression of individual children towards the early learning goals
- continue to develop children's interest in early counting skills through everyday activities and routines.

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