



Armitage Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218087
Inspection date	24 January 2007
Inspector	Jasvinder Kaur
Setting Address	Armitage Village Hall, Shropshire Brook Road, Armitage, Rugeley, Staffordshire, WS15 4UZ
Telephone number	07967687071
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Registered person	ARMITAGE PLAYGROUP 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 good. 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?

Armitage Playgroup opened in 1995 and operates from a community centre, close to Armitage village. The playgroup has use of two rooms within the centre. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09.45 to 12.15 during school term times.

There are currently 22 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education. The playgroup serves Armitage and surrounding areas. The setting currently supports children with special needs and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs five members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children understand the importance of personal hygiene and wash their hands before they eat their snacks, after using the toilet and after playing in the sand or other messy activities. They wear aprons for such activities without being prompted by staff. They dry their hands using the paper towels provided in the playroom and the hand dryer in the toilets. Staff implement effective hygiene routines. They wash their hands before preparing food and ensure that tables are regularly cleaned with an anti bacterial solution. Good nappy changing arrangements ensure young children are protected from cross infection. Children are protected from the spread of infection because there is a procedure in place to exclude children with infectious illnesses. Accident records are well maintained and shared with parents, who countersign all entries. Staff have a good understanding of the importance of keeping a record of medicines administered to children and obtaining written parental consent.

Children enjoy a social and relaxed atmosphere at snack times. They eat a range of healthy foods including fresh and dried fruit such as oranges, grapes, apples, bananas and raisins. Children have a choice of water, squash or milk to drink with their snacks. They are able to help themselves to water throughout the session. Staff work in partnership with parents to meet children's dietary needs and are sensitive to those needs.

Whilst there is no outdoor provision, good use is made of the indoor space to develop children's physical play. Staff use 'Birth to three matters' guidance well to provide a range of physical activities for the three year olds. Planned movement sessions such as circle games encourage children to move in a variety of ways. They develop skills in throwing, catching, climbing, sliding, peddling bikes, balancing on a beam, etc. They also enjoy walking to the local facilities in their village and to the park.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure and safe environment. They are well supervised by staff, and the adult-to-child ratios are good at all times. Children use good-quality equipment appropriate to their age and stage of development. They can access toys and equipment easily and can sit on their own to play or join in activities and group games. Premises are welcoming to both parents and children, with a wealth of displays of children's art work and colourful posters at children's eye level in the playroom. Information for parents such as planning of activities, staff rota and qualifications is displayed in the reception area and in the playroom and contributes children's well-being.

Space is organised so children can move about freely and safely. Staff monitor access to the provision, and all visitors are requested to produce identification and sign the visitors' book. There is a good security system in place for the premises. The playroom door is fitted with locks and clearly visible from the playroom, ensuring no unauthorised persons can gain access. There is a system for registering staff and children's arrival and departure, which is accurately recorded.

Children learn about safety through daily routines and simple safety rules, which they are reminded of during play, for example, the importance of not running indoors and being careful when opening a door to ensure their fingers do not get trapped. All staff are well aware of health and safety regulations through well documented policies and procedures. Written risk assessments are effective in identifying and reducing potential risks and hazards on the premises and on outings. Children develop an awareness of safety measures through emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis.

Children are well protected because staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues. They are aware of their responsibility to report any concerns to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff members, as well as the manager, demonstrate a good understanding of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and the implications this may have for their practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Most children enter the playgroup happily, separating from their carers with confidence and chatting to staff and their friends in the process. Those who are new to the setting are helped to settle by staff who are sensitive towards their individual needs. Parents are also encouraged to stay with their children during settling-in periods. An effective key worker system ensures children are cared for by a consistent use of staff whenever possible. However, staff are not always able to include all children in activities or help them to be focused. Consequently, some children lose interest and pay little attention to other children speaking. Most children settle well and are involved in a range of activities. They are well behaved and have positive relationships with the staff and receive attention when they need support. They play happily together and with adults, using resources such as dressing up clothes, large equipment for role play, construction sets and a wide range of materials for arts and crafts. Exploration through paint, sand and water helps children express their feelings, ideas and experiences in a variety of ways. Children benefit from a colourful, stimulating and learning-friendly environment in which they are happy, content and well cared for.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children show satisfactory levels of concentration and interest in activities. The new manager and staff work together well and have started to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework with the younger children. However their planning of activities does not fully cover the six areas of learning. This means children are not always challenged to extend their learning towards the early learning goals. Staff use regular observation of children's play and learning to plan their next steps in learning. They carry out regular written assessments of the children's developments. Children are eager to face new challenges in a safe and effective learning environment and prepare to tackle new equipment independently- 'let me try'. Staff ask questions to make children think about what they are doing and develop their ideas.

Children form good relationships with staff and proudly show their artwork to them. Individually, they have good independence skills and are able to choose activities for themselves. They learn to show care and concern through role play and daily routines. For example, older children offer to shepherd younger children about such as holding their hand and taking them to register.

Children are happy to speak in a familiar group. They generally pay attention, concentrate and sit quietly during circle times and when otherwise appropriate. Children's self confidence is growing as they talk excitedly about things that interest them. Their self esteem is enhanced by the provision of laminated placemats with their own photographs.

Children develop their communication skills through routines and planned and unplanned activities such as singing nursery rhyme and responding with enjoyment during registration times. Children extend their vocabulary by sharing their thoughts and experiences, such as travelling by bus with a parent and buying a ticket from the bus driver. On arrival children register themselves by recognising pictures on their name cards. However, there are few opportunities provided for children to develop their writing, linking sounds and letters or reading skills. The environment is well organised to meet the learning needs of the children but staff do not always encourage children to make good use of resources available. For example, there are accessible writing and reading areas with various writing materials and a good range of books but children make little use of it throughout the session.

