

Hempsted Playgroup & Toddlers

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101762
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Inspector	Linda Janet Witts
Setting Address	C/O Hempsted C Of E Primary School, St Swithuns Road, Hempsted,, Gloucester, GL2 5LH
Telephone number	01452 527188
E-mail	amanda@hempstedgrange.fsnet.co.uk
Registered person	Hempsted 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

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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 - enforcement action. 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 - special measures.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Hempsted Playgroup and Toddlers is a committee-run pre-school group. It operates from a purpose built unit in the grounds of Hempsted Primary School. The village of Hempsted is on the outskirts of Gloucester City.

The playgroup is open every morning between 09:15 and 11:45, and Monday and Thursday afternoons between 12:30 and 14:45. It can accommodate a maximum of 24 children. Children are admitted to the group from the age of two years six months, and afternoon sessions are specifically organised for the younger age group. There are 25 children on roll, of whom 16 are in receipt of funded early education. The group welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The building is owned by the group, which is a registered charity. They have sole use of the premises which comprise of the main play room, children and staff toilet facilities, kitchen and storage cupboards. They also have an enclosed outdoor area.

Three members of staff are employed and parents provide additional support on a rota basis. The deputy and assistant hold level three qualifications in child care. They receive teacher

support from an Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership, Foundation Stage Consultant.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's healthy wellbeing is promoted by staff who take some positive steps to maintain clean premises and ensure that there are suitable personal hygiene routines for children. Children independently wash their hands after craft activities and after using the toilet. All children wash their hands before they eat. The comfort of children who wear nappies is ensured because staff change them promptly, as required, and follow suitable nappy changing procedures. There are occasions however when the risk of cross-infection is not effectively minimised to protect children. For example, staff do not routinely wash their hands after wiping children's noses, and young children drink water from the water-play trough. If staff notice this they will remind children about germs and deter them from drinking the water, however it often goes unnoticed.

In the event of a child becoming unwell or if they injure themselves, staff know how to offer sensitive care. All staff are trained in first aid and the group has an appropriate sickness policy, with useful information about infectious illnesses, displayed for parents. Unfortunately, many items in the first aid kit are out-of-date and may no longer be sterile.

Children enjoy healthy fruit snacks. They are offered a variety of fresh and dried fruit, such as apple, grapes and raisins. Children see the fruit prepared by staff, seated at the table with them. Staff use this opportunity to introduce children to mathematical ideas, as they cut up the fruit, into a number of pieces. Children drink water or milk with their snack and they have named bottles of water readily available during the session.

Children are keen to play outside. There is a garden area adjacent to the playgroup building. Here children can enjoy fresh air and exercise. However, the area is not used to its full potential. During some sessions children may only play outside for a few minutes and there is a lack of planning for outside play to aid children's physical development and to promote learning in other areas of the curriculum. When outside children negotiate the space successfully. They ride tricycles and scooters with control, manoeuvring around the latex surfaced area of the garden. However, for some children the tricycles are too small. A climbing frame is available only occasionally to enable children to develop climbing skills and the group can also use the school's outside play equipment. Children bounce with vigour on a small trampoline and learn to carry objects with control. For example, two children practise with an egg and spoon game. Very carefully, walking slowly and steadily the children carry their eggs on their spoons. They concentrate hard and offer words of encouragement to one another. They continue until one falters and the plastic egg crashes to the ground, cracking open to reveal a realistic-looking, soft fabric egg. Children also learn to carry resources safely inside. Each child carries their chair and re-sites it at a table, after registration. Children do little to learn about the effects of exercise upon their bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children's safety is compromised by the ineffective measures taken to minimise potential safety risks. A recent risk assessment highlights risks of children being able to leave the garden

unsupervised because the gates are not secure, and also risks associated with the group's play house structure inside. Despite an awareness of these hazards the committee and staff have failed to take action to minimise them. The documented risk assessment does not cover all areas used by the children. A door buzzer and security chain secure the playgroup building.

Children use mostly suitable toys and equipment. The free-standing play house structure presents a risk to children's safety as it can be pushed over. Resources are in a good state of repair and stored in low level storage units that enable children to access them safely, for themselves. Children do not all look after the resources. Some throw the toys down after use and staff fail to encourage children to show respect for the toys and equipment. Children rarely help to tidy up as adults are very quick to do it for them. For example, an adult sweeps up spilt sand and clears all tables whilst children pursue other activities. Children are reminded how to carry chairs so as not to injure themselves or others, but are not always reminded how they should carry scissors safely.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of child protection issues and one holds an up-to-date training certificate. In the event of a concern about a child's welfare staff know the appropriate action to take. The group has a written child protection procedure but this does not include the need to notify Ofsted if an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children of all ages enjoy their time at playgroup. They enthusiastically go about their play making decisions about what they choose to do. The range of activities offered occupies the children and promotes some learning. The children happily participate in freely chosen and adult-led activities. Activities for younger children are not planned to support their development. Staff are not familiar with frameworks such as Birth to three matters, to aid the assessment and planning of activities appropriate for the differing stages of development of children aged under three years.

