



Little Rascals Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 127338 |
| Inspection date | 13 March 2007 |
| Inspector | Karen Scott |
| Setting Address | 114 Queenborough Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 3DA |
| Telephone number | |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Janice Birchmore and Joyce Harland |
| 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?

Little Rascals Playgroup opened in 2000. It operates from a single room, in a single storey building in Minster on Sea. A maximum of 20 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:00, with an additional option of a lunch club between 12:00 and 13:00, term time only. During the summer term the playgroup is also open Tuesday and Thursday between 13:00 and 16:00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outside play area.

There are currently 25 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The group currently 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 group employs four members of staff who all hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a further qualification. The group receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene as they wash their hands before preparing and eating food. However, staff do not routinely wash their hands before serving food to children and are therefore not protecting them from germs at all times. Infectious children do not attend, preventing the spread of contagious ailments.

The setting has an understanding of healthy eating for young children. They receive a range of healthy snacks such as fruit and vegetables, which they prepare themselves. They independently pour their own drinks of milk or water and make choices about what they would like to eat. Children do not become dehydrated, as they are able to help themselves to drinking water throughout the session. Some children bring packed lunches to the group and stay a little later to eat them. The setting asks parents and carers to put ice packs in the lunches in order to keep them fresh. However many do not and lunches are stored in the kitchen meaning that perishables are not always kept fresh.

Children understand the need for regular exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. They access the outside area daily and make good use of the equipment available to them. Opportunities are available for physical exercise indoors too. Children who need to rest are able to do so indoors and outdoors.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from playing in a spacious environment. Toys and resources are age appropriate and children make choices about what they wish to play with from the selection that staff arrange in the room before each session starts.

Staff undertake regular assessments of the surroundings in order to minimise the risks to children. A fire evacuation procedure is in place and regular practices are undertaken, preparing children if an emergency should occur. Policies are in place should a child be lost or uncollected but these are not shared with parents and carers, making them unaware of what the settings procedures are. The group uses passwords to help keep children safe at collection time. Children are closely supervised when playing outside and potential risks have been minimised.

The staff have a reasonable understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about the children they are caring for. A written policy makes the setting's procedures clear but it does not include the name of the responsible adult, meaning that parents and carers are unaware of whom to approach if they

have any concerns. The setting understands the process involved if an allegation is made against them but have not shared this process with parents and carers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy the setting and are keen to join in when they arrive. They have formed strong relationships with their peers and are happy and confident. For example, the children stand in front of everyone and sing to their peers who applaud their friends' efforts. They show independence, making choices about what they would like to play with from the range of resources that are available in the hall. Most activities are child led and adults support children when they require it. The group makes daily changes to the range of resources that children are able to play with, reflecting the different areas of learning. Children particularly enjoy playing outside where there is a large range of resources to play with. Children make good use of the outside area and staff interact with them, extending and supporting their play in the different areas of learning.

Plans for the group concentrate on the Foundation Stage and the developmental stepping-stones. Although staff show an understanding of the Birth to three matters framework they do not use it to plan for the two year olds to meet their individual needs.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most activities are child led with adults supporting their play at varying times. Staff have an understanding of the Foundation Stage and use it to plan activities for the children. They make regular observations of the children and use these to establish the stages of children's individual development. Staff record what they think children's next steps in learning are but do not use the observations to inform this judgement. Activity plans show the names of children to include but overall do not reflect the individual needs of the children. Plans do show that children participate in a range of activities. They settle at activities that are led or supported by an adult but do not tend to stay at activities for long when they are unsupported. Children show initiative and ask questions, making the rules of games as they play.

Children are keen to attend and initiate interactions with each other. They share views and opinions. They select and use resources independently and feel that they are part of a community. Overall behaviour is good although there are occasions when the group sits together for a long time and this causes restlessness.

Children talk happily to each other and the staff. They join in with group discussions although they find it difficult to await their turn to talk at these times and louder children tend to talk over the others. Children use language to create roles. For example, children are dressed as fire fighters and they explain in detail how they are going to put out fires. Adults support discussion, extending children's language development. For example, new words are introduced when children study the spring display. Staff make occasional references to the sounds that letters make. Children have developed a healthy interest in books. They enjoy looking at a range of books and handle them correctly. Children join in with their favourite stories with enthusiasm

and enjoy large group stories, one-to-one stories and looking at books together. Children self-register when they arrive and at snack time, recognising their names. A writing table has resources on for children to practice their pre-writing skills. However, there are not opportunities to extend this practice into other areas of play.

A number display is at children's eye-level and they look at it regularly. Children join in with number rhymes and songs. There are opportunities for children to calculate throughout the session. For example children know how many of them are allowed to play on the climbing frame at any one time so count how many are on there and then work out how many more are allowed on. There are limited opportunities to explore shape although children occasionally look at different shapes in the environment such as the roofs of houses adjoining the setting.

Children enjoy looking at the spring display and exploring the natural objects on it. They show an interest in the daffodil, smelling it, feeling it and talking about the colour. Children have access to a differing range of toys for construction and build with a purpose in mind. Children attempt to use the computer but lose interest very quickly when unsupported by an adult. Children talk about significant events in their lives. Occasionally the group looks at different cultures and beliefs but this is not a regular part of the curriculum.

Children move with control and coordination. They use their imaginations to create different movements. When playing outside children show an awareness of space and others. However, they are not always aware of the obstacles in their way when playing indoors and sometimes take risks by crawling under tables and climbing on chairs, for example. There are opportunities for children to use tools and equipment. For example, they use knives and apple corers to prepare fruit and office equipment at the writing table.

