

Hertford Vale Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	400421
Inspection date	04 May 2007
Inspector	Elizabeth Patricia Edmond
Setting Address	Hertford Vale School, Staxton, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO12 4SS
Telephone number	01944 710273
E-mail	admin@hertford-vale.n-yorks.sch.uk
Registered person	Hertford Vale 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?

Hertford Vale Playgroup operates from a purpose-built nursery classroom in the Hertford Vale Church of England Primary School in Staxton. The village is situated adjacent to the A64, seven miles from Scarborough. There is an enclosed area for outdoor play and learning; this is shared with the school's reception class as are the toilet facilities. The pre-school also use the school hall and playground.

The playgroup has been registered since September 1997 and is open Monday to Friday 09.00 to 12.00, term time only. It serves families in the immediate locality and offers places to children from neighbouring villages if spaces are available.

Funded nursery education places are provided for those children of eligible age. For this they have the support of the local education authority. There are currently 15 children on roll, of whom nine are in receipt of such funding. The group sometimes supports a small number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The group is run by a committee of parents. They employ three permanent staff to work with the children; most 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 a warm, clean environment where they learn to manage their own personal hygiene needs very well. The younger children are sensitively supported whilst the older children use the school toilets independently and wash their hands confidently without being reminded before they have their snack.

The children enjoy the free access to good quality play and learning opportunities in the outdoor environment throughout the session. They develop their physical skills and strength as they ride tricycles and cars with increasing balance and skill. They have great fun creating their own obstacle courses when an adult has modelled this briefly. The children change into their boots independently when they want to dig in the garden. This promotes a positive approach to being active outdoors and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, the children enjoy moving in different ways in the school hall; they listen carefully to the instructions and develop an understanding of the immediate space around them.

Mid-morning snacks are provided by the pre-school. The children enjoy the daily portion of fruit with their biscuit or crumpet. They learn that their milk helps them to develop healthy muscles and they talk confidently about not eating the seeds or pips. The children have free access to the school's water fountain in the entrance and staff remind them all to get a drink after they have been active in the hall. This means that they do not become dehydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children can play freely and safely in a very child-friendly, school premises which are bright and welcoming. The staff are professional in their approach to identifying risk and minimising this where sensible. There is also a positive approach to helping the children to learn about keeping themselves safe; for example, the children are very confident about not playing with the real oven in the home corner. This promotes their understanding of how to keep themselves safe whilst at the group and at home. Similarly, the staff guide the children when necessary on the climbing frame but do not interfere when children are clearly confident. This means that the children learn the necessary confidence and skills to keep themselves safe whilst hanging upside down or using the firemans pole.

There is a broad range of play equipment and child sized furniture which the children can access freely and independently. The good quality of the equipment and the accessible storage fully promotes the children's safety. The children are well protected because the staff continue to update their child protection training and they keep all relevant guidance on hand should advice be needed. Close links with the school and parents further ensure that the children's well-being is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children arrive happily at the preschool and they enjoy their time there greatly. The calm learning environment is enhanced by the use of classical music and the staff offer a warm

welcome to all the children and their parents and carers. Consequently, the children become quickly involved in the broad range of stimulating activities indoors and out.

The main emphasis at the pre-school is on providing the children with a good quality play-based nursery curriculum as they become used to using the school facilities. The young children are very settled in the attractive nursery environment within the school premises; they enjoy watching out for their older relatives in the playground from their own enclosed outdoor area. This further promotes the relaxed, friendly atmosphere and the positive relationships.

The children benefit from outings into the local community. They learn about their immediate locality through walks to the nearby play amenities and they find out about the wider environment because of the interesting outings to the sea-life centre or the beach.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children's learning needs are supported very well by staff, who have a clear understanding of how children all learn in their own way. They plan the activities in such a way that all children can take part at their own level. The good range of activities outdoors means that children's individual learning styles can be addressed. For example, some children may prefer to sit quietly indoors with a jigsaw whilst others may concentrate more effectively by fitting together the various bricks onto the back of the trailer outdoors. Similarly, some may become quiet animated as they use the full range of art and craft materials indoors, yet others may become more absorbed as they paint quietly outdoors.

The staff operate an excellent system of observing the children at play to assess their involvement with the curriculum, their level of learning and the children's preferred learning styles. This demonstrates the staff's clear understanding of the importance of building on the children's interests and abilities. However, whilst the staff use this knowledge in an informal way to facilitate the children's continued development, and they use informal conversational questioning techniques very skilfully to support the child's learning, the careful observations are not fully utilised in forming individual learning plans for the children.

The children are very motivated and they develop as very confident independent learners. They are interested in all the activities and engage in the whole curriculum at their self-chosen play. Regular routines for registration encourage the children to develop their counting skills and the wealth of number in the environment means that the children can name familiar numbers. They also develop their understanding of more or less when a staff member skilfully asks them to think how many 'one more' would be and they subtract easily as part of their favourite number rhymes. Strategically placed fiction and non-fiction books encourage children to select these freely as they play. Consequently, they enjoy the books and handle them well. The children learn about print carrying meaning and easily find their name cards for registration. However, they do not often attempt to use this knowledge and their developing writing skills for a purpose, for example to label their work. Importantly, the children develop excellent listening skills as they listen carefully to instructions for the game in the school hall and they respond very well to this.

