

Halebank Pre-school Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303465
Inspection date	26 March 2007
Inspector	Michele Anne Villiers
Setting Address	Halebank Primary School, Heathview Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8UZ
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Registered person	Halebank Pre-School Committee
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Halebank Pre-school Playgroup opened in 1998 and operates from a mobile classroom in the grounds of Halebank Primary School. It is situated in Widnes, Cheshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.45 and 13.15 to 15.15 school term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 35 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of these, 16 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school playgroup supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs three staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff take appropriate steps to help protect children from illness and cross infection. They follow written policies and procedures on the administration of medication, and sickness and exclusion. All staff have completed training in first aid in order to deal with minor injuries, and accidents are recorded. There is a staff rota system for the cleaning of the premises and resources. However, some areas are dusty and dirty, compromising the children's risk of infection. The carpet area where children sit is sometimes covered with glitter or paper from collage artwork carried out previously, and the entrance is dusty and the floor not cleaned regularly. Children learn about personal hygiene and know to wash their hands at appropriate times, with regular reminders from staff. They learn about dental hygiene through topical activities and books on 'Going to the dentist'. The provision has received a Gold Award for helping children learn about keeping their teeth clean.

Children develop a good awareness of nutritional and healthy food. Fruit is offered each day, and children enjoy making up their own sandwiches using brown bread and a choice of filling, such as cheese or banana. Staff talk to children about the importance of nutritional food to keep their bones healthy. Activities also reinforce the children's learning. For example, they draw pictures of their favourite fruit, and a basket of fruit is displayed along with books on keeping healthy. Children have regular drinks of water or milk, and know to ask for water if they are thirsty.

Children take part in regular physical exercise to help promote their health and wellbeing. Outside play is very much incorporated into the daily routine. The door from the playroom into the outside area is open at all times and, weather permitting, children may choose where to play. Staff supervise and support the children, and organise a wide range of play opportunities outside, including drawing, role play, musical instruments, sand and construction. Children also have the opportunity to play in the primary school play area where they develop strength, stamina, balance and coordination. They practise climbing and balancing on various resources and skilfully manoeuvre bikes around the path and weave around objects with comments such as, 'Look I can pedal with one foot'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a safe and secure environment. All visitors are closely monitored, and the entrance into the school grounds is kept locked during operating times. There is a password system for the collection of children, helping to ensure unknown persons do not enter the playgroup. The environment is suitably welcoming and children access a wide range of safe toys and resources. Staff satisfactorily organise the room into specific areas for play where children can independently make choices.

Staff conduct a regular risk assessment of the premises and play equipment in order to identify any hazards and minimise accidental injury to children. They follow written policies on health and safety and there are procedures in place should a child become lost or is not collected. Children learn about keeping themselves free from harm. Staff remind children how to use scissors safely and not to run with them. A 'Caution wet floor' sign is displayed when children play with water, or staff have washed the floor, reminding children that the floor may be slippery.

On outings, children learn about safely crossing the road. Staff further reinforce the children's understanding through planned activities and discussions on pelican crossings and the Green Cross Code. Children also practise the fire drill procedure, learning about the importance of evacuating the building in an emergency.

The children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have a suitable awareness of child protection issues in order to help protect children from harm or abuse. Staff follow written policies and procedures, in line with current legislation. There is a designated staff member who coordinates child protection issues and has completed relevant training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young children happily settle to activities and confidently explore their environment, making independent choices. Staff plan and provide a variety of activities, helping children to make progress in all areas of development. However, staff do not effectively use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan activities and to monitor the children's progress. Staff use observation to assess how children are developing, but they do not use the components of the framework in order to track the children's progress and ensure that activities are suitable for their individual needs.

Children explore a range of different media, including sand, water and paint. They have fun exploring different textured paper to make collage pictures. They develop good hand-eye coordination as they learn to complete puzzles and put together matching shapes. Staff promote the children's communication skills through books, stories and singing songs. Children use their imagination well in the home corner and through play with a range of different hand puppets.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and children are making effective progress towards the early learning goals. Staff enthusiastically motivate and challenge the children's learning. They plan and provide a variety of interesting activities and use good questioning to encourage children to express their own ideas and learn from experience. Written activity plans identify the early learning goals and the intended learning outcomes. Staff evaluate activities in order to use for future plans and adapt activities to suit the children's individual needs. They provide a good balance between adult-led and child-directed play with the children's interests being taken into account.

Children are happy and involved in their play. They confidently make choices and contribute their ideas and thoughts, requesting specific toys and resources. The children's independence is very much encouraged. They learn to toilet themselves, dress for outside play, and pour their own drinks at snack times. Children demonstrate very good levels of concentration. They sit and listen during discussion time, and patiently complete puzzles and collage pictures. Children confidently interact with adults and they are encouraged to use language to communicate and express themselves. During outside play, when children share bikes, staff say to children 'How are we going to tell him the bike is free?', 'You must go and talk to him'. Staff constantly talk to children and allow them time to speak and listen to each other.

