



St Leonard's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507842
Inspection date	09 March 2007
Inspector	Penny Wood
Setting Address	St Leonard's Centre, Rectory Road, Oakley, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG23 7ED
Telephone number	01256 782868
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Registered person	St Leonard's 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 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?

St Leonard's Playgroup is an independent setting which opened in 1976. It operates from the church hall in the village of Oakley near Basingstoke and serves the local community and surrounding villages. The group have access to a large hall, the kitchen and toilets. Outside there is not a designated play area, but a local garden is available for their use.

The playgroup is open between 09:15 and 12:15 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays during school term-time only. A maximum of 26 children aged between two and five years old may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 32 children on roll, of which 23 are funded to receive nursery education. There are seven members of staff who work directly with the children, five of which hold a recognised qualification in childcare.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Prior to eating, children quickly wash their hands in a bowl of water in order to reduce the spread of germs. However, sharing water and towels between all the children limits the effectiveness of this routine. After visiting the toilet, children readily wash their hands in running water and use individual paper towels to dry. Staff ensure all resources are appropriately clean and suitable for children to access. Most of the time staff adopt appropriate hygiene routines, such as wiping the tables prior to snack time and ensuring toys are regularly cleaned. However, they do not routinely wear gloves or aprons when changing nappies or preparing snacks in order to reduce the cross infection of germs.

Appropriate routines protect the health of all children, with exclusion times in place for children who are ill. Appropriate systems to record medication administered to children comply with regulatory requirements. Specific training for medical procedures, such as the use of epi-pens, ensure children receive the appropriate level of care. Documentation to record accidents contain appropriate information and inform parents of events and the care their children receive from staff who are trained in first aid.

Children's health benefits from physical activity. Although the group have limited access to a suitable outside play area, they continue to provide children with opportunities to hop, skip, throw and peddle within an area set-aside within the hall. Children are developing their co-ordination skills through the use of a range of equipment and enjoy participating in games, such as 'Hop Scotch' with staff. Staff effectively encourage children to develop their physical skills. For example, when throwing balls to each other, the member of staff discreetly moved further away from the child who was learning to throw and catch a ball. The rotation of physical play equipment from week-to-week ensures children enjoy a balance of opportunities and experiences to encourage their physical development.

Children benefit from a healthy range of snacks which include a variety of fruit, raisins and biscuits. When celebrating different cultural festivals, staff introduce children to a range of cultural foods at snack time, such as noodles when celebrating Chinese New Year. Records of children's allergies ensure children only receive foods that are suitable for their individual dietary needs. Water which is readily available within the room encourages children to develop their independence in pouring for themselves and combined with drinks at snack time, ensures children do not become thirsty during the session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy access to a spacious room which allows for easy access to the good range of activities and play opportunities provided. The premises are warm and welcoming with displays of children's work promoting a friendly environment. However, occasionally radiators are particularly warm for children to touch. The area is well organised to allow children space to move freely and with safety in mind. When providing physical activities, staff separate an area

within the main hall to contain those activities and to allow children to peddle and throw balls within a defined area, free from the risk of injuring other children at play.

Within the hall, good safety measures are in place, such as the use of socket covers and the good security of the hall promote children's safety. High levels of supervision, particularly when escorting children to the toilets, ensures children do not access other areas which are unsuitable for them. Regular checks on the toys and equipment ensure children are able to play free from the risk of injury.

