

Whittingham Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119538
Inspection date	27 March 2007
Inspector	Lisa Paisley
Setting Address	Whittingham Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 4WA
Telephone number	01702 603229
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Registered person	Linda Kennedy
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?

Whittingham Playschool is privately owned. It opened in 1976 and operates from a room within a local church in Southend-on-Sea, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 to 11.45 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 32 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these nine receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area.

The pre-school employs seven staff. Three of the staff, including both managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff members are currently attending training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being cared for in an environment where suitable hygiene practices are maintained and they learn about hygiene routines through washing their hands appropriately, for example, after creative activities and before snack time. Children have access to liquid soap, hot and cold water and paper towels minimising the potential risk of cross-infection. All documentation in relation to children's health, for example, medical and accident forms are in place, however, not all accident records are signed by the parents. Consequently parents are not being consistently informed about their child's care. Some of the staff are first aid trained, ensuring children receive suitable care and attendance in the event of an accident or administering medication such as an inhaler.

Children's awareness of the benefits of healthy eating is suitably promoted at snack time. They enjoy eating a variety of foods at snack time such as apples, dried raisins, bananas, grapes, kiwi fruit and strawberries. Children learn about foods that are good for them through everyday discussions and planned topics. Fresh drinking water is freely available throughout the session ensuring that they remain hydrated. Staff maintain appropriate written records for each child to ensure their individual health, medical and dietary requirements are met.

All children enjoy regular opportunities to engage in physical activities and have access to a range of outdoor play equipment to support their whole body movements. For example, children confidently use bat, balls, hoops and skittles where they enjoyed kicking, throwing and rolling the equipment appropriately. Children use a range of tools and equipment to promote their finer manipulative hands skills such as threading activities, peg boards and puzzles.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from using a suitable range of toys, play equipment and resources which are maintained to a suitable standard. Resources and play equipment are organised at child height, allowing children to self-select promoting their independence and choice. As a result they enthusiastically select their own play resources which are appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Children learn about keeping themselves safe through gentle reminders from staff such as walking nicely, lining up sensibly, tidying away toys. They also practise regular fire drills to ensure children and staff know how to evacuate the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency or an incident.

The pre-school has suitable measures in place to ensure that risks to children's safety, both indoors and outdoors, are minimised, for example, the main entrance and outdoor play areas are secure. However, the procedures for assessing risks require updating to further minimise potential risks to children, this relates to procedures for hand washing, monitoring the accident book and ensuring annual risks assessments are undertaken. Clear arrival and departure procedures allow for the safe arrival and collection of the children to and from the pre-school. The group has clear written safety procedures in place which are consistently applied by staff, such as the lost child policy. Staff have sufficient awareness of how to organise space, furniture and equipment appropriately to enable children to move freely and with independence between activities and different play areas.

Children are safeguarded as staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities regarding child protection. This ensures that they act in the best interests of children. There is a designated person who is responsible for safeguarding children and they have a clear understanding of their role. A clearly written safeguarding policy is in place and this includes a statement with regard to an allegation being made against a staff member and staff have access to the new guidelines from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Parents are informed of the pre-school's responsibility regarding child protection reassuring parents of their child's safety and well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school and they are happy and settled. Young children's confidence and self-esteem is growing and developing, due to staff relating to them sensitively and warmly. Young children are provided with a suitable range of activities, for example, play dough, puzzles, books, construction and the home corner, however, creative activities are repetitive and could be further developed to support young children's self-expression and imagination. Staff have developed warm and effective relationships with the children, enabling them to feel secure and develop a strong sense of their own self-worth.

A range of themed resources including the home corner allow children to develop their role play. Children use the outdoor area confidently when developing their physical, investigate and exploratory skills. The pre-school has obtained the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the staff are beginning to implement the approach into their practice to improve the quality of care and play experiences for young children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a suitable understanding of the Foundation Stage and are able to implement an adequate range of activities covering the six areas of learning sufficiently. However, planning does not clearly link into the six areas of learning, focus activity plans with clear learning intentions are not included and children's developmental progress is not informing future activity plans. There is a secure key worker system in place and staff record children's developmental progress through Southend's initial profiles, however, they are not consistently completed to ensure a children's progress is being effectively monitored and initial profiles are not completed to help staff assess children's starting points in their development. The structure of the sessions allow children to play and learn at their own pace with a combination of child-initiated play and adult-led activities.

Children are developing secure attitudes and dispositions towards their learning and the older and more able children are keen to complete tasks such as tracing letters and shapes. They are keen to participate in the range of activities provided and are encouraged to independently select resources and initiate their own activities and games. Children show a secure sense of belonging as they greet staff and each other upon arrival. They work well together and understand the importance of co-operation during group activities. For example, sharing the toy mini beasts and discussing in detail each insect. Children are becoming confident speakers, using words effectively and a range of vocabulary to convey their experiences both real and imaginary. They listen attentively to each other and join in during group story times. The book corner is warm, welcoming and inviting for children and they are confident and enjoy looking at books, for example, 'Dear zoo' and 'Peace at last'. Children confidently use tools and resources to make marks and more able children are beginning to write their names independently. Older

and more able children can count up to 10 and beyond. Counting and number recognition is suitably promoted through daily routines and activities such as number rhymes, this includes 'five little monkeys'. Cooking, sand and water activities develop children's sense of size, weight and capacity. Mathematical equipment includes puzzles, matching games, interlocking shapes and sequencing cards providing children with suitable opportunities to explore early mathematical concepts.