Children create pictures of their choice, using paints, pens and chalk, for example. They join in happily with their favourite songs and sometimes use musical instruments to create tunes. Children use their imaginations in artwork and to create roles for themselves when playing. They enjoy playing in the house and with the tea set when outside. However when playing indoors the chances for children to use their imaginations in role-play are not available every day or limited to a box of hats, for example. Children enjoy coming together as a group and discussing things of interest.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The group has an understanding of equality of opportunity and make children feel valued. Children talk about things that are important to them such as their family and celebrations. Children have access to a small range of toys and resources that promote positive images of diversity within society. They celebrate festivals that are important to the children that attend, involving the family by asking for their advice and support. Children have also enjoyed the occasional celebrations of other festivals and trying foods from different cultures. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The group has experience and a fair understanding of caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A special needs coordinator has attended training and receives support

from the local authority. She works with the parents, staff and other agencies in order to provide appropriate care for children. A written policy does not include the name of the coordinator so parents and carers may not be aware of whom to approach when they need advice or support.

The group have devised some behavioural rules and these are written under pictures of happy and sad faces. Children are aware of them and refer to them throughout the session. When children discuss what they must not do, staff talk about positive rules such as being kind to each other. Behaviour is generally good. However, some behaviour such as climbing on chairs occasionally gets unchallenged and at registration, for example, behaviour deteriorates as children are sitting for a long time and become restless. Most of the time though staff use appropriate strategies such as calm intervention, distraction and reminders of how it feels to be treated unkindly to manage behaviour.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. At the beginning of each session, parents and carers are encouraged to settle their children in, helping them to find and write their names. They are welcomed warmly into the setting and staff interact positively with the whole family, making them feel part of the group. The setting gathers some information before children are looked after, enabling them to be cared for appropriately. However, personal information such as the child's likes and dislikes are not recorded. A notice board has information for parents and carers but it is overcrowded and difficult to read. Policies and procedures are in place and shared with parents but they are often incomplete and helpful information omitted. Parents and carers are aware of how to complain should the need arise.

The setting have began to ask parents and carers about their children's starting points and ask for their input on a form. However, the forms are based on the Foundation Stage and are not appropriate for children aged two years. The notice board informs parents and carers as to the current theme the group are learning about but does not add any further detail such as what activities children will participate in. Parents and carers miss the opportunity to become involved in their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The group keep themselves well informed of current childcare practices by attending relevant courses. However not everything that they learn is implemented in the setting. All staff have first aid training, enabling them to administer first aid in an emergency. However, the group has not obtained written parental permission to seek emergency medical advice and treatment for children, putting them at risk if there is an emergency. Visitors sign a book detailing the time they are at the setting and are not left alone with children, helping to keep the children safe from harm. Each child has a key person who is a point of contact for parents and carers. Policies and procedures are in place and are available for staff and parents to read. However, they are not up to date and details are missing from them meaning that parents and carers are not fully clear about the care that their children receive. A record is maintained of any accidents that children have. However, confidentiality is not ensured as entries are on the same page and parents are sometimes informed of the name of the child who caused the accident.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Newer members of staff need guidance but as a whole staff are motivated to interact with children. However sometimes children are left unsupported as staff undertake tasks such as clearing away resources. The supervisors, with support from an advisory teacher, monitor the delivery of the Foundation Stage. They are aware of the group's strengths and weaknesses and are working towards improvements in their delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, five recommendations were identified for progress within care and four recommendations within nursery education.

Within care, the setting was asked to develop and implement an action plan that sets out how supervisors will achieve a level 3 qualification, develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues, ensure registration arrangements show when staff and children are present, ensure that at least one member of staff with a current first aid certificate will be on the premises or on outings at any one time and keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children.

Within nursery education, the setting was asked to review and plan the presentation of the activities and play area, to make effective use of planning and observations to identify individual children's next steps in learning, to develop staff management and training, especially in the Foundation Stage and to increase child led activities.

Both supervisors have achieved a level three qualification, expanding their knowledge. Staff have a reasonable knowledge of child protection issues and the procedures involved should it be suspected. These are shared with parents and carers, making them aware of the process. A daily register is taken of staff and children's arrival. If children arrive or depart at times different to the opening and closing time this is recorded, providing an accurate record of attendance. All staff have up to date first aid training, enabling them to administer first aid in the event of an emergency. Procedures are in place that detail how the administration of medication will be recorded and a book to do this is available.

The play area is presented attractively with different resources available to the children, making them keen to play when they arrive at the setting. Staff undertake observations of the children but mainly use these to assess their developmental progress. Plans show that some children's learning is focused on during activities. However using observations to plan for children's individual needs remains a recommendation. Staff have attended training in the Foundation Stage. They are aware of their role in delivering the Foundation Stage curriculum and continue to review it. Most activities are child led.

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

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):

- ensure all packed lunches are stored at an appropriate temperature
- further develop knowledge and understanding of promoting young children's overall development; for example by the use of Birth to three matters framework
- review and rewrite where appropriate all the policies and procedures to accurately reflect current guidelines
- ensure that children's accidents and incidents are recorded with regard to confidentiality
- obtain written parental permission to access emergency medical advice and treatment

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 the use of observations to inform the planning and ensure that activities are based on what children already know and what they need to learn next
- enable parents to contribute towards their children's learning

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