



Linden Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	311275
Inspection date	26 February 2007
Inspector	Jill Lee
Setting Address	St Cuthbert's Church, Linden Road, Birkby, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD2 2TP
Telephone number	07985 233096
E-mail	ntk313@aol.com
Registered person	Linden 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 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?

Linden Playgroup was initially registered in 1967. It operates in the basement of St. Cuthbert's Church, in the Birkby district of Huddersfield. It is a voluntary organisation, which is managed by a management committee of parents.

Children are cared for in two rooms. They have access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area, which has soft-surface areas.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.15 to 11.45 and from 12.30 to 15.00, during term time only. There are currently 58 children on roll, of whom 25 receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports high numbers of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs five permanent staff to work directly with the children, four of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification. There are four regular supply staff, three of whom are also appropriately qualified. The playgroup receives regular support from the local authority and is affiliated to the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a good variety of play experiences using the outdoor environment. They learn to use the small space well as they ride around on the cars and bikes. They develop good coordination skills as they climb on the slide and clamber over the soft play blocks. They have balancing equipment, which they learn to use with care. They love music and movement sessions and parachute games, which encourage them to explore different ways with movement. They learn to judge space well, as they curl up in the doll's bunk bed. Physical play is well planned to help children develop coordination and control, as they explore and try out new challenges. Staff are enhancing planning to enable children to enjoy the learning opportunities offered by the outdoor environment more fully throughout the whole year.

The playgroup environment is bright and welcoming. Staff understand the importance of good health and hygiene practice and they implement procedures effectively. Parents are clearly informed that sick children cannot be cared for, so that children are protected from infection. Arrangements for first aid and administering medication meet requirements. Clear written permission to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment is sought. Children remember to wash their hands before they help to prepare fruit to eat in the home corner and before they have snack. Staff consistently promote clear hygiene routines, helping children to become increasingly independent in attending to their own personal care.

Parents are fully consulted about their child's health and dietary needs. Children are well nourished and enjoy lots of fruit. There is always a fruit bowl available in the home corner and children can select and prepare fruit independently. Children often help to prepare their own snack; for example, they prepare sandwiches and pizzas. Snack time is relaxed and sociable. Staff sit with children and they enjoy conversation together. Staff plan projects to raise children's awareness and encourage conversations about healthy eating. They talk about the importance of limiting sweet foods to keep teeth healthy. Children are offered a choice of milk or water to drink and are always able to pour their own drinks independently from the water jug in the home corner.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's understanding of safety is promoted well. Staff discuss limits and boundaries with them within everyday activities, encouraging children to develop very good levels of independence within the safe environment. Staff routinely explain and reinforce safe practice, like not running indoors. Consistent reminders about rules help children to begin to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. For example, they know that they must always be

sitting when using scissors and learn how to take care when using sharp knives to cut the vegetables. Well planned activities promote children's awareness of wider safety issues, for example, the road safety officer visits the nursery to talk about the dangers of busy roads. They read books about road safety and the role of the emergency services, as they learn about people who help us.

Children learn to use the play environment purposefully. A range of good quality resources is stored at child-height, so that children can select them freely. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted and practice is consistently evaluated to increase all children's safe participation in everyday activities. Accidents are routinely monitored and the premises are secure, although the presence of visitors is not clearly recorded. There is clear planning for safe evacuation, which is practised with children, so that they understand what they must do in an emergency.

Children are cared for by staff who protect them and keep them safe. Recruitment procedures ensure staff are suitable to work with children, although systems for checking the members of the parent committee are less robustly established. Staff help children to feel confident to make their needs known and they establish supportive relationships with parents. Most staff have accessed recent basic training to update their awareness of the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and have a reasonable understanding of their responsibilities. The designated child protection coordinator has been unable to access an appropriate level training course, although this was identified in the playgroup action plan. The child protection policy has been fully updated to reflect current guidance. Appropriate procedures for recording any concerns are in place, although there is some lack of clarity regarding when existing injuries are to be recorded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well, feel secure and are very happy in the playgroup. They develop very high levels of independence as they plan and develop their own play ideas. Staff are interested in what they do and listen closely to their ideas, so that they are confident to explore and enjoy the stimulating play environment. Opportunities for role play and for children to represent their own experiences are very well planned. They fill the sink with water to wash pots and clean cupboards in the home corner, slice cabbage and chop potatoes, to prepare meals and make buns with play dough. They dress up as doctors and nurses, as they check the babies in the baby clinic and care for their patients in the doctor's surgery. They enjoy well developed, extended, cooperative play. They experiment with lots of different media as they explore with sand, water, paint and dough. Resources for creativity are readily accessible and children freely explore their own creative ideas.