Two to three-year-olds do play happily alongside others engaged in similar activities. Those less confident are supported in their play by the staff who are sensitive to their needs. For example, a child becomes tearful and asks for his mum; a member of staff quickly offers reassurance and encourages him to join her at the marble-run activity. He cheers up and becomes interested in the activity. He fills a bowl with marbles and then watches as marbles placed at the top of the run roll at speed down the structure of plastic shoots. He tries with several marbles at a time, repeating the process for an extended period of time. The children also like to play with small world farm animals moving them around the 'farmyard'. Others tip and pour at the water and sand trays.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and children's learning is inadequate. Staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum is poor. The range of activities and experiences fails to successfully cover all aspects of the six areas of learning. Although staff know most children well, they do not take account of children's interests and needs in their plans. For example, they know that at least one child learns best within the outdoor play environment but time spent outside is often very limited. Activities are sometimes planned on the day with no specific purpose. Those that are pre-planned do not have clear learning objectives, in order to build

upon what children already know and can do. Staff also have low expectations of children's abilities. As a result children are not sufficiently challenged.

Teaching methods are often inappropriate. Staff try hard to promote children's learning through questioning and are currently pushing mathematical ideas, following suggestions made by other practitioners. Unfortunately despite good intentions, the excessive questioning results in children losing interest quickly. The children do not always listen to the questions and on many occasions before they have a chance to answer, staff answer the questions for them. The staff are well-liked by the children, who enjoy their company but staff involvement at activities can inhibit children's freedom to explore and use their own ideas. For example, children at the sand tray talk to one another; they use their imagination as they fill containers and distribute their 'cups of tea'. An adult joins them; conversation stops and activity changes as the children respond to the request to watch what the adult is doing. A child colours meticulously taking care to fill every available space on the paper. He selects the colour he uses for different sections, clearly with design ideas in his mind. An adult joins him and asks questions and makes suggestions. The child loses interest and moves off to another activity.

Staff continuously record what children say and do at an activity, focusing upon their 'key' children. These observations are added to children's progress records. This information is not always linked to learning achievements or used effectively to inform future planning.

The staff are unable to manage children well and have unclear expectations of behaviour. The environment is not always conducive to learning. The temperature of the building can be extreme; very cold or too hot. There is suitable equipment and resources to support children's play but these are not used creatively to promote children's learning. For example, the home corner becomes a travel agency. A table is provided with a computer key board, brochures and passport/notepads. However, there is no seating for 'employees' or 'customers', no posters of destinations to promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world, and no writing implements. Children opt not to use the facility.

Children show interest in the activities set out, but can lose interest when activities become too adult directed. The behaviour of individuals undermines learning because they fail to learn how to manage their behaviour. Some children are confident and keen to talk about what they are doing. Others say very little and can go unsupported. Children listen with interest to stories read by adults but rarely look at books for themselves. They see some print used as labels but some of the signage within the premise is written in capital letters and children are not shown how to form letters correctly. Most children give meaning to the marks they make and some attempt to write their own names. Often staff are quick to write children's names on work for them. Many children are unable to hold writing implements correctly. More able children recognise the sounds of letters at the beginning of familiar names.

Children join in counting and some count independently and recognise the number of objects in a group. Children are introduced to mathematical concepts such as heavy and light, halves and quarters and shapes. Unfortunately these are often only verbally introduced and children are unable to engage in practical activities that aid their understanding. Children see few numbers as labels in their environment.

Children can use a microscope under adult direction and the children are keen to look at natural objects such as feathers and a dead spider. Children are not helped to learn to care for living things. For example, they use the dead spider to see if it floats or sinks in the water trough. Children have some opportunities to explore objects and observe changes, for example ice is

added to the water trough and children experiment with ways to melt the ice. Outdoor play opportunities are not used for children to plant or make observations of the natural world. Children have access to construction resources and some will make models, joining pieces together. They have some opportunities to use the group's laptop computer but there are few pieces of simple equipment that children can operate. Children are not actively introduced to different cultures or encouraged to talk about events in their own lives, their families or others they know.

Children use a range of tools and equipment, most demonstrating control, using them safely. Children use paint brushes and colouring pencils, although some hold them in a clenched fist grasp. Some children struggle to cut with scissors. Children manipulate play-dough, prodding and patting it and they use tools, such as a rolling pin, to effect change upon it. They also transfer sand and water steadily between different containers.

