



Meeting House Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402125
Inspection date	27 February 2007
Inspector	Jill Nugent
Setting Address	Friends Meeting House, Hutton Road, Shenfield, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 8LA
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Registered person	Julie D. Jewitt
Type of inspection	Childcare
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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Meeting House Playgroup opened in 1967. It operates from the Friends Meeting House in Shenfield, Brentwood. It is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 09:00 until 12:00 during term time. Children share access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 42 children, from two to under five years, on roll. The playgroup does not receive funding for nursery education. It supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

A total of nine staff work with the children. Of these, five hold relevant early years qualifications. The leader is working towards a level four qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is promoted extremely well. All the necessary medical permissions are requested from parents. Children are protected from infection because they are excluded from the setting if they have an infectious illness. There is an excellent system in place for ensuring that children with allergies are well cared for whilst at playgroup. They each have their own profile containing information about their condition and records of any medication administered. Staff liaise closely with parents in order to provide the most appropriate care for these children. All staff are trained in the administration of Epipens so that there is no delay in a child receiving treatment. Children are well looked after in the event of an accident as staff are well qualified in first aid and have good access to first aid equipment. The accident records are very well maintained. Separate records are kept by staff so that they can assess any trends in the occurrence of accidents. These procedures contribute very effectively to keeping children healthy.

Staff are particularly attentive to matters of hygiene. All the equipment, and resources, are cleaned regularly and children wear indoor shoes while on the premises to help maintain a clean environment. Staff ensure that children have good access to tissues and wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating snack. Consequently, children are becoming aware of good hygiene practices themselves. They enjoy eating a wide range of healthy snacks, including fruit and vegetables. Snack time is a social occasion for children and also a learning experience, as they count how many foods are required and discuss aspects of different foods. They are developing personal independence through making choices and pouring their own drinks. Consequently, they are well nourished and have an increasing awareness of healthy eating.

Children enjoy very good opportunities for regular physical activity. They have fun using indoor play equipment, climbing up and down steps and jumping off onto mats. Staff are on hand to assist them and increase their confidence in the use of physical equipment. In this way children are developing better control and co-ordination. They demonstrate good manipulative skills when using scissors and glue sticks