



Thornton Hough Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	306507
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Inspector	Elaine Murray
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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?

Thornton Hough Playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the playgroup and members of the local community. The group has been operating for over thirty years and was registered in 1993. It is situated in the Village Hall Community Centre, Thornton Hough, Wirral. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group is open Monday to Friday from 09.00 until 11.45 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five years on roll, 13 of whom are in receipt of funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area.

The playgroup employs six staff. Four staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and two staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show an awareness of simple hygiene procedures as they routinely wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Staff follow hygienic procedures as they clean table surfaces before snack, helping to protect children from the spread of germs. The playgroup's clear sickness policy is shared with parents and helps to protect children from the spread of infection. There are always at least two staff members on duty each session who hold an up to date first aid certificate, helping to meet children's needs in the event of an accident or emergency.

Staff plan a variety of opportunities to develop children's physical skills. As a result, children are learning to enjoy exercise and develop control of their bodies. Children show confidence in using the slide and wheeled toys in the outdoor area. However, children do not always have chances to be active and enjoy fresh air, as the outdoor area is not always freely accessible or used on fine days.

Children learn about healthy eating as staff provide healthy and nutritious snacks. This understanding is reinforced through topic work on healthy eating. Children also participate in making food such as tuna and cucumber sandwiches. Children are aware of when they are thirsty and confidently request a drink of water, which is always available in the main room. This helps to promote their good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff create a stimulating environment by displaying children's work attractively and providing a comfortable and inviting book area. Children's independence is promoted as they confidently select from the many resources available in low-level drawers or on low shelves. Space is appropriately used as areas are provided for different purposes, for example, for children to be involved in messy play, table-top activities or role play. There is a broad range of good quality toys and equipment which are suitable for different ages and abilities. This helps to meet children's needs effectively.

Generally good safety procedures are in place to protect children from hazards and dangers. Staff make a daily safety check of the premises and outdoor area. They produce a written risk assessment of any outings undertaken and some activities such as sand play. This does not assess the full range of risks and hazards from premises, equipment and procedures, or identify action taken. Children show a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe as they independently put on safety helmets before using wheeled toys on the outdoor area. This awareness is developed by staff, as they explain to children why they must not climb on the door ledge, or run at playgroup. Children learn to protect themselves in the event of a fire or emergency through regularly practising the fire evacuation procedure.

Children are well protected as staff have a good knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and are familiar with the procedures to be followed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are content and secure and have positive relationships with staff. Children enjoy and are involved in the wide range of activities provided, which effectively promote their all round development. Staff follow children's interests in choosing and carrying out tasks, helping to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. Staff make effective use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to guide their planning and practice. Children enjoy learning to explore and investigate, using their senses as they play with soapy water and whisks. They enjoy sand play and explore paint using their hands, brushes and rollers. Children learn to be independent as they confidently tidy up and select their own painting aprons. Staff make assessments of children's progress under the outcomes described in the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use this information to inform the next steps for children's learning.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals. They provide a broad range of interesting, practical activities which are imaginatively developed. As part of a topic on hibernation, children use items collected on an autumn walk and a large cardboard box to create a 'hibernation den' which they use for role play. This is then developed further as children make animal masks to wear during this play. Staff question children effectively to make them think and extend their learning. Staff develop children's vocabulary, talking about the 'ingredients' of the pretend cakes they are making in the sand tray, and confirming their understanding of hibernation. Staff adapt their questioning to take account of different ages and abilities. In an activity matching and counting pairs of socks and shoes, older and more able children were encouraged to think how many socks they would have if they had one more. Children develop enjoyment and understanding of stories as staff promote this well. Children are effectively encouraged to be involved in stories, for example, in wearing blankets during the telling of a story about a bear that couldn't get to sleep. Staff interact well with children to support them and develop learning. They establish clear rules and routines, helping children to feel confident and secure. Staff effectively encourage children's independence. Children happily select their own activities and choose the resources they will use in painting and sand play. Children show a high level of personal independence as they pour their own drinks and brush up sand. At times, grouping of children does not ensure that the needs of younger or less able children are effectively met. For example, younger children find it difficult to sustain interest in an activity where they are required to sit and wait their turns in a small group. Staff have a clear knowledge of children's capabilities. They establish children's starting points at the beginning of the Foundation Stage and build on this knowledge. Each child has individual learning targets which are regularly reviewed. Staff make regular observations of children's learning and use this information effectively to inform planning. This means that planning successfully builds on what children know and learning is developed well.

Children show good concentration skills as they manipulate play dough. They show sustained interest as they play with a pretend 'castle'. Children listen well to stories and a 'sound lotto'

game. They confidently recognise their names on cards as they self register. Children make use of the ample chances for them to write and make marks. They show confidence in counting to ten and beyond. Children learn to recognise shapes and use mathematical language such as 'big' and 'little'. Children learn to explore and observe as they watch ice shapes melt and grow seeds. They show confidence in operating a tape recorder and are developing skills using a computer. Children develop a sense of time as they talk about recent events in playgroup and discuss the days of the week. Children develop skills using a variety of play dough tools and cutters, and through activities such as threading. They show confidence in expressing their own ideas through painting and printing. Children show imagination in role play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff work positively to ensure that all children are included in the activities provided. This helps to promote their self esteem and sense of belonging. Children develop an awareness of diversity and the wider community as staff make good use of resources and planned activities to promote this. The children develop an awareness of different cultures and beliefs through topic work relating to festivals such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year. They behave well as staff give them plenty of praise and support for their efforts and achievements. The children are familiar with the routines of the playgroup and respond well to praise and encouragement from staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is good. Parents receive a high level of information about the setting and children's learning. The parents' brochure and newsletters give helpful information and weekly plans are on display. Parents gain further information about their child's experience and progress through a daily diary, showing which Foundation Stage activities children have been involved in. Parents are well informed about their children's progress through regular chances to see their children's assessments. Some parents help out at the playgroup on a regular basis, helping them to be involved in and support children's learning. However, there are fewer chances for parents to be involved in their children's learning at home.

Staff have established positive relationships with parents. They request information about children before a child joins the playgroup and obtain relevant parental permissions. This information is used to help meet children's needs appropriately. Parents of younger children receive a daily diary showing which activities children have participated in and how these relate to the 'Birth to three matters' framework outcomes. This communication between parents and staff helps to promote children's welfare, care and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a well organised environment. Staffing levels are organised so that they are within the required ratios at all times and such that children have a good level of attention and support. Most staff hold relevant qualifications, which has a beneficial effect on children's learning and welfare. Space and resources are organised well to promote children's

safety, care and learning. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and work well in practice to ensure that children are well cared for.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager provides positive direction to staff. Roles are clear and staff work well together. Thorough and effective monitoring and assessment procedures are in place which ensure good quality provision. There is a commitment to improvement and the group is continually seeking to develop and improve. The manager seeks and acts upon advice from the early years partnership regarding improvements to planning and teaching. This approach has a positive effect on the quality of children's learning.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was required to improve the child protection and special needs policies and procedures, improve information to committee members, and to make improvements to the planning and monitoring of nursery education. These recommendations have been met with positive effect on children's safety, welfare and learning.

The setting was also required to improve written risk assessments. Some improvements have been made but this remains as an area for development.

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.

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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 that all children have regular chances to be active in the outdoor area

- develop risk assessment to fully assess risks and hazards and identify action taken.

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):

- ensure that grouping of children consistently meets need of younger and less able children
- ensure that parents are encouraged to be involved with their children's learning at home.

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