Children have plenty of opportunities to undertake painting and craft activities. A trolley containing craft items is situated within the craft area and children are able to select items freely from it. They like to draw and glue, many choosing to decorate their pictures with glitter. More able children talk about the colours they create as they mix paints. Some activities provide children with opportunities to explore using their senses. For example, a group of children make 'gloop' a mixture of corn flour and water; they mix it and enjoy the sensory experience of allowing the sticky solution to ooze through their fingers and drizzle it in different ways. Then they crumble the powdery residue as it changes consistency. Dressing up clothes are available as are small world resources. These encourage children's imaginative play. The home corner and role play facilities are uninspiring. Children sing a snack time song and have some other opportunities to sing. Musical activities such as using instruments and listening to music are not regularly undertaken.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Children are not fully supported in their development and lack clear guidance to help them to learn the behavioural expectations within the setting. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered. Children are warmly welcomed into the group and have developed generally good relationships with the staff. Some children are confident and go about their play with enthusiasm, others are very quiet, withdrawn and say very little. The more reserved children do not always receive equal care and concern; often staff attention is given to the more active members of the group. Children's individual needs and background information is known by staff, but care and learning is not always guided by this information. Children are not clear of the behavioural expectations as the way staff handle behaviour is inconsistent. Children gain independence as they can choose which activities they do and most are independent in their personal care. They see few positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability and are not helped to gain awareness of the wider world.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities receive limited support. The group has a trained special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who will adapt activities to ensure inclusion. For example, activities with loud noises are avoided when children who have sensitive hearing are present. However, the SENCO does not work effectively with the children's parents to ensure that children are fully supported, to meet their full potential. Individual education plans are not always implemented.

Partnership with parents is inadequate. Parents of funded children receive only a brief written introduction about the Foundation Stage. They are not helped to understand about the curriculum and how activities support children's learning. Some parents are unaware that they can look at their children's progress records, if they ask. Parents are required to do regular playgroup duty but do not receive direction as to how to support children in their learning. Children are released from the playgroup into the care of their parents/carers who are expected to wait outside. Staff do not routinely share information about what children have done during each session. The new parent newsletter includes forthcoming activity focus which does provide some information relating to what is likely to be planned in future. A complaints procedure has been produced but not all parents are aware of its content.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Poor organisation results in a failure to effectively promote the outcomes for children and a number of the National Standards are not met. Improvement since the last inspection is limited. The provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are inadequate.

The leader does not hold a level three qualification relevant to the role and an action plan to address this has not been implemented. One session each week is led by a manager who is not appropriately approved for the role. None of the staff are trained in the delivery of the Foundation Stage and lack knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. As a result staff fail to assess children's learning and plan effectively to promote children's development across all six areas of learning. Children's learning is poor. Children do enjoy the activities offered and do relate to the staff well, but activities often only occupy them rather than offering challenge to help them to progress in their learning. There is no system to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery education programme.

The group has sole use of self-contained premises with its own garden area. However, organisation of the session particularly the use of space, staff, time and resources do not utilise facilities to their full potential.

The newly appointed voluntary management committee is keen to work with staff to improve the provision. Input from the host school, reception class teacher and outside agency support is welcomed. Many policies and procedures are now in place but have yet to be shared with all parents. Some procedures lack detail and there is no clear system for recruitment, vetting of staff and to ensure the ongoing suitability of staff. A brief introduction to the Foundation Stage is sent out to parents but two-way communication with parents is not actively promoted. Most legally required records are maintained appropriately. Children's details are recorded and all necessary parental consents obtained. Accident records do not always include children's full names. A system for recording parental complaints is in place. The documented risk assessment lacks information.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the quality of care and education was judged to be inadequate. Since that inspection the setting has made insufficient improvement. Several actions were raised at the last inspection, relating to both the care and educational aspects of the provision. These were: to develop and implement an action plan that sets out how the play leader will achieve

a level 3 qualification; to improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage to include the stepping stones, planning, observations and assessments, and to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour. Other actions were to ensure that planning is effective and that it offers a broad range of stimulating, challenging and interesting activities which cover all areas and provide children with appropriate challenge, especially for older children; to introduce a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery education programme, and to improve organisation of the session particularly the use of space, staff, time and resources. The group was also required to produce policies and procedures which are in line with National Standards and regulations; to 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, and to provide information for parents of what to do if they have a complaint. This should take account of revisions to guidance to the National Standards made in October 2005. Ensure that a written complaints log is kept.

The group has produced an information sheet introducing parents to the Foundation Stage of learning. They have produced policies and procedures that are in line with National Standards, although some lack detail. A complaints procedure and system to record complaints are in place. The group has implemented a system to assess safety risks, but have not taken sufficient steps to address the risks identified.

An action plan to enable the play leader to achieve a level three qualification has not been implemented. Staff have received some outside support to improve their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage, but have had no relevant training to help them with planning, observations and assessments. As a result planning is not effective and does not offer a broad range of stimulating, challenging and interesting activities which provide children, especially for older children, with appropriate challenge. There continues to be inconsistency in the way that staff manage children's behaviour. The group has not developed a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery education programme, and organisation of the session particularly the use of space, staff, time and resources is not effective.

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.

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 - enforcement action. 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 - special measures.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

Ofsted is taking **enforcement action** to safeguard the welfare of children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

The setting requires special measures to improve the provision for nursery education. The following urgent action is required:

- ensure that activities provide children with appropriate challenge, especially for older children
- introduce a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery education programme
- 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

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