Children are given many opportunities to mark-make, helping to foster their writing skills. They make patterns in the sand, and trace out numbers in the air. A writing and drawing table is made freely available and children enjoy painting and colouring. They have access to a wide

range of books for enjoyment, and reference and learn that print carries meaning. Children develop an interest in mathematical concepts and enjoy counting, calculation and number. At registration time, staff encourage children to count how many are present. Older, more able children are further challenged to use addition when more children arrive and staff ask them, 'How many children do we have now?'. During snack time children spontaneously count how many slices of banana they have and how many are left when they eat one. Number tiles help children to recognise numerals. During outside play, children sequence the tiles and confidently point to the correct number when asked. Staff encourage children to explore shape and to use their senses, for example, when playing with bean bags and textured materials they describe what shape they can feel.

Everyday technology is provided for children to become familiar with the world in which they live. They have fun taking photographs, proudly putting the camera around their neck and taking pictures during play. Children then sit together to look at the photographs and discuss the camera. Children also have free access to a computer, and use various resources to examine objects, such as magnifying glasses and binoculars. The outside area is used to help children learn about the seasons and living things as they go on mini-beast hunts and examine plants and trees. Children use their imagination well and staff give good support to enhance the children's creative skills. Outside, children sit on the benches and pretend they are on the bus. Staff join in, handing out paper bus tickets and discussing with children their destination, 'Where are you going?' 'Ibiza' says one child, and 'The seaside' says another. Indoors, staff regularly change the role play area to recreate different activities, such as a hairdresser's shop, a post office, or a shoe shop.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children confidently enter the playgroup, initiate interaction with staff and develop a sense of belonging. They form close relationships with staff who help children to settle with cuddles and words of comfort. Children learn about diversity through play with toys and resources that reflect positive images of race, culture and disability. They learn about their culture and the culture of others when celebrating different festivals, such as birthdays, Christmas and Chinese New Year.

Children are very well behaved and cooperative. They are well-mannered and know to share and take turns. Staff have good strategies to manage the children's behaviour and reinforce good behaviour. They talk to children in a calm and consistent manner, constantly explaining right from wrong. Children respond because activities are made fun. For example, when lining up to go outside they form a train and march across the school playground in a controlled line, pretending to blow their whistle and make 'choo choo' sounds. Staff explain to children about taking turns on bikes and give suggestions to others, such as 'Go and ask the children if you can join in their game'. Staff provide a variety of activities during outdoor play to ensure all children are happy and occupied. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

Children benefit from parents being welcomed into the playgroup to informally share information about their child with staff. Parents speak very positively about the care provided. They initially receive an information leaflet about the provision that includes statements on all policies and procedures. Parents are then kept up to date on issues through newsletters and some information displayed on the notice board. The partnership with parents and carers of educationally funded children is satisfactory. Parents receive a 'Welcome to our playgroup pack' that includes written

information about the Foundation Stage and early learning goals, with photographs of children playing and captions to help reinforce explanations. Parents may informally contribute their ideas to staff and ask to see their child's progress reports. However, there is not a formalised method for ensuring that all parents have the opportunity to meet with their child's key worker to discuss the progress reports and contribute to the learning programme for their child.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are settled and well cared for by qualified staff who use their skills and knowledge to support the children and provide a stimulating environment. There are effective procedures in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff, and to ensure staffing ratios are maintained at all times, to help protect and safeguard children.

The play environment is suitably organised and the key worker system ensures children receive good support and care. However, the entrance into the playgroup is not well organised. Limited information is made available for parents, and displayed documentation is not creatively organised in order to promote a welcoming environment for parents and visitors. The parent notice board is overcrowded with written information, some of which is out of date.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager has a good awareness of the Foundation Stage and curriculum planning. Staff work well together as a team and use good methods to help children learn and develop. All regulatory documentation is in place and records are safely stored. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the playgroup: conduct a risk assessment on the premises; include a procedure to follow should a child become lost; devise an induction policy; implement a recruitment policy; and monitor the number of activities provided during each session. Regular risk assessment is conducted on the premises and recorded. Policies have been updated to include the procedure to follow should a child become lost, and the recruitment and induction procedure for new staff. Activities are monitored to ensure sufficient and suitable activities are provided during each session.

The previous nursery education inspection recommended that the playgroup: deploy staff effectively so that they are able to extend children's learning; make appropriate use of resources for children to explore and investigate; implement a system to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery, and evaluate the activities provided to ensure the set objectives are fully achieved. Staff are deployed to work with small groups of children in order to challenge and extend their learning. Children have access to some resources for exploration and investigation, such as magnifying glasses and binoculars, and they freely use the camera. The manager uses observation and staff meetings to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery and action plans are in place to meet previous recommendations. Activities are evaluated and written comments are used to address future planning of activities.

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 the environment is clean before the beginning of each session and cleanliness is regularly checked and maintained
- effectively implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework for the planning of activities and the assessment of the children's development
- organise the entrance and the display of information in order to create an interesting and informative environment for parents.

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):

- introduce a formalised method for sharing information with parents about the children's learning programme and their development records.

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