

Little Gems Under 5's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101501
Inspection date	17 January 2007
Inspector	Shirley Ann Jackson
Setting Address	Scout Hut, Clyde Road,, Brockworth,, Gloucestershire, GL3 4JN
Telephone number	07979 514 822
E-mail	
Registered person	Little Gems Under 5's Playgroup
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Gems Under 5's Playgroup opened in 1984. It operates from the main hall and outside play area of a scout hut in Brockworth, Gloucestershire. It is managed by a committee. The playgroup serves the local area.

There are currently 21 children from two to four years on roll. This includes 12 children receiving nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group can support children with learning difficulties or disabilities. There are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language.

The setting opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00.

There are three full-time and one part-time staff members who work with the children, one has an early years qualification equivalent to NVQ level 3, and two are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Good hygiene procedures are not always used in daily practice. For example, a communal bowl or sink is used for hand washing after messy play and before eating snack. When there are no paper towels available, children use one towel to dry their hands. Children are cared for in premises which are grubby and not well maintained. These issues do not fully protect children from the risk of cross-infection and pose a risk to their good health. Children independently manage their own self-care needs with effective support from staff, when needed.

Children are offered a balance of mostly healthy snacks. They are offered fruit at every session along with a range of other snacks, such as, cereals. Children all sit together to enjoy their food. However, children are not involved in the preparation or serving of snacks and drinks as this is carried out by adults in the group. This does not help to promote children's independence skills. Staff do not sit with the children when they eat, so manners and social skills are not promoted.

Children have the opportunity to be active each day. They learn about balance and co-ordination as they bounce on the small trampoline and rocker. Children adjust speed or change direction to avoid obstacles, for example, when riding wheeled toys around the hall. The hall has direct access to the outdoor play space. However, children cannot choose if they want to play indoors or outdoors on a daily basis. Children take part in activities which develop their hand-eye co-ordination, such as, painting and sticking.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children are cared for in premises which are grubby and not well maintained. Although some safety precautions are in place, for example, all unused sockets are covered, there is a lack of rigorous risk assessments in place. This means that some safety risks have not been identified and addressed, for example, the door leading to the toilet is heavy and children risk catching their fingers in it. There is no system to record risk assessments to ensure that these can be used to minimise hazards and help to prevent accidents. Consequently, children's safety is not promoted. Children are cared for in premises which are made secure when all the children are present. This ensures that there is no unauthorised entry and that children cannot leave the building un-noticed.

Children play with a good range of resources and equipment. Most of these are good quality and are well maintained but others are broken and pose a risk to children's safety. Staff set resources out before children arrive and children then choose from this selection.

The group shares use of the hall but has sole use of the premises during sessions. The setting is not welcoming or inviting to the children. There are no displays of photos or posters on the walls. There are difficulties using walls for display purposes but staff have not identified other ways to do this to make it more attractive. The hall provides plenty of space for the number of children attending. However, staff do not always organise the available space effectively and the outdoor area is not used to its full potential.

All staff have completed child-protection training enabling them to safeguard and protect children's welfare. They are able to identify if a child is at risk of abuse or neglect. They are

aware of what to do if they have concerns about a child's welfare. Procedures ensure that children are protected should an allegation be made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Children do not have free access to a wide range of resources which enables them to begin to learn independently. This leads to children becoming bored, unsettled and displays of challenging behaviour. Activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for older children, and others are not suitable for the younger children attending. Children come happily into the group and settle to their play quickly.

Staff have not attended training in the Birth to Three framework. Consequently, they do not plan specifically for the younger children. Many activities are not suitable for the younger children, such as, large group activities and story times.

Opportunities to further extend children's language are sometimes limited. For example, staff do not make sufficient use of questions to encourage children to think and demonstrate what they know and understand. Staff generally talk and listen to the children during free play activities.