Children practice fire evacuations every term, although the infrequency of this reduces the opportunity for all children to become familiar with the procedure to follow. Clear procedures for staff to follow during outings, ensure children cross roads safely and enjoy the experience of a trip. Risk assessments carried out within the hall highlight hazards and allow the management to take action to improve safety for children. Staff possess a good knowledge and understanding of the child protection procedure and the action to take in order to safeguard a child's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Most children enter the setting with ease and quickly settle into their play, with those children who require reassurance receiving support from staff until they are confident to independently join activities. Staff move well between activities offering support to children within their play and extending children's learning experiences through discussion. Children readily engage with staff when playing and feel confident to seek help when required. For example, children enjoy playing and following staff's instructions with physical play equipment and ask for help with throwing and catching a ball. At the beginning of the session, children are eager to share their experiences with staff, such as a recent visit to a supermarket with their parents, where they purchased new dressing-up clothes. Children enjoy access to a good range of activities and play opportunities within the group, all of which are well-resourced. The planning and provision of activities is appropriate to the ages of the children within the group and relates to both the Foundation Stage and the Birth to three matters framework.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children enjoy a broad range of activities which cover all areas of learning. Staff plan topics together, compiling ideas to ensure children enjoy a good range of opportunities. However, the flexible approach by staff ensures that despite having plans in place for the week, they continue to seize spontaneous opportunities, such as playing outside in the snow.

Initial profiles completed by staff when children join the group enable them to assess children's starting point within their learning journey. Ongoing evaluation of activities and observations of children during activities and their play are used to inform children's records of achievement, although this information is not routinely updated to ensure children's records accurately reflect where children are within their development.

Children enjoy participating in activities which are led by adults and those which they are able to choose for themselves. Children benefit from clear directions given by staff with regards to the aims of the activities, with examples of the end product available when appropriate. However, some adult led activities are too prescribed, limiting the available challenge and children's opportunities to explore and develop the activity for themselves.

Staff effectively support children during their play, for example by offering encouragement to those children who require confidence to join in with group activities. During free-play, staff allow children to develop their own ideas and to play independently or with their friends. Children enjoy staff's input into their games, particularly when playing in the physical development area and with the doll's house.

The excellent delivery of a range of group activities ensures children remain engaged and enjoy the activity on offer. Staff vary how they present simple activities. For example, during story time, rather than always reading from a book, some staff encourage children to act-out the story, some use puppets as props and some use tapes and music to tell the story. At the end of group activities, children celebrate with claps and big smiles, having obviously enjoyed the activity provided. Praise and encouragement given by staff boosts children's confidence and self-esteem.

On entry to the group, children are keen and eager to access the activities, particularly the crafts. Children are developing good use of their language skills. They enjoy talking with staff about the activities and sharing ideas with each other, such as talking about the animals in their pictures and what animals they spotted on the way to pre-school. Children are beginning to write their names and take pride in naming their own pieces of work. During the session, staff allow children time to persist and fully explore each activity, followed by opportunities to re-visit activities in order to consolidate their learning and experiences.

Children enjoy opportunities to use a range of tools and equipment, such as scissors and glue sticks during craft activities, developing their small muscle control and hand-eye co-ordination skills. They enjoy fitting pieces of train track together and benefit from having a large space to allow them to extend the track to cover a wide area. They are able to complete a range of jigsaws, which offer varying degrees of challenge. When completing sets of jigsaws, children are beginning to develop simple mathematical skills. For example, when they had completed three of a set of six jigsaws, they were able to calculate that they had three left to complete. Staff support children in order that they are able to achieve. For example, when randomly naming numbers on a clock face and struggling to name number five, staff helped a child to count in order from one to 12, returning to the number five at the end which the child was then able to name.

Children are developing their exploring and investigation skills. They enjoy fitting cogs together, making them turn one way and then the other. They enjoy access to a range of information, communication and technology resources, such as a member of staff's laptop loaded with appropriate programs. Within their role-play they enjoy playing with imitation mobile phones which take imaginary photographs and make appropriate noises. The role-play area is well-resourced with a very good range of dressing-up clothes available for children to choose from.

Music is a particular strength of the group, as a result of the musical skills of the staff. Children enthusiastically join in with songs, whilst members of staff play the guitar and piano. They enjoy experimenting with sound when playing an interesting range of musical instruments. Children are developing a good sense of rhythm, with some able to tap in time to rhymes such as 'Hey Diddle Diddle'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They play an active part in routines, such as tidying up, willingly putting toys away when asked by staff and returning items to the correct locations. Children are developing a good awareness of diversity through the celebration of a range of cultural festivals and access to toys which depict positive images of race, culture and disability. There are sound procedures in place to ensure children with additional requirements receive appropriate levels of support to ensure their inclusion within the group.

