

Swinton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	400254
Inspection date	15 May 2007
Inspector	Elizabeth Patricia Edmond
Setting Address	The Reading Rooms, Swinton, Malton, North Yorkshire, YO17 6SR
Telephone number	07879 834975
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Registered person	Swinton 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?

Swinton Playgroup is an established group that has been providing sessional care for over 20 years. It operates from the village hall in Swinton, a village two miles from the market town of Malton. The group is run by a committee of parents and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. The facilities include a main playroom with adjacent toilet facilities, two further rooms for focused activities, a kitchen and an enclosed garden for outdoor play and learning. The group serves the local community and a number of villages within the surrounding rural area.

The group cares for up to 24 children under five years and takes children from two and a half years old. They are registered to provide funded nursery education for those children of eligible age. Of the 33 children currently on roll, 22 are in receipt of such funding. The group receives support from the local education authority. Session times are between 09.15 and 11.45 Monday to Friday during term time only. The 'Friday Fun Fours' session is specifically for the older children. On Mondays and Wednesdays the children are invited to bring a packed lunch and may stay until 12.45. Five members of staff work directly with the children, most of whom have relevant qualifications and experience.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in suitably clean premises where they learn about good daily hygiene routines. Signs in the toilets remind them to wash their hands. The older children manage their personal hygiene independently, however, whilst the village hall toilet facilities are adequate, they are not easy for the youngest children to use. The children learn about the wider issues around cleanliness by helping to wash the toys in the garden. The children's health benefits significantly from unlimited access to the interesting activities in the garden. They develop their physical skills and strength on the various climbing and balancing equipment and by digging in the soil. Regular visits to the village play area provides further very good quality opportunities for physical play and development.

The pre-school provides good quality snacks and drinks which promote the children's health; they learn that their milk helps them to grow and that fruit is good for them. Several children say that their favourite fruit is apple but that they like the toast too; they also talk excitedly about having made trifles for a treat one day. This promotes their own understanding of healthy eating. They develop a very good level of independence by choosing when to have their snack and pouring their own drinks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children can play freely and safely because the staff have a professional approach to identifying and minimising immediate risk without inhibiting the children's play; they have an excellent understanding of how children need to play a part in keeping themselves safe. The staff watch the children carefully as they use the woodwork tools, they remind the children to look around as they carry larger items, such as milk crates and bricks and the children are proud of the praise they receive for climbing the lilac tree. This highly sensible approach helps to promote the children's confidence in keeping themselves safe both on the premises and in the wider environment.

The indoor and outdoor premises are safe and secure; clear signs remind parents to close and chain the gate as they leave. There is a broad range of play equipment, in good, safe condition, which the children can access freely. Importantly, the staff provide a stimulating range of everyday items and natural materials.

The children are protected and their well-being is safeguarded. The staff continue to update their child protection training and they have all local and national guidance carefully filed should they need advice or support.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children arrive very happily at playgroup and they quickly settle at their favourite activities in the indoor and outdoor environment. The broad range of activities on offer means that the children are motivated and purposefully engaged throughout the session. There is a calm yet industrious atmosphere enabling the children to concentrate for extended periods at their play and learning. For example, they spend considerable time writing letters, posting them and

delivering them in the role play area and they are engaged and fascinated as they bring more bricks to prop up the guttering, to make a long chute for their self-initiated experiment with water and balls.

The stimulating outdoor environment is used exceptionally well to enhance all aspects of the children's care and learning throughout the year. The children become confident and exceptionally motivated learners as they examine the soil, plants and weeds; they confidently discuss the time of year as they wonder when the brambles will be ready. Some children express themselves more freely outdoors when their role play takes on an added dimension as they transfer their game to the wheeled toys. They have great fun in the 'secret' area behind the shed and they are exuberant when they discover that they can climb the tree or fit into the narrow space to spy on the ducks next door. They develop their mathematical understanding as they find the correct size of boots from the box or park their cars in the numbered parking spaces. The staff clearly understand the importance of the natural outdoor environment on children's learning, development and overall demeanour.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff have a clear understanding of how children learn best when engaged in their self-chosen play and they make the whole of the curriculum available in this way, so that the children's interest is captured, their motivation maximised and their individual learning styles harnessed. The staff make impromptu and planned observational notes of the children's development for assessment purposes. However, this new system is not yet fully developed to identify and maximise the children's individual learning potential.

The staff arrange the indoor and outdoor resources to provide maximum choice and variety for the children; ongoing development work with the local authority is further improving this. They use conversational questioning with great skill to support the children's learning. For example, adults recognise the learning potential when a child arrives a little later and encourage the children to think how many children there will be now. The more able children confidently calculate that one more than 18 is 19. Similarly, staff use a child's casual comment about what is at the other side of the fence to help the group to recall the brambles and what they did with them and what they have to look out for.

The children concentrate exceptionally well at their self-chosen play and in whole group activities. They listen with genuine interest when their friends show what they have brought to add to the interest table and they cheer their friends when they pretend to fly around the world as part of a number action rhyme. Their excellent behaviour is an asset to the children's development in all areas of learning. The children develop very good counting skills and develop a clear understanding of more and less. They name familiar numerals easily and the more able children begin to recognise two-digit numbers. The children enjoy stories both individually and in a group and can relate the story to their learning, making comments, such as 'that's a policeman like the real one that we saw'. Some children develop very good writing skills; they label their work increasingly clearly. They have an excellent understanding about print carrying meaning because the staff help them to write letters which they post to their home addresses.