Staff confidently link the 'Birth to three matters' framework to planning of activities within the continuous provision. They respond intuitively and sensitively to non-verbal communications, so that the needs of all children are met effectively. Staff are very sensitive to the needs of new children and allow them opportunity to choose their own key person. Planning of large group times does not sufficiently consider the different needs of individual children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning is comprehensive and helps children to make sound progress towards the early learning goals. Children's interest is sustained by a broad and balanced range of well planned activities and experiences. Staff are well deployed to support children's play and learning in all areas. However, planning does not sufficiently clearly define learning objectives and staff roles within all areas, so that some activities are not sufficiently differentiated to extend challenge. The range of resources available to encourage children to enhance and extend their own play ideas is more limited in some areas, for example, access to small world resources and resources to 'design and make'. Planning for the continuous provision outdoors is being developed. Children learn to listen well, concentrate and persevere with activities they enjoy. Daily routines are well-considered to encourage children's active involvement and minimally disrupt their play.

Children communicate their thoughts and ideas confidently. Staff introduce new language into activities and skilfully ask open questions to encourage children to find their own solutions. Children use a range of factual books to extend their awareness of the world around them. They enjoy making up their own stories in play and using puppets to tell stories. Children have good opportunities to write for real purposes in their play, for example, they use the clipboard to record what they are building with blocks and to describe their journey to nursery. They learn to recognise and write their name on their work and staff promote their interest in letter sounds. Children count and become familiar with number concepts within everyday play and routines. They act out number rhymes at group time, using their fingers to show how many times the clock struck. They investigate mathematical ideas as they roll and shape dough, fill and empty containers in the sand and make patterns. Staff do not consistently maximise opportunities for them to use number concepts and solve problems in their everyday play.

Children's interest in the natural world, growth and change is stimulated well. They observe plants and animals when they go for nature walks in the woods. They grow vegetables in their garden and love digging up the potatoes. They develop an interest in technology, as they become skilled at using the computer. They use a computer program, which helps them to think about re-cycling.

Staff interact warmly with children, stimulating their interest and curiosity and helping them to consolidate their learning. They model skills and consistently reinforce expected behaviour, so that children learn to work cooperatively and use all activity areas productively. Staff have developed clear systems to observe children's interests and monitor their individual progress. Assessments of progress are clearly linked to the stepping stones. Staff are considering how they can most successfully utilise their observations of children to differentiate planning of activities in the continuous provision and plan next steps in learning, to ensure children are fully challenged in their everyday play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff very successfully create a thriving, child-focussed environment, in which children make lots of choices and decisions about their play and participate fully in the routines of the playgroup. They learn to express their own needs and preferences and very actively contribute

to their own experiences. They become very familiar with daily routines, so they develop a strong sense of belonging to the playgroup. They help with food preparation, access resources freely and help to keep the play environment tidy. Children enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff and with each other. Their individuality is nurtured, promoting their confidence and self-esteem. They show pride in their achievements as they display their pictures and learn new words. Support for children with learning difficulties or disabilities is very well considered. For example, staff use a 'talking table' to promote language development and encourage children to contribute their own experiences.

Children learn to behave well as appropriate behaviour is sensitively encouraged and warmly rewarded. Staff clearly and consistently reinforce rules and boundaries, so that children learn to share and take turns. They play very cooperatively and learn to negotiate with each other in difficult situations, knowing staff will offer support if it is needed. Staff clearly explain why certain behaviour is unacceptable.

