



Playbox Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113653
Inspection date	29 November 2006
Inspector	Felicity Gaff
Setting Address	Methodist Church Hall, Gloucester Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 8QD
Telephone number	07947 229628
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Registered person	Playbox 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 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?

Playbox Playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the playgroup. It opened in 1974 and operates from church buildings in Burgess Hill, West Sussex. All children have access to a secure outdoor play area. The playgroup runs during school term times only. It is open from Monday to Friday from 09.15 to 11.45; on Tuesday and Thursday from 12.15 to 14.45; and on Wednesday and Friday from 12.30 to 14.30. A maximum of 30 children aged from two to under five years may attend the setting at any one time and there are currently 51 children on roll. Of these, 35 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as several children who speak English as an additional language. Children are drawn from the local urban areas. There are eight permanent members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and the other four are working towards a recognised qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have some opportunities to develop their physical skills through active physical play inside and out, although these are not always provided every day. Staff arrange visits from health professionals such as a dentist, ambulance crew and paramedic, and as a result children begin to learn about a healthy lifestyle. Children are cared for in clean and hygienic premises with adequate toilets and wash basins. However, they do not always wash their hands before eating which puts them at risk of infection. Staff maintain clear records of minor accidents sustained at home as well as on the premises. They monitor their records well to identify and address any patterns of accidents. Although staff record any medication administered to a child, they do not keep records of a parent's consent. This puts children at risk of being given unauthorised medicines and is a breach of regulations. Children receive suitably nourishing snacks and there are clear procedures to ensure their dietary requirements are met. They begin to learn about their bodies' needs and are encouraged to pour themselves a drink at any time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe because they are cared for in secure, well maintained premises and staff follow effective safety routines. They use a satisfactory selection of good quality, play materials which are put out daily. Staff follow suitable risk assessment routines to ensure toys are in good condition, and check that unused furniture is properly stored to minimise hazards to children. Staff protect the youngest children from unsuitable toys by organising separate sessions for two-year-old children. This allows children to choose from toys and play resources appropriate for their age and stage of development. Children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe through well organised fire drills, which staff link to visits from emergency services. Staff have an appropriate understanding of child protection issues. The group has experience of working effectively with other agencies to safeguard children and all new staff attend training as a priority to ensure they are familiar with the issues. However, the written child protection statement does not provide staff with clear guidance on the procedures to be followed should an allegation be made against a staff member, which is a breach of regulations.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children receive a considerable degree of individual attention and build close relationships with their key worker. Staff organise short, focused play activities where they can work intensively with the children in their key worker groups. They know the children in their group well as individuals and use this knowledge to help each one make progress. They use the Birth to Three Matters framework to enhance their awareness of the needs of the youngest children and use it in recording what children do. Children settle readily at the group because they feel secure. They follow regular rituals as they arrive. For example, they find their name card to self-register and place any toys they have brought in the 'treasure box', knowing they will be safe until they

go home. Children develop their independence as they confidently select and use their own resources, such as scissors and glue sticks. They become engrossed as they play with interesting materials such as sand, ice or cornflour mixtures. Staff encourage them to talk about what they do and children happily express their ideas as they play. The close interaction with adults helps children who are learning English as an additional language to make very good progress.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are cooperative and well-behaved. They concentrate well on their self-chosen activities. Staff use their knowledge of individual children to help them develop independence in their personal care. Children enjoy listening to well read stories and select their own books from an attractive display. They demonstrate their understanding of print and reading as they retell stories or use their emergent writing to label their own drawings. Staff teach children about print, for example, by informally walking round the building looking for signs and notices. Children develop a basic understanding of number through regular activities such as counting the number of children present. Although staff use snack time to count and compare numbers and quantities with older children, this is not done routinely with younger ones, which limits their opportunities to learn to calculate. Visits from the emergency services such as an ambulance crew, paramedic and the fire service inspire children to develop their understanding through imaginative role play. They learn to respect their own cultures and those of other people as they mark festivals from a variety of cultures and celebrate important events in their own and other people's lives, such as birthdays and weddings. Staff use anniversaries such as the playgroup's 30th birthday to help children learn about time and place.

