



Cogenhoe Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Susan Marriott
Setting Address	York Avenue, Cogenhoe, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN7 1NB
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Registered person	Cogenhoe 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 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?

Cogenhoe Playgroup opened in 1970. It is operated by a committee of elected parents and carers and is located within the Community Centre in the village of Cogenhoe, Northampton. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 12.00 during term time only.

There are currently 29 children aged from two years and six months to under five-years-old on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for Nursery Education. Children come from the village and surrounding areas. The setting makes provision for children who may have learning difficulties or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs three staff. The supervisor holds an appropriate early years qualification and her deputy is working towards a qualification. Volunteers work as staff members each day. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy because staff follow generally effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection. The premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Children wash their hands before snack and staff always remind children to wash their hands after visiting the toilet. However, children do not always learn about germs through the daily routines because staff do not remember to promote discussion about healthy eating and the reasons for hand washing. Children use paper towels to dry their hands and limit the spread of infection but soap is not always available. Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because staff hold suitable first aid qualifications. The first aid box is accessible and the contents are checked regularly. Staff record accidents and include the relevant details.

An extensive range of snack foods such as sausage rolls, biscuits and fruit are presented for the children at a group snack table system. However, many of the foods offered contain high levels of salt or sugar. Staff sit with a group of children and talk about everyday events but they are distracted by organisational issues such as not having a suitable cloth to hand to mop up spillages. Preparation is done in the kitchen out of sight of the children. This removes an opportunity to develop more detailed conversations about the food. Children have the choice of juice, milk or water, but staff often pour this for them, removing the opportunity to develop increasing levels of independence at snack time. Children may become thirsty whilst playing because a bottle of water and cups is not clearly visible and is not easily accessible by children themselves.

All the children enjoy basic daily indoor activities, which enable them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills. For example, the children develop their large muscle movements as they pedal bikes and bounce on space hoppers around the hall. Staff do not always have clearly defined learning intentions for physical activities and this sometimes compromises the quality of play and learning. The outdoor area is not in use due to unresolved safety concerns, and children do not regularly gain access to fresh air during the playgroup session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff give excellent priority to the security of the premises and the supervision of the children. Visitors to the setting must announce their arrival by ringing the bell to alert staff to attend the locked entrance doors. Visitors must show their identity documentation and sign the visitor book. This system protects children from unvetted persons entering the premises unescorted and ensures that access to the children is suitably monitored. Staff carry out evacuation drills

with sufficient frequency to ensure the safety of the children and staff. Visual daily risk assessments are completed but there is no record kept. There is no procedure to be followed in the event of a child becoming lost. Children are safe in the setting because staff are appropriately vigilant and take precautionary action to prevent accidents. For example, a member of staff notices spilt sand on the floor and fetches the dustpan and brush to clean it up. She explains the consequences of leaving sand on the floor to children nearby, but does not involve them in the clearing up process. This limits children's involvement in taking responsibility for their own safety.

Children are warmly welcomed by the friendly staff and well-cared for in a pleasant, suitably safe and secure indoor environment. Staff have to set out the equipment every morning before the children arrive. They have to clear it away at the end of each session, because the hall is used by many other community groups. Equipment and resources must be safely stored in the store cupboard and children choose from the pre-selection made by staff on a daily basis. This rather limits children's ability to make independent choices in some areas of learning. The large hall is set out with activities relating to the six areas of learning and a book area is made inviting to children with cushions and soft toys.

