



Chestnut Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221914
Inspection date	27 February 2007
Inspector	Heidi Falconer
Setting Address	The Cathodean Centre, High Street, Linton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 6AX
Telephone number	
E-mail	
Registered person	Chestnut 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?

Chestnut Playgroup was established over 40 years ago. It operates from the Cathodean Centre in the village of Linton. The group serves the local area. A maximum of 25 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday during school term-time from 9.30am to 12pm with additional lunchtime sessions on some days. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 42 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 35 children receive funding for early education. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup employs eight members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are soon to start working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children demonstrate a good understanding of the need to follow effective good health and hygiene practices. They independently wash their hands before their snack, using the hand washing station confidently. They consistently use the provided anti-bacterial hand wash and dry their hands with paper towels. Children say that they wash their hands 'to get rid of germs so that they don't get poorly'. Children's health is protected because staff are aware of, and follow, good hygiene practices to prevent the spread of infection. For example, they wear gloves when changing children's nappies and they ensure that the changing mat is cleaned with anti-bacterial wipes after each use. As a result the risk of cross-infection is minimised and children stay healthy. Children receive appropriate care if they are ill or have an accident. Staff are caring towards the children and offer them plenty of support and reassurance following any accidents. Records of all accidents are maintained, however, these are not always shared with parents. This does not fully support children's good health. A high number of staff hold a current first aid certificates, this ensures that children receive appropriate treatment in the event of an injury.

The playgroup enables children to learn about healthy living through a range of good activities that develop their understanding of what foods are good for them. For example, the children grow a variety of fruit and vegetables, such as Brussel sprouts and strawberries in the garden. Children receive a wide range of mainly organic snacks, which ensure that they are well nourished. All staff are fully aware of children who have special dietary requirements and they ensure that these needs are catered for. Children have free access to drinking water throughout the session, this allows them to respond to their bodies needs. Children know that it is important to eat snacks so that they don't get 'hungry and thirsty'.

Children participate in a range of activities which contributes to their physical health and fitness both inside and outside. Indoors, children enjoy taking part in music and movement songs, such as 'Dragon, Dragon'. This gives them opportunities to practise new skills, such as turning around, running on the spot, walking on tip toes and taking giant steps as they move around the room. Children demonstrate increasing control as they thread needles and sew with wool, use scissors, pour their own drinks and use clay tools in the play dough. These activities help to develop children's hand-eye co-ordination. Outdoors, children use large apparatus, which gives them opportunities to climb, slide and balance. However, there are less regular opportunities for children to ride bikes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's welfare is safeguarded. The staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and the procedures they would follow if they had concerns about a children, or of an allegation was made against a member of staff. This knowledge is in line with the guidelines as set out by their Local Safeguarding Children's Board. A child protection policy is in place which is shared with parents to ensure that they are familiar with the setting's responsibility to report concerns.

Children learn about what they can do to keep themselves safe. For example, they regularly practise the setting's fire evacuation procedure, and they are reminded by staff to take care as they climb and jump from the stepping stones in the garden. Explanations from staff help the children to understand why they must take care. Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised because staff take positive steps to promote safety within the setting. For example, staff carry out a daily risk assessment of the premises to identify potential hazards. To ensure that children are kept safe the staff are conscientious in ensuring that the premises remain secure throughout the session. As soon as parents have left the front entrance is secured and access can only be gained to the building via a doorbell entry system. To further promote children's safety the setting has fitted catches on all exterior doors, which are fitted with a push bar exit. This prevents the children from being able to leave the premises unescorted.

Children are cared for in a bright and child-centred environment. As the premises are shared with other users the rooms must be cleared at the end of each session. However, the staff work hard to ensure that the premises are welcoming to the children as they arrive. For example, they zone the room into different areas so that children can take part in activities, such as messy play, sensory play, construction play or sit quietly and look at books. Children use a good range of high quality toys and equipment which are well maintained. Additional resources have been purchased to make some activities easier for the children to use independently, for example, on the computer the children use a 'Big Keys Keyboard'.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and enjoy their time at the pre-school. They separate readily from their parents and settle quickly into activities. Children particularly enjoy the role play area which is well resourced. Children are currently particularly excited by the castle role play area, which gives them opportunities to dress up as characters from their favourite stories. Children dress up as sleeping beauty, dragons, the three bears and the giant from Jack and the beanstalk. As they dress up the children act out their characters, for example by chopping down the beanstalk with a play axe. Children have developed good relationships with the staff and each other, and often they seek out others to join in their play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure knowledge of all aspects of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They use this knowledge to provide a broad range of stimulating play and learning opportunities which help children to make good progress towards the early learning goals. However, some activities lack challenge to older or more able children. Assessments are in place and contain a range of evidence in the form of photos, drawings and observations which help staff to develop a good understanding about what stage each child is at. Assessments are then used to inform planning.

Children have good opportunities to learn about the natural world. They take part in growing and caring for plants, and they are currently actively involved in developing a wildlife area in the garden to encourage bugs and butterflies. Children learn about the world around them through the visitors who attend the setting. These include dentist, police officers and guide

dogs and their carers. Recently the children have had a visit from the local fire brigade and they talk excitedly about how they were allowed to use the fire hoses.