Children have adequate opportunities to find out about the natural world such as growing spring bulbs and learning about the life-cycle of caterpillars. Trips out into the local community are limited, however, people are invited into the pre-school to talk about their work, for example, the fire safety officer and the police officer. They are developing a sound awareness of the uses of information technology in everyday life and are able to operate equipment such as domestic items, telephones and tape measures. Their physical skills are promoted through a variety of mediums such as the climbing frame, tricycles, balls, hoops and bean bags. Children's finer manipulative skills are suitably promoted through the range of activities such as threading, puzzles, peg boards and play dough utensils. Children's imaginations and free expression is promoted through a range of activities such as play dough, painting, role play, craft activities and music and movement. The particularly enjoyed music and movement where they can enthusiastically practise moving their bodies rhythmically such as stamping their feet, clapping their hands, bending their knees and wiggling their fingers.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle well at the pre-school as staff work with parents to ensure children's individual needs are met. For example, all the required information from parents before a child starts at the pre-school regarding their interests and abilities are obtained, enabling staff to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. Staff acknowledge and appreciate children's individual characteristics and lively personalities. Children are well behaved and benefit from having consistent boundaries set by staff. Children are appropriately supported by staff who regularly use praise and encouragement to promote children's self-esteem. They learn to share play equipment and take turns and increasingly take responsibility for their own actions. Their understanding of right and wrong is promoted sensitively by staff through gentle reminders to care for their environment, the equipment and each other. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

All children are warmly welcomed into the pre-school which helps them to feel happy and secure. Children benefit from having access to a range of play resources which promote positive images of diversity and they participate in activities which promote their awareness of different festivals and cultures, for example, Chinese New Year, Shrove Tuesday, Mother's Day and Easter. They also taste food linked to festivals such as noodles and rice when celebrating Chinese New Year. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any additional requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Ensuring an inclusive environment is suitably promoted within the pre-school.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff inform parents and carers about the day to day running of the pre-school. There is a flexible settling in procedure and staff find out about children's individual needs and their developmental progress before starting. Parents receive information about the pre-school's policies and procedures, there are regular notices keeping parents up to date about topic work, events such as Red Nose Day and the Easter party

and any changes in the pre-school. Parents receive both verbal and written feedback with regard to the day to day care of the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is adequately supported by the secure organisation of the pre-school. All staff have been vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), ensuring their suitability when looking after children. Staff make sufficient use of available play space and resources, however, the organisation of snack time limits children's play and learning opportunities. Documentation and records are comprehensive and organised effectively and confidentiality is maintained. Policies and procedures including the operational plan are regularly reviewed ensuring that the pre-school continues to meet the National Standards.

The leadership and management of the pre-school is satisfactory. The manager, deputies and staff work hard to ensure children have secure play and learning experiences. The staff work closely together to ensure the day to day running of the pre-school runs smoothly. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and they are deployed effectively within the pre-school. Staffing ratios are maintained throughout the session ensuring children are well supervised and supported during activities. Staff meetings are in place to ensure all staff have a clear understanding of topic work, special occasions or concerns. Staff appraisals are in place ensuring staff's professional development and training needs are being appropriately supported. Consequently, children are cared for by a suitable and experienced staff team and they benefit from secure continuity of care.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed; to ensure the certificate of public liability insurance is displayed at all times during opening hours and review the organisation of the policies, procedures and records, especially the operational plan information, to increase their use as reference documents by staff. The public liability insurance certificate is now displayed on a notice board within the pre-school room and all records and documentation has been reviewed and made accessible to staff to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, resulting in secure improvements with regard to record keeping.

At the last education inspection the group agreed; to expand the detail within the planning to demonstrate learning intentions and links with the early learning goals within short term plans. To include detail of how activities are adapted to meet the needs of more or less able children. To ensure the balance of activities used to support development across the six areas of learning is appropriately reflected and develop the links between the assessments and observations made about children's achievement and the planning of activities to direct them towards taking the next steps in learning. Planning has been reviewed and updated to include short term plans with the six areas of learning and there are some links between assessments and observation records. However, further development is required to secure and consolidate future improvements.

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 accident records are signed by parents
- review risk assessments procedures in relation to hand washing procedures, monitoring the accident records and ensuring yearly risk assessments are undertaken
- encourage young children's self-expression through further developing the range of creative activities.

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):

- review activity planning to ensure clear links with the six areas of learning, focus activities with clear learning intentions and next steps to inform future planning
- ensure children's profiles are consistently completed and develop assessment records to include initial profiles enabling staff to assess children's starting points
- review the organisation of snack time to further develop children's learning opportunities.

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