Children's welfare is adequately safeguarded because they are protected by informed adults who are aware of current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff have not attended any recent training but have relevant literature to which they can refer in the event of a concern arising. The written policy for child protection does not contain a clear procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against a staff member or volunteer.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The friendly staff work well together as a team. They follow children to the activities which attract their interest and provide some effective support to draw learning from play. This promotes children's welfare, learning and play. Staff provide positive role models and give sensitive support to all children. They demonstrate a genuine affection for children and clearly enjoy their company. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are working towards incorporating this on their session plans to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for the under three-year-olds. Younger children happily play together, and are beginning to take turns, share and to talk to others. They experiment with crayons, pencils and chalk, and explore sand, paint and dough. Children are imaginative and resourceful, using whatever they can find to enhance their play. For example, they collect the two pots of paint from the other side of the easel to add to the two they already have, in order to increase the range of colours available. Children dress up in character costumes such as 'Buzz Lightyear' and 'Snow White' before they participate in the other play opportunities available.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. Staff engage with children at the

activities of their choice and they interact in a generally appropriately manner to draw the learning from play. Staff work well as a team to prepare toys and equipment in advance and mostly achieve a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff have an increasing knowledge of the Foundation Stage and plan to provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. However, play activities lack sufficient challenge to progress the learning of some children. Long and medium term planning largely reflects the curriculum guidance but activities are not always appropriately referenced to the stepping stones to ensure a clear focus to secure and progress children's learning. There are currently no session plans because the staff are working with advisors to identify a suitable system. Staff make highly detailed and conscientious observations of children's achievement, supported by narrative and photographic evidence. They track children's progress through the stepping stones. However, assessment of what children know and can do, does not yet feed into planning in a logical way to inform the next steps in children's learning.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is nurtured well. Children enjoy the activities on offer, and are beginning to concentrate and persevere well to complete tasks. Staff positively encourage children to share and support play effectively to achieve this. However, staff do not always recognise and make the most of unexpected and spontaneous opportunities to extend learning. For example, children are settled and attentive at registration time and are dismissed to play, when further teaching and learning is possible. The staff praise the children for their achievements reinforces children's self-esteem and confidence. Staff make generally good use of books and story time. They point out features of the pictures and encourage the children to listen attentively and participate in discussion through generally effective open questioning. Basic writing materials are provided daily, but there is little to stimulate children's interest and there is limited use of strategies to encourage early reading, writing or recognition of letters and the sounds they represent. Staff occasionally count during the daily routine, but do not always include the children in the activity. They use mathematical language such as under, over and through, and the medium term plans highlight some number games and shape activities. However, taken overall, children's mathematical development is given insufficient emphasis. There are very few numerals in the environment and staff lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of how to promote all aspects of mathematical learning.

A good range of activities to support knowledge and understanding include daily opportunities to explore and investigate sand, water, paint and chalk. Children enjoy small world play, construction and access to information technology. However, restrictions relating to the use of the hall reduce the quality of the experiences for children. For example, minimal amounts of sand are placed in the tray for children to explore. Messy activities are limited. Plans show that cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year are acknowledged through activities at the craft table and different foods at snack time. Children's physical development is supported daily through indoor provision at one end of the spacious hall, but access to the outdoor area is limited by practical constraints. For example, the grass is not being cut regularly. Physical play is sometimes seen as a rather recreational time as opposed to a time of planned activity because there is no guidance provided to staff in the absence of any short term planning. Although activities are planned to support children's creative development, these are rather over-directed by adults, and children complete tasks such as making a daffodil card to a pre-determined end product, using pre-cut shapes and adult controlled colours. Children freely

experiment with paint at the easel, although their creativity is restricted by a limited supply of colours and materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children from the local community are warmly welcomed and included in all activities. Toys, books and equipment reflect some positive images. Some activities are planned to highlight festivals and themes around the world such as Chinese New Year. These help to increase children's awareness of other cultures and help the children to begin to develop a positive attitude to others.

Children who have varying needs receive suitable support. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision. Staff provide positive role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children frequently, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff continue to strive to develop a positive partnership with parents to support children's progress in learning. The setting is aware of new legislation issued October 2005, regarding the complaints process. The group provides lots of information in the entrance area for parents including general care and basic information about the educational programme. Staff are developing ways of sharing information about the children who receive nursery education. Parents are able to see their child's records and may contribute to them. This two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Positive outcomes are promoted for children through the generally effective organisation of the setting because free flow play is promoted throughout the morning and children have plenty of opportunity for uninterrupted activities, completed in their own time. The play leader, staff and committee work together, persevering to maintain the service to the community. For example, the group employs two staff, assisted by regular volunteers in order to maintain staffing ratios. All staff hold appropriate clearances, but the group is struggling to achieve and maintain the staffing qualification requirements. This leads to variable quality of teaching which hinders the implementation of the programme for learning.

