



Cobtree Playschool For Special Children

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127120
Inspection date	09 November 2006
Inspector	Mary Van De Peer
Setting Address	Cobtree Hall, Mote Park,, Willington Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 8EB
Telephone number	01622 670464 OR 01622 861994
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Registered person	Maidstone Mencap
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Cobtree Playschool For Special Children opened in 1968. It is run by a charity, 'Maidstone Mencap' and operates from several rooms in a building owned by them, in Maidstone, Kent. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open Tuesday and Thursday, term time only, from 10:00 to 14:00. There are currently 16 children aged from one year to under eight years on roll. Of these, eight children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports children who speak English as an additional language. There are seven members of staff, which comprises of qualified Early Years practitioners and specialised therapists. All other adults are volunteers providing one to one care for the children.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The equipment used by the children has to be stored throughout the nursery. This means some rooms have slightly reduced play areas. However, staff make very good use of the space available and utilise it well for the different types of activities children enjoy and need. The premises are kept clean and tidy. Floor space is kept clear so children are able to use any mobility aids easily and efficiently. Role play resources, such as home corner and dressing up, enable many children use their imagination in their play. All the children are helped and encouraged to wash their hands regularly at appropriate times. Many of them have their own wash-bags with flannels and toothbrushes. The children are learning good hygiene procedures. Children's senses are stimulated with excellent facilities such as the light room, which contains coloured and varied lighting. They are able to activate voice boxes by small physical movements. This gives them a lot of enjoyment when they achieve this. There is easy access to a garden. Staff take children outdoors whenever they can. Some of the resources can also be transferred outside. This helps ensure children get fresh air and the freedom to move around. Children's physical development is promoted well. Many children are on medication and staff have been trained to administer this safely. This information is recorded and entries are signed by parents. Almost all staff have completed a recognised first aid training course. There are first aid kits on each floor. This means any minor accidents children have, are dealt with effectively. Accident details are always written down and this is shared with parents, who sign to confirm they have read these. If a child is ill they do not attend. A sickness policy means that cross infection amongst the children is kept to a minimum.

All meals and snacks are prepared and cooked on the premises. There are healthy and nutritious options on the menus. Many of these meals have to be pureed for several of the children, so taste is also very important. This helps children try different foods and textures. Fruit and vegetables are always on the menu. Parents provide the staff with important information about their children's food intolerances and allergies. The different menus are created, taking this into account. Children are able to benefit from eating healthily. The playschool cares for a few children under three years of age. Some staff have attended Birth to three matters training. This has provided them with a good understanding of the needs of very young children. Staff and children are happy to give each other cuddles. Laughter is also an essential part of the care given.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The playschool premise has two floors. A lift has now been installed and this means children can be transported up and down safely and easily. Most of the children arrive with their own wheelchairs or other equipment needed for them to be more mobile. Staff make sure the areas children use are clear of obstacles. Outdoor areas are fenced. The kitchen area is out of bounds to the children for extra safety. Large, soft safety mats are used when children receive physical movement therapy. This is essential to help keep their bodies as supple as possible. The main entrance is kept locked and a bell attracts staff attention. A visitors' book records any callers

to the premises. However, the registers recording arrival and departure times of children and staff lack some important details. Staff ensure they know who children are being collected by. An adapted mini bus transports some of the children safely and securely between their homes and the playschool. Seat belts are used where appropriate. An emergency evacuation procedure is in place. All children have at least one carer so they are able to be taken from the building quickly and efficiently. Medication is stored away from the children but can be accessed easily by staff. If any medication needs to be given to children, there are always two members of staff present. Risk assessments are made on the setting's equipment before children arrive and after they go home. This helps ensure children are kept safe in their play. Although child protection training has been undertaken by a few members of staff, the policy requires some updating. For example, procedures to follow if any allegations are made against staff members.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The playschool is a very caring and happy place for children to be. The children are always involved in some activity or doing something. They are in smaller, cosy rooms where one or two children receive intense therapy to stimulate their senses. Staff assess the children's progress and any achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated. The children's response shows in their facial expressions or improvements. Larger areas are used to help children improve their physical development. Staff and therapists use lights and music to help children move and stretch different parts of their bodies. Each session shows children making excellent progress in many different areas. Children who are more independent can choose an activity to play with from a wide variety of toys and resources, for example a touch screen computer, art and crafts, mark making, books and puzzles. Staff also ensure children who are unable to make their own choices have experience of playing with these toys or watch others using them. All the key workers observe and record children's achievements. This makes sure that children can be continually challenged. Interaction between adults and children is very good. Each seems aware of the others needs and notices the signs of pleasure or acknowledgment in whatever they are doing. Parents are encouraged to participate by telling staff what their child's favourite toy is. This helps to engage their attention, as well as assisting with the continuity of care.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All the activities and resources provided are aimed at stimulating children's senses, physical and mental development. Small and large group activities, for example all children joining in using musical instruments and singing. All the children are able to communicate in their own way. Activity pictures are used so some children can point to an image they want to explore further. Examples of children's creations, such as paintings are displayed around the playschool. Staff use words such as 'under' and 'over' repeatedly to help children learn their meaning. Some children are able to repeat short number sequences and colours. Dolls and posters show the children images of people from other cultures and countries, such as India and China. All children are encouraged and helped to create pictures and collages using different natural and craft materials. Children and their parents display delight when these are shared with them. The Foundation Stage curriculum is followed but as the children have so many different special needs, staff show initiative and imagination by