The learning and developmental needs of individual children are not clearly identified or planned for. Staff use an activity as the starting point for their planning, not focusing on what the children are interested in, what they can do or their stage of development. This has a negative impact on children of all ages. Some activities offered are not suitable for the younger age group, such as, looking at the contents of a holiday suitcase. Other activities do not capture the interest of the more able children and their behaviour becomes disruptive and challenging.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. The play leader has only been in post for a few weeks and has not attended any training to support her in this role. Staff have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how to implement it in practice. Plans and free play situations allow few opportunities to follow children's interest or to build on what they already know. For example, a child who wanted to play in the water in the sink was not offered water in the hall. Staff only evaluate a few activities, this does not enable them to move all children on to the next stage in their learning. Children do not make enough progress because activities and experiences are not well enough matched to children's needs to provide a suitable level of challenge. Staff do not use the practical routines of the day to extend and develop children's learning. Children do not have free access to a wide range of resources which enables them to begin to learn independently. The environment lacks excitement and interest for the children. Time, staff deployment and resources are not used effectively to support children's learning. Observations and assessments of children's progress are not regular nor are they carried out systematically. There are no systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of nursery education.

Opportunities for children to distinguish one sound from another are limited. Children are not encouraged to routinely name their own work, nor are they encouraged to attempt it. Children have few chances to learn about writing for different purposes, for example, in the role play area. Resources for writing are not always readily available. When they are put out, they may not be the best tools to use, for example, crayons which are too big to fit in the stencils. There

is little labelling around the room and no alphabet poster for children to refer to. Children's name cards are only used for them to sit at that place for snack. Consequently, children are not learning that text carries meaning. Children use words and gestures including body language and eye contact to communicate. They respond to simple instructions, such as, tidying up. Children handle books carefully, hold books the correct way up and turn the pages. Some children respond to simple instructions, such as, sitting on the carpet. Some children draw and paint, sometimes giving meanings to their marks, for example, the child painting someone familiar to her.

Staff offer children few chances to show an interest in numbers, counting and recognising numerals. Daily routines are not used to develop children's learning through practical activities, such as, counting numbers of children present. Children are not encouraged to set the table or to count chairs, cups and plates. Consequently, they are not always able to relate mathematical concepts to everyday routines and activities. Some adult-led activities are offered, for example, counting the number of soft toys in a line. However, most children count in rote or guess the next number. Staff do not model maths language using shape and calculation vocabulary.

There are few opportunities for children to learn about the natural world and the environment. Children do not routinely dig, look for insects, or use natural materials found outside to extend their play. Consequently, children are not learning to freely explore and investigate their environment. Some children show an interest in information communication technology, but they have limited opportunities to learn how to operate simple equipment. Children have access to some multi-cultural toys that reflect the wider community. There are some chances for them to become aware of different cultures, but this is limited. Staff do not give frequent opportunities to children to talk about their home life, to think about time or to talk about things that have happened to them.

Children's opportunities to explore and spontaneously create are limited. They have no direct access to a range of craft materials and resources, other than those provided by staff. Children have few opportunities to show an interest in what they touch and feel, for example, playing with sand and water. However, these activities are not available at every session. There are some opportunities for children to express themselves creatively, for example, free painting. Children have opportunities to sing simple, familiar songs. However, there are few chances for them to make their own music with musical instruments. Children have limited opportunities to engage in role play based on their own first-hand experiences as the role play area is not available at every session.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Adults caring for children are not able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development. Challenging behaviour is not always dealt with appropriately or consistently by adults. Staff have not identified strategies to help children to learn about sharing, taking turns and respecting others. The group has a behaviour management policy in place. However, staff do not consistently use this in practice when handling difficult behaviour. Adults have a limited understanding of different behaviour strategies and their implementation is ineffective. Staff do not identify flash points when behaviour may become challenging. Often, children are not sufficiently stimulated by the activities offered and their behaviour becomes challenging. This is not always dealt with appropriately by adults. This can have a negative effect on children's self-esteem and confidence. Children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is not fostered.

The group is willing to support children with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, the member of staff appointed as the special needs co-ordinator for the group has only very recently taken on this role. She has not completed any training to support her in this role. As a result the setting is not able to ensure that the individual needs of all children are met and that each child receives appropriate adult support.

Children separate from their main carer with confidence. They relate and make attachments to members of their group and they seek one another out to play with. For example, two children dancing together on the carpet. Children have few opportunities to show initiative and manage developmentally appropriate tasks. For example, they are not involved in the preparation or serving of snack. Children have limited opportunities to select activities for themselves, apart from those provided by staff. This limits their independence and sense of responsibility.

The group has some resources which reflect positive images of the wider community. However, children see few posters or pictures around the setting which builds on their understanding of society and its diversity. The group has no equal opportunities policy in place so parents are not informed of how their children's individual needs will be met. Information from parents relating to children's individual needs is gathered on children's registration forms. This includes information about allergies and any medical conditions. As a result, children's needs are generally identified.