The children enjoy finding out about their environment and talk with increasing knowledge and excitement about what they will see on the forthcoming trip to the beach. They increase their vocabulary as the staff offer them additional words to talk about the sea-life on the jigsaws or on their paintings. The young children are curious and enjoy exploring their immediate surroundings; they enjoy digging in the garden area, observing closely how the path area looks

from underneath. Their explorative play takes on another learning dimension when, modelled by the older children, the children begin to talk about digging for Australia and they speculate how long this might take.

The children become increasingly confident in their art work and use the associated tools very well. Some absorb themselves for some time in the art and craft area. Others are fascinated by the small coloured beads that they discover in the sand and spend time arranging them into an interesting pattern to express themselves. The children enjoy music; they confidently help themselves to the box of musical instruments after being inspired by the sound of a metal colander in the home corner. They sing along to their favourite rhythms and spontaneously stop what they are doing to join in with the action rhymes on a CD.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children are valued and respected as individuals because the staff get to know them very well and are very proactive in meeting their diverse care and learning needs. This is because they spend time observing the children as they play and they talk to parents in detail about their preferences in relation to their children's care.

The high staff-child ratios are also key to the high level of individual support for the children; this also contributes significantly to the harmonious environment where children learn to play and work together. The children are proud of the warm praise they receive as they share the equipment, complete a task such as getting their own coat on and when they apologise freely when misunderstandings have arisen. This promotes a high level of self-esteem, excellent behaviour and a very good level of motivation. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good and relationships are positive. There is clear information about all aspects of the care and education provided in the form of parents packs, a notice board and regular newsletters. Every day the staff and parents also discuss the children's changing care needs and aspects of their development, they also chat about village events and their family members. This leads to a very friendly environment for the children and they develop very positive three-way relationships with the significant adults in their lives. There is a more formalised sharing of attainment when the children's assessments folders are discussed at parents' evenings. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the staff's hard work and they comment on the positive efforts made to help their children to settle. They also confirm that the group's approach to working closely with the school means that the transition into school is very effectively managed, with a high level of continuity for the children. The group have acted on the changes to legislation and introduced a system for logging parents' complaints. However, because they had not fully realised the fact that parents are allowed to access this freely, at the time of inspection, it contained information which was not relevant to parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the provision is good. The well established staff team work effectively together; they motivate each other and fall easily into their roles. They continue to attend a broad range of short training courses to complement their existing qualifications and they enthusiastically consider ways of upgrading their qualification level. The high adult-child ratio supports the children's care and learning needs very well. Procedures to deputise also

work very well in practice, providing a strong sense of continuity and consistency for the young children. In relation to the overall management, there has been a complete changeover of committee members. This has meant that the group's policies and procedures have not yet been reviewed and signed by the new committee and some policy statements lack clarity as to the committee's specific role and responsibility.

Under the guidance of the local authority the staff use their developing skills and knowledge well to evaluate the provision and make improvements in relation to the children's care and education. The staff also welcome the inspection process and see this as a positive part of their continued development.

A major strength of the pre-school lies within the strong links with the school, both in an organisational sense and on a day to day level. For example, the pre-school leader works with the reception teacher to plan joint outings, they discuss the children's development and they share knowledge, expertise and resources. This provides the children and parents with a strong sense of continuity in their relationships, particularly for those children who attend both settings; this in turn contributes to the calm, settled environment. On a daily level, because of the shared nature of the outdoor facilities, the younger children learn from the older children in the reception class; this effectively promotes the very natural way in which children learn from each other. For example, when the older children spontaneously begin to 'dig for Australia' the pre-school children join in enthusiastically and they increase their knowledge and vocabulary as they play alongside.

All aspects of documentation are clear and records such as accidents and attendance are maintained effectively to support the children's care and learning. Children's details are stored confidentially and updated appropriately. 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 recommendations were raised in relation to some aspects of policy matters. The group was asked to further develop the section of the child protection policy relating to any allegations being made against staff and extend the policy for uncollected children. Both policies have now been reviewed and updated as recommended although the committee responsibility in relation to the handling of allegations is still a little unclear.

They were also asked to extend the range of resources to promote equality of opportunity. The selection now includes various good quality resources, books and activities. The children demonstrate their acceptance of others in society, for example, by playing happily with the play people, jigsaws or books.

At the last inspection of the funded nursery education there were no key issues raised. However the group were asked to consider ways of encouraging the children to use the craft area more confidently. The staff have created a well stocked art and craft area which the children are using increasingly confidently. Some children concentrate for extended periods as they consider how to use the paint, lolly sticks and paper shapes to get the desired effect.

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 the new committee reviews, revises and adopts the range of policies paying particular attention to the committee's role in the handling of allegations
- ensure that the complaints log which is available to parents contains only relevant information.

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):

- encourage the children to develop their understanding about writing for a purpose
- continue develop ways of using observations to inform plans for the children's independent learning needs.

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