Children enjoy lots of activities, which help to promote their awareness of the wider world. They learn about the lives of people from other cultures, how they dress and what they like to eat. They routinely visit the local library. Regular visitors into nursery, like the community dentist, help to raise children's awareness of roles in their local community. Support for children with English as an additional language is a real strength and the playgroup actively values the 'diversity of family lifestyles'. Bi-lingual support staff, dual language books, translations of policies and signs in different languages help children and parents to participate confidently and feel fully included in playgroup life. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Relationships with parents are very relaxed and comfortable and parents are encouraged to play a very active role in both running and helping at the playgroup. Staff communicate informally with parents on a daily basis. They are developing a new parents brochure to share information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage, to help them understand their child's experiences in the playgroup. It also includes information for parents helping on rota about how to help children with activities. Policies have recently been fully updated and are to be translated into community languages. They are displayed for parents and include the complaints procedure which has the contact details of the regulator. Parents clearly know how to raise any concerns. A record is kept of complaints, as required.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage curriculum; this information pack is being updated. Photographs give parents insight into the variety of activities, which support their child's learning. Parents are able to access their child's development records and are encouraged to borrow books to share with their child. They value the daily informal sharing of information and this year's parents evening was a great success in promoting parent's awareness of their child's experiences at playgroup. Staff are developing ways to encourage parents' active involvement in their child's learning. Newsletters keep parents updated about playgroup issues.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery environment is organised appropriately to promote children's welfare and safety. Daily routines are clearly planned to respond to their varying needs and interests. Staff are deployed very well to ensure appropriate levels of care and supervision. Children's experiences are enhanced by well-planned opportunities for staff to access appropriate training to support their professional development.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Space and resources are organised very well to promote children's independent learning and participation. Staff work well together as a team and are developing an effective approach to shared reflective practice. Systems to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning are considered but difficult to implement consistently because of restrictions of time and funding.

Policies and procedures are effectively implemented, so that children's welfare is safeguarded. Systems to ensure staff suitability are robust, maintained with consistency and available for inspection. The playgroup is managed well. Staff are effectively supported by a committee of parents, however, committee members have had less opportunity to access training and are therefore less well informed about their responsibilities. The committee has failed to notify Ofsted of changes to its membership, which is a breach in regulation. Systems are now being put in place to define more clearly the roles and responsibilities of individual committee members.

Appropriate induction procedures, together with ongoing staff monitoring and appraisal, ensure staff are able to support children's individual needs effectively. Required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place. Parents' wishes regarding their child's care clearly influence day-to-day practice and clear written agreements are recorded.

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 playgroup was asked to develop staff knowledge and awareness of child protection issues and obtain the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. With regard to nursery education, they were asked to develop and improve the observation and assessment of children, using the stepping stones to inform planning to ensure the progress of and challenge for individual children; also to improve the layout of resources to ensure children can select their own resources, make choices, develop their independence and use their imagination spontaneously. They were also asked to plan more everyday opportunities for children to write for a purpose and for the more able to learn letter sounds to develop their writing.

All playgroup staff have attended basic child protection training, although the designated child protection coordinator has been unable to access appropriate training for her role. This has enhanced staff confidence with regard to their child protection responsibilities, so that children are appropriately protected. The child protection policy has been fully reviewed and updated to include current guidance and ensure staff are familiar with local procedures.

The playgroup has developed a clear system for observing and recording children's progress, which is clearly linked to the stepping stones. Staff are still developing ways to ensure these observations are used effectively to plan the next steps in learning for individual children. Staff have fully reviewed the ways in which resources are made accessible to children. The playgroup environment offers continuous provision, providing freely chosen activities in all areas of learning at each session. This has extended children's independent choices and opportunity to use their initiative. Well-considered planning is ensuring that children's opportunity to use their imagination in role play and small world activities is stimulated and resourced well. Children are able to freely explore their own creativity, which is nurtured well. Opportunities for children to write for a purpose and become more aware of letter sounds are included within routine planning. These measures have significantly enhanced the quality of children's play experiences at the playgroup.

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):

- continue planning to access appropriate child protection training and develop clearer systems to monitor the presence of visitors and to record existing injuries
- review organisation of group times, to ensure there is clearer planning to meet individual needs
- ensure all significant changes are notified to Ofsted and that systems for checking the suitability of both staff and management committee members are robust.

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):

- more clearly define learning objectives, resources and staff roles, to differentiate and extend learning opportunities within all areas of the continuous provision
- use observations of children's progress more actively to plan next steps in their learning, so that children are fully challenged in their free play
- develop a more systematic approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning and progress towards the early learning goals.

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