The children's knowledge and understanding of the world is a very strong feature of the setting. There is a wealth of opportunities for the children to explore and investigate in the outdoor area. They are fascinated as they pour water to whoosh the balls down the guttering and they speculate which will arrive at the bottom first; they are then interested to find that the cork

behaves differently. They experiment with the soil and water observing how some particles mix in easier than others and that some just float on the top. The children learn about the natural environment and the community that they live in; they often demonstrate this in their concentrated role play as they play in the post office and trundle the gardening equipment around as they pretend to tend the garden. Because of the daily work with the calendar and the staff's encouragement, the children talk with increasing knowledge about varying timescales. They also learn to use tools confidently and capably. The younger children use the play dough tools with increasing skill and dexterity to make shapes and patterns. The older children discuss in detail which hammer they might need for the bigger nails and they demonstrate how to use the plane to smooth the wood.

All of the outdoor activities encourage a very high level of creativity and the children are very proud of their results, whether they have made a woodwork helicopter, invented an interesting mud-pie recipe or rearranged the milk crates into a different shape. The children learn to use different paint techniques for their pictures and there is a good range of craft materials for the children to access. Sometimes the children use these skills freely for their artwork, confidently mixing colours to make handprints. However, partly because 'artwork' is sometimes used as a vehicle for other learning, for example, to initiate a discussion about mathematical shapes, or to enhance a topic on fire engines, and partly because of storage problems, true creativity indoors is sometimes a little inhibited. The children sing a range of well-known songs from memory and spontaneously burst into song and movement as they help themselves to the range of small percussion instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children are truly valued and respected as individuals because the staff get to know the children and their families very well and they take great delight in the children's individual personalities. This is due to ongoing observations and conversations with the children as they play and the excellent relationships with parents. Parents and other family members spend time at the beginning of each session chatting to each other, the children and the staff. This creates an exceptionally happy start to the day and ensures that the children develop very comfortable three-way relationships with their parents and the staff. This further adds to the settled environment where children flourish and become confident in their role in the community. Secure in the routines and trusting relationships, the children are relaxed, very confident and behave exceptionally well. They share and take turns with the minimum of adult support. They are proud of the warm praise they receive from the staff for their efforts and their behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Over the year, the staff provide a good range of resources and activities which promote equality of opportunity. The children demonstrate a clear acceptance and enjoyment of our diverse population as they talk confidently about the tractors in the book, show off their sari from the dressing-up clothes or take part in related arts and craft activities.

Partnership with parents is good and relationships are extremely positive. The parents are pleased with the level of information they receive about how their children are progressing. There is clear information for parents about the operation of the facility, the curriculum provided and the children's individual development. Because of the information given to parents about ongoing topics and themes, they enjoy helping their children to find relevant items for the interest table and talking to them about what they have been doing at pre-school. Parents confirm their overwhelming support for the pre-school; they praise the staff for their hard work and feel that the friendly, welcoming atmosphere is a key strength of the provision. Most

parents also find that helping out at playgroup each term provides further opportunities for them to take part in their children's education and gives them an interesting insight into their children's developing social skills and behaviours.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the provision is good. The children's education and overall well-being are both amply addressed by qualified staff who are very motivated and conscientious. They continue to attend a broad range of training relating to all aspects of the children's care and development. The staff work very well as a team; well established staff routines for covering all areas of the premises means that the children are effectively supported wherever they choose to play and learn. The clear support and advice for parent volunteers means that children's care and learning needs are well supported at all times. For example, volunteers know to encourage the children to pour their own drinks and they help them to focus on specific topics as they chat to them. The staff are developing systems for evaluating the provision and the subsequent impact on the children's care and learning. They work readily with the local authority on ways of improving choice and variety for the children and enthusiastically welcome inspection as part of this ongoing development. This ensures a continually evolving and improving childcare and educational provision.

The aging community building presents challenges to the staff. However, the staff conscientiously arrive early each day to check the premises and arrange the resources; they also help the children throughout the session to reach their coats or to use the adult-size toilets. The interesting garden provides a wealth of opportunities for children to explore and learn; staff skilfully maximise the benefits of this and consequently the children's needs are well addressed. All aspects of the group's documentation are clear, professionally presented and kept up to date. Staff are vigilant in maintaining records of the children's care and learning. The operational plan shows any interested parties how standards are met and monitored. 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 one recommendation was raised in relation to the recording of staff's and children's attendance. The attendance register now shows clearly the hours of attendance of all individuals and is kept up to date.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection of the funded nursery education no key issues for improvement were raised. However, it was suggested that the group make the children's name cards more easily accessible to support the children's writing skills. Name cards are now available in the mark making area and the children use them confidently to label their drawings and paintings.

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):

- continue to work with the village hall committee to improve the toilet facilities for the children.

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 the planning system so that the children's next steps in learning can easily be identified and their individual learning potential maximised.

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