Children explore and investigate objects and materials and find out how things work. For example, while playing with water they experiment to see which direction the water goes and what it does to a wheel. Older children understand and say, 'it makes the wheel spin.' They look at the weather chart and talk about different types of weather. Most children are able to recognise and describe differences in the weather. Children build and construct with a wide range of objects, tools and joining materials. They enjoy playing in the home corner and use programmable equipment such as microwave, oven, toaster, magnifying glass, etc. Children learn about their environment as they go for walks in their village. Summer and autumn walks are also arranged to look at trees and leaves and how these change in the different seasons.

Children show developing understanding of numbers, shapes and colours through daily routines and planned activities. Most children confidently recognise shapes and numbers. They talk about the days of the week and discuss the date at registration times by recognising numbers on cards. Singing nursery rhymes such as 'Five little ducks' helps children to develop skills, as they represent numbers by using their fingers and enthusiastically count in the correct order. However, they have limited opportunities to develop simple calculation skills, use language to make comparisons or to solve practical problems. There is a good range of displays and resources such as magnetic shapes, flash cards, puzzles and jigsaws for children to improve their mathematical skills.

Children's physical skills develop through a variety of activities, including dance and movement. They move confidently, safely and with control while playing with a wide range of resources such as cars, scooters and climbing frame with slide and steps. Children show awareness of their own space and that of others while queuing up and playing. Older children recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. Children are engaged in activities requiring hand-eye coordination and show increasing skill in the use of construction sets and rolling, patting and twisting malleable materials.

Children have good opportunities to develop their creative talents, as they use a wide range of art and craft materials to create their own work alongside more structured art activities for the purposes of themed pieces or a wall display. For example, they paint and draw, make shapes

and collages, and play with sand and water. Children enjoy singing their favourite nursery rhymes from memory and new children join in by moving spontaneously to familiar sound patterns. There is a good range of musical toys and instruments. Children use their imagination in role play and stories and enjoy taking up the positions of, for instance, a rabbit. This means children make satisfactory progress towards six areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children relate well to staff and are well behaved and have a good understanding of right and wrong, responding positively to guidance and instructions from staff. In group situations they wait patiently for their turn to speak. Children are encouraged to share, take turns and say 'please' and 'thank you'. Strategies for managing children's behaviour are appropriate and ensure that children are not humiliated in any way. Children with learning difficulties are appropriately supported, as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) has a good understanding of addressing all children's needs in consultation with parents and other staff. Consequently staff are pro-active in providing an inclusive service.

Children play in a warm and welcoming environment where staff are caring, approachable and sensitive to children's individual needs. Various activities arranged by staff are always available for children to initiate their own play. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through planned activities. Children taste different foods from around the world, and there are some planned activities to celebrate different festivals. Children have access to an appropriate range of resources depicting positive images of diversity. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Staff establish relaxed and informal relationships with parents, who are encouraged to be involved in fund raising, attend committee meetings and put forward their views. Information is shared verbally on a daily basis, and parents receive a prospectus about the setting. They are made aware of the complaints procedure should they be unhappy with the service provided. Formal and informal meetings are held at parents' convenience to inform them about the Foundation Stage and to discuss their children's development. Parents share information about their child when they complete the 'stepping stones profile' and this helps staff with initial planning of the child's learning. They are made aware of the short-term, medium-term and long-term plans in this respect, so that they can become actively involved in their child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the setting are good. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that all staff are qualified and suitable to work with children. The staff are committed to attend appropriate courses to update their knowledge and understanding of childcare issues. All staff hold a current first aid certificate. They work effectively as a team to provide a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Consultation with parents allows them to be aware of

children's individual needs. Effective staff deployment contributes to a secure environment where children are comfortable and positively interact with adults and peers. Regular staff meetings and a clear management structure help to ensure that staff remain committed in providing a leaning and caring environment. They receive support from the Local Authority to improve the quality of education for all children.

All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and is regularly reviewed. Records are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality is maintained. All written policies and procedures are in place and implemented by staff.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection six actions were stipulated and seven recommendations were made which the provider agreed to implement. All of the actions and four recommendations have been successfully addressed. However, the rest of the recommendations have not been fully met.

Actions have been taken in the following respects. Staff have produced a written statement of the procedures to be followed in the event of a child being lost or uncollected and which they all understand. Forms have been amended to obtain written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment, and before administering medicines to children. Staff have revised their child protection statement to include the procedure regarding any allegations made against a member of staff whilst the child is in their care. They have now devised a written procedure for notifiable diseases, implemented by all staff. Children now use good quality hand washing facilities before eating, after messy play and after using the toilet. Drinking water and cups are readily accessible to children throughout the session. This means children's needs are met regarding these issues.

The following recommendations have been taken up. Staff have now provided a range of resources to promote awareness of diversity and disability. This means children have appropriate opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them. There is a good range of toys and equipment for children to further develop their knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology. The written statement of behaviour management has been updated to include the policy regarding bullying. Staff carry out regular written assessments of the children's developments and plan activities to help them to move to the next stage in their learning. Children have access to a range of musical toys and instruments to use during activities.

However, the following recommendations have not been fully implemented. There are still limited opportunities provided for children to develop linking sound and letter skills and their writing. Staff are not always able to include all children in large group activities or to maintain their interest in these situations. Consequently, some children lose interest and pay little attention when other children speaking. This means children are not always challenged to extend their learning towards the early learning goals. These issues have been reinforced as the recommendations in this report.

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 good. 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):

- include all children in group activities and help them to be focused

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):

- extend opportunities for children which promote their communication skills including writing, reading, listening and linking sounds and letters
- provide opportunities for children to further develop their mathematical skills.

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