The system for recording children's attendance is manageable and accurately reflects the numbers of children on the premises. This ensures children's safety in an emergency situation. Group sizes and staff deployment contribute positively to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. The policies and procedures have been adopted from standardised documentation and do not always accurately reflect the daily practice of the group. For example, risk assessment is not fully recorded as stated in the policy. Documentation does not always reflect more recent amendments in

requirements. For example, there is no clear procedure to follow in the event of a child being lost. Job descriptions are now in place and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the staff and committee, providing a sound basis upon which to move the development of the group forward.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff are receptive to ideas and suggestions and have the confidence to experiment with planning systems to find out what works for them. They are beginning to learn how to use the self-evaluation form to monitor and evaluate their practice. This does not currently extend to an evaluation of the educational provision, in order to improve the quality and standards of teaching and learning. Taken overall, the provision meets the needs of all children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of day care the setting was asked to implement three recommendations to improve the quality and standards of care for children. Two of these recommendations related to ensuring that the group meets staffing qualification requirements and one concerned the establishment of a complaints record. The group continue to struggle to meet the staffing qualification requirements. The manager holds suitable qualification and her deputy continues to work towards a qualification, which has been delayed by circumstances beyond her control. The group are aware of new legislation relating to complaints and have now put an appropriate system in place to record complaints as required. The setting has made slow progress in implementing the recommendations made, but this is beginning to improve the quality and standards of care for children.

At the most recent inspection of nursery education, three key issues were raised. The setting was required to continue to develop staff knowledge of the Foundation Stage, to continue to develop the system of observation and assessment and to develop the use of evaluation to monitor all aspects of the provision. The setting continues to operate with insufficient qualified staff which impacts negatively upon the quality and standards of the nursery education and means that limited progress has been made with the key issues from the previous inspection. The setting is working with advisers from the Local Authority to evaluate the provision and identify suitable action to improve the provision for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

In March 2006, concerns were raised relating to Standard 2, (Organisation); Standard 6, (Safety); Standard 7, (Health and Hygiene); and Standard 12, (Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers). The concerns related to the supervision of the children and a parent not being informed a child had suffered an accident. Concerns were also raised about the application of first aid and the accident book not being completed.

Ofsted made an unannounced visit on 27 March 2006. Policies and procedures were reviewed, staff interviewed and observations were made. Ofsted were satisfied that appropriate policies and procedures were in place and being followed with regard to Organisation and Safety. However, under Standard 14, (Documentation), a recommendation was raised to ensure that a complaints record is in place and available to parents. An action was set in relation to Standard

7, (Health and Hygiene), to ensure that all accidents are recorded, discussed with parents and signatures obtained. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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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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):

- ensure that children learn about germs and healthy eating through the daily routines
- ensure that children can easily access fresh drinking water and that children receive nutritious foods in adequate quantities for their needs
- devise a clear procedure to be followed in the event of a child becoming lost
- devise a written procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against a staff member or volunteer
- continue to improve the planning and provision of a range of play activities with appropriate levels of challenge and opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and emotional capabilities
- ensure that policies and procedures comply with the National Standards and associated regulations.

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):

- improve the use of snack time as an effective learning time for children
- continue to develop a simple planning system, including all areas of learning and ensuring that plans provide sufficient and useful detail to guide all staff members in the delivery of a stimulating programme of learning. Evaluate the plans and use the information gained to decide what children will learn next

- ensure the educational programme is suitably monitored, and address identified areas of weakness to improve the quality of provision.

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