Partnership with parents and carers is inadequate. There is limited written information available to parents about the setting and what it offers. The leaflet they receive has no information about the Foundation Stage or how the group will implement it in practice. Policies and procedures are in place but are not always complete or carried out by staff. Some legally required documentation is not available, for example, a complaints log. This is a breach of regulations and poses a risk to children's well-being. Although the group has a complaints policy in place, parents are not offered the contact details for the regulator.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Overall, the setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's well-being is not promoted because the setting is not organised effectively to meet the children's needs. Staff do not have a sound knowledge of the National Standards, the Foundation Stage curriculum or the Birth to Three Matters framework. They have insufficient knowledge of how to promote children's learning and development and do not know how to plan effectively to meet the individual needs of the children.

Organisation of adults and resources are limited. For example, staff spend time serving snacks and drinks rather than sitting with the children encouraging interaction and social skills. Rota parents do not receive clear direction from staff and consequently, their help is not fully utilised to support the children. Transition times, such as, the end of snack time, are not appropriately managed by staff. For example, staff are getting out resources for the next activity, rota parents are tidying snack away and children have no direction. They run around the hall, roll around on the floor and fight with each other.

Throughout the session, most activities are adult-led and children have few opportunities to initiate and develop their own ideas. Staff interaction with children is sometimes limited. Staff supervise during many activities rather than interacting, supporting and encouraging the children. Children have few opportunities to learn through self-selected activities. Resources

are put out by staff, but many of these are not appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children attending. Some lack interest and challenge for the more able children.

The group has breached regulations by not keeping Ofsted informed of significant changes which have taken place with regard to staffing and committee members. A complaints log is not in place and details of the regulator are not available for parents if they have any concerns about the care being offered. Most policies and procedures are in place but are not consistently applied in practice by staff. This makes it difficult to ensure that children's welfare is consistently managed.

Most legally required paperwork is in place and is reasonably well maintained. Attendance registers are kept to show that adult to child ratios are met. However, times of children's attendance is not accurately recorded. Staff have not attended significant, relevant training in the last year. The group has had trouble sustaining and electing a new committee. Consequently, support for staff is limited. There is no system in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision and staff are not able to identify how the practice can be improved. This leads to weaknesses throughout the setting which have a negative impact on the children attending.

Leadership and management of the group are inadequate. Staff do not demonstrate a clear understanding of how to plan for the Foundation Stage or for the needs of the younger children attending. They are not effective in ensuring that activities covering all areas are offered at each session. Consequently, there are gaps in the children's learning. Recording systems, although in place, are not regular or systematic. There is no system in place to assess the groups strengths and areas for improvement or to monitor and evaluate the curriculum. The group have not sought support from outside agencies about delivering the curriculum. This means that weaknesses in the provision have not been identified or addressed.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed to: continue to pursue improvements to the safety and cleanliness of the premises, so that they are better adapted to meeting the needs of young children and continue to revise policies and procedures with reference to the National Standards.

At the last education inspection the group agreed to: continue to develop the confidence of staff who are new to their role in understanding and implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum and review staff deployment at the weekly session for pre-school children in the light of its recent extension to include some slightly younger three-year-olds.

During the inspection, no action plan was available to examine. Observations and examination of documentation were considered.

The group has made poor progress in most recommendations set at the last inspection. Most issues raised continue to cause concern. Policies have been reviewed regularly, but there are still some gaps.

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 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 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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:

- improve the outcomes for children under three by using an approach in line with Birth to Three Matters framework
- improve organisation of the session particularly at transition times
- improve staff's knowledge and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour
- promote children's safety and ensure that precautions are taken to prevent accidents by ensuring that regular risk assessments are carried out and keep a written record of risk assessments
- ensure staff have a sound understanding of the processes and documentation needed for recording complaints. Ensure that a written complaints log is kept.
- ensure that Ofsted is informed of any significant changes or events

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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage to include the stepping stones, planning, observations and assessments
- ensure that planning is effective and that it offers a broad range of stimulating, challenging and interesting activities which cover all areas
- provide parents with written information about the Foundation Stage and ideas of how they can become involved in their child's learning
- introduce and implement a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery education programme

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

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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