Staff plan a range of craft activities, broadly linked to themes, and introduce these to the children in their key worker groups. However, they are often highly directed with staff choosing the materials and method and children waiting passively for adult guidance and approval. As a result, children have insufficient opportunities to develop their creativity through experimentation or by contributing and exploring their own ideas. Children using the graphics area handle scissors and pencils skilfully. However, staff do not ensure children who have other interests have alternative, attractive resources available every day to develop their fine motor skills.

Most staff have a satisfactory understanding of the Foundation Stage. The structure of the session allows each staff member to work closely with a small consistent group of children and adjust how they present activities to meet the needs of those children. They make simple observations of what children do but these are not evaluative; they do not assess what children understand and what they need to do next. Staff plan the resources they will use each day but do not identify how activities will be presented or adapted to meet the needs of children at different ages and stages. Identified learning intentions appear arbitrary and are sometimes unrelated to the planned activities. As assessments are not used to plan for children's future learning, children's progress is haphazard.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn to recognise and value their own needs and those of other people because staff create an inclusive environment. Staff liaise closely with parents before children join and throughout their time at the playgroup to ensure their individual care needs are fully understood. Children feel secure because they form strong bonds with trusted adults. They respond to the realistic and consistent expectations of staff and behave very well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff have wide experience of adapting the service they offer to include children from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children with additional needs receive consistent care because staff work cooperatively with parents and other agencies. Partnership with parents is good. There are effective arrangements to exchange information. Staff display a great deal of information about the playgroup in the foyer so parents are aware of how it is organised and what their children do. They are able to talk to their child's key worker at any time. For instance, staff inform parents of visitors such as the fire service so that they can follow up activities at home. Parents support their children's learning by sharing the reading books they borrow. Staff keep parents fully informed about their children's progress; parents take their children's personal profile home to share with other family members. They are encouraged to add their own comments to form a more rounded picture of their child's progress. Parents are very happy with the playgroup; they feel their children enjoy themselves and learn a great deal.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. There are rigorous and well-organised arrangements for vetting staff to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Staff are supported by clear induction and appraisal systems and they are following an approved quality assurance scheme to help them reflect on and develop their practice. They undertake training to improve their skills. Staff organise playgroup sessions to ensure all the children form close relationships with their key worker, which helps them feel very secure. Staff have a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to improvement. They attend many training courses on a wide range of topics focusing on both care and education, and take part in an informal network of practitioners to share ideas. All the documentation required to support children's welfare is in place and is mostly satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The managers do not ensure that assessments of children's achievements are sufficiently focused and so they cannot be used to inform future planning. Plans are brief and provide insufficient guidance to less qualified staff. However, they have identified this as an areas for development and several staff have arranged to attend training in assessment and planning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to improve the snacks offered to children and the arrangements for hand washing. Staff now promote children's health by providing varied and nutritious snacks including fruit and vegetables. Hygiene has improved as new toilets and hand

basins have been installed adjacent to the hall. The provider agreed to improve the nursery education by developing the planning systems and the use of everyday routines to develop children's understanding of number. Children work closely with their key workers, who keep records of what they do. However, assessments are limited and are not yet used systematically to plan for their future learning. Although staff create opportunities for older children to count and compare numbers at snack time, this is not done routinely at the morning sessions. Consequently, younger children do not systematically develop their mathematical skills through everyday routines.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 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 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):

- improve routines for hand washing before snack time
- review and update policies and procedures to comply with current legislation, including those for child protection, complaints and for administering medication.

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):

- use assessments of what children do and understand in order to plan for the next steps in their learning, identifying how activities may be adapted to meet the needs of children at different ages and stages of development

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