adapting activities to meet the children's individual needs and capabilities. An additional progress record system has also been introduced. This helps staff assess the milestones children are reaching and what their next steps maybe. Each child is allowed to progress at their own pace and they are all achieving more than they did when they first arrived at the playschool.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The setting provides care and education for children with special needs. Many of the activities provided are unsuitable or too large for use in a child's home. Specialist therapists, for example speech therapists and physiotherapists are also present at each session. This results in children gaining increased, consistent professional help. Children from the wider community and those who also speak English as an additional language are able to attend the playschool. Parents have to complete a child record form, which provides staff with essential information about their children. This includes contact numbers, medical details and favourite activities. The behaviour management policy is clear about ensuring children's behaviour is dealt with on an individual basis. Challenging behaviour is linked to each child's needs and stage of development. One to one care and attention is a major part of the care offered to children and their families. The partnership with parents and carers is good. Each child has a contact book which is completed after each session and given to parents. They also contribute by writing about what their child has been doing and progress they have made at home. Parents confirm how pleased they are with the playschool and how everyone has aided children's progress and development. When parents pick their children up they have a friendly discussion with staff and the children are included in the conversation. This shows the children that they matter and are involved. Policies and procedures are available for parents to refer to. They also have a booklet with relevant and operational information about the setting. Forms and consents are completed by parents, giving staff vital information which helps towards the care of their children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The playschool has a management committee. They work hard to support the staff, the children and their parents. Fund raising is a very important element of their work as the children always need new and up to date equipment. There are relevant and clear policies and procedures in place. The committee try and ensure any new information is reflected by regularly reviewing and amending them. The Ofsted registration certificate is displayed in the entrance hall for parents to view. As the children require intense care and individual attention, there is a bank of volunteer helpers. There are four staff who have a recognised child care qualification to NVQ level 3. Other specialised staff make up the dedicated team who provide vital care and help to all the children attending the playschool. A robust recruitment and probation system means staff and volunteers alike are vetted appropriately and are passed as suitable to work closely with the children. Informal staff appraisals help to monitor and assess staff member's individual development and training needs. Staff meetings are held frequently to look at the operation of the whole group. This includes the planning system, children's progress and equipment. This

helps to identify future needs of the group and the strengths and weaknesses of what is being provided.

Leadership and management is good. There is effective communication taking place with the child care staff. The experienced and qualified staff plan and implement good quality play experiences suitable for all the children. Specialist equipment to further aid children's development is obtained wherever possible. The training needs of the staff are met. This results in a happy and relaxed atmosphere in the playschool. The documents and paperwork for the safe and effective management of the playschool are in place. This contributes to the well-being and welfare of all the children. The dedicated staff are very caring and committed to providing the best care for the children. They have good opportunities to reflect, monitor and discuss how they can improve the quality of care and education being offered. Children's and staff's individual records are stored confidentially in a lockable filing cabinet. All Children Act Regulations are met. The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider has followed the previous recommendations to improve the provision.

The first recommendation was for the setting to devise a system for parents to ensure they acknowledge information regarding any accidents at group. An accident book is kept. All accidents are recorded and parents read and sign this when needed. Children's welfare is protected.

A second recommendation was for all staff accidents to be recorded in a separate book to children's accidents. Staff have their own accident record book now. This is completed by the adult concerned and any witnesses.

The final recommendation was for the group to expand resources to reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity and disability. Resources have been increased and festivals of other cultures, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year are looked at with the children. Dolls and books show other people from different countries and cultures. The setting provides care, support and education for children and with special needs and their families. All of the equipment is carefully and specially selected for its stimulating qualities, for example, resources providing lights and sounds.

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.

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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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure registration system includes all relevant details
- update knowledge on current child protection and safeguarding children procedures

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):

- consider providing parents with more information on their children's progress in the Foundation Stage

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