Children behave well, with instances of inappropriate behaviour managed well by staff. Staff act as good role models for the children to follow. When managing issues, they talk calmly to the children about why certain aspects of behaviour are unacceptable within the group. Children are encouraged to use good manners and say please, thank you and sorry when required. Innovative activities aid children's understanding of behaviour, such as using a puppet to share items with children during group activities. Discussions and craft activities based on friendships encourage children to be kind and nice to each other.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents talk about how approachable they find the staff and how they and their extended families feel welcomed into the group, particularly during special events. Parents are welcomed to discuss children's progress with staff at any time, with a written report on each child's progress available to parents every half-term. Staff value parent's feedback from the reports and use information offered by parents to aid the evaluation of their provision. Parents enjoy access to a good range of information regarding the Foundation Stage, both within the prospectus and on wall displays.

The playgroup encourages parents to contribute and extend children's learning at home. For example, after recently making bird feeders, parents were asked to support their child at home by recording the number and colours of birds visiting to feed. A playgroup library enables parents and children to take books home to read together, encouraging children to further develop interest in books and the written word. Children eagerly contribute a variety of items for the interest table, which they are able to share with others later in the session.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit from a high ratio of staff, the majority of which are well qualified. All staff undergo checks to ensure their suitability to work with children, with new staff not left alone with children until

such checks are cleared. Good induction procedures ensure new staff are aware of their role, responsibilities and the routines of the group.

Staff naturally deploy themselves well throughout the group, ensuring children receive appropriate levels of support. Voluntary helpers are valued for their support and input with the children. The premises and activities are well organised allowing children to experience a good range of opportunities within a secure environment. All regulatory documentation is in place and completed with the required detail. Documents and children's records are stored securely and maintain confidentiality.

Leadership and management is good. The manager evaluates the provision for children, valuing feedback from both staff and parents on how to improve the quality of both care and nursery education for children. Continual evaluation of the provision of activities and the routines of the group ensures that action is taken to improve provision where necessary. For example, through assessment of the positioning of activities and the frequency of children visiting these areas, staff have amended their layout to encourage children to access all learning opportunities, particularly those centred around mathematical activities.

The instigation of new initiatives, such as offering regular written reports of children's development, ensures that the group are continually striving to improve their level of service. All staff are encouraged to attend further training opportunities in order to develop their experience and professional expertise. Information gained from training is cascaded throughout the staff in order for all to benefit from the experience. The manager values and utilises additional skills that staff possess, for example, those who are able to play the guitar and piano within the music sessions.

Improvements since the last inspection

The group have made some improvements based on the recommendations raised at their last inspections for care and education.

At the last care inspection, the group were asked to ensure the kitchen area could not be accessed by the children. As a result, the kitchen is now fitted with a stable door to prevent children from entering unsupervised.

At the last inspection for nursery education, the group were asked to provide more opportunities for children to develop their mathematical skills, to provide more opportunities for children to see the written word in lower case lettering and to improve the opportunities for children to use information technology and programmable toys. As a result, children experience opportunities to develop their calculating skills, they regularly count both in groups and spontaneously during activities and they use mathematical language, such as big and small within their play. Displays of children's work are accompanied by annotations of children's descriptions of their pictures and the displays in general. This combined with a range of books available on a daily basis has improved the opportunities for children to become familiar with lower case letters. Finally, children enjoy using a laptop, various small 'V-TEC' computers and a range of resources available through the local authority which are specifically designed to increase children's understanding of information, communication and technology.

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 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 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 the hygiene procedures within the group, with particular regard to the procedures for children to wash their hands
- improve procedures for safeguarding children's safety with particular regard to the frequency of fire practices and the temperature of the radiators

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):

- continue to develop children's independence during planned craft activities to allow them to experience appropriate challenge
- ensure children's records of development are regularly updated with information gained through observations and the evaluation of activities to ensure they represent an accurate reflection of where children are within their learning journeys

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