There are many opportunities for children to talk and listen to each other and adults in small and large groups. During these sessions children confidently talk about their favourite books from home and their families. Children listen very well to stories and join in familiar songs, such as Goldilocks and the three bears, with obvious enjoyment. Books such as 'Pass the jam Jim' introduce children to patterns in rhymes, words and letters. Most children can recognise their names with ease, however there are fewer opportunities for them to write their names. Children are very confident and are becoming increasingly independent. They chop their fruit at snack time and put on their boots as they go outside.

Children enjoy the wide variety of opportunities they have to explore different forms of media. For example, as they play with trays of shaving foam they talk about how the foam feels describing it as 'gooey, snowy and like soap'. Children thoroughly enjoy activities such as dressing up in the role play area and using puppets to develop their imaginative skills. As they use puppets, children walk around saying 'I'm a crocodile, snap, snap, snap'.

Children's simple calculation skills promoted by some staff, for example, whilst playing in the water tray children are asked 'how many have we got altogether if you have three and I have two? Children confidently count up to 10 and beyond, they count objects on computer games or as they tidy away cups at the end of the session. Children freely talk about shape and size in their play and activities. For example, when looking at photos children explain why some of the adults' heads are not in the pictures. They say that the staff are tall and that if the picture was turned around they would have fitted in.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents comment positively about the staff and express their confidence in the staff's ability to provide a caring and safe learning environment for their children. Parents and carers are well informed about the setting through newsletters, notice boards and daily discussions with the staff, whom they describe as being approachable. Parents are provided with information about the six areas of learning and they are asked to complete a child profile when their children start at the playgroup to help identify their children's starting point. However, there are infrequent formal opportunities for parents to view their children's assessment records. The setting actively seeks the views of parents through a yearly 'How's it going' questionnaire. This helps staff to evaluate the provision so that it meets the children's needs.

Children's individual needs are met well because staff are flexible with their routines, so that they accommodate all of the children's needs. Children with identified learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from being cared for by a staff team who work proactively with parents and other professionals to ensure their specific needs are met. For example, the setting offers children one to one support where necessary and they have development profiles in place for each child which identifies children's needs and shows their progress. Children are developing a positive attitude to each other and gain an understanding of the wider world through planned

activities and resources which show positive images of difference and diversity. For example, they use Native American and Egyptian sets of toys. In addition, the children take part in meaningful activities which help them to learn about different cultures. For example, they children recently celebrated Chinese New Year by eating foods with chopsticks. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children behave well as they know what is expected of them. The children know and understand the rules of the setting, which they help to formulate. For example, at register and circle time the children are keen to put up their hands and remind others of the rules. Children say that they must 'put hands up if want to say something' that they 'don't shout out' and that they must 'listen with our ears'. Children's self-esteem and confidence is promoted as staff actively encourage them to make choices and decisions about how they spend their time at the setting. For example, prior to setting up the outdoor environment the staff ask the children which resources they would like to use. Children are learning to share and take turns with popular resources, this is reinforced by the staff who give them explanations and reassure them that they will all get a turn.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a setting which is well-organised. Consequently the setting offers a warm, secure and stimulating environment for the children. Staff work well as a team and are caring and well-organised. For example, a rota system is used to ensure that each staff member is aware of their main responsibilities each day. These responsibilities may include taking care of children who have accidents, organising the snack bar or reading the day's story.

Effective recruitment procedures ensure that the staff are suitable to work with children. A thorough induction system is in place, this ensures that all new staff are supported well. For example, when carrying out some procedures for the first time staff, such as treating an injury, new members of staff are supervised and guided by an experienced member of the team. This ensures that the setting's policies and procedures are followed consistently by all staff. This promotes children's safety and welfare. Staff are fully committed to attending additional training, which ensures that their practice is up-to-date and in line with current guidelines.

The leadership and management is good. Regular staff and planning meetings enable staff to work effectively as part of a team and to make contributions about activities. Suitable procedures are in place to regularly review and monitor the practice of the setting so that it continues to meet the needs of the children who attend. For example, the manager takes time to observe the practice of the staff and at the end of each day the session is evaluated. This enables the manager to identify any areas for development. The manager and staff have developed a strong partnership with staff at the local school, this helps the children to have a smooth transition from the playgroup to the school. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection, the setting agreed to include children in developing the behaviour rules of the setting. The children are now fully involved in helping to formulate the rules which helps to develop their sense of belonging.

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to improve health procedures by obtaining written permission from parents to seek emergency medical treatment for their children. This is now in place for all children and as a result they would be able to receive treatment promptly in the event of an emergency.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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 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 all accidents records are signed by 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):

- ensure that activities provide sufficient challenge for older or more able children, with particular reference to encouraging them to develop their emerging writing skills, calculate and use wheeled toys on a regular basis
- develop opportunities for parents to be more informed about the progress their children are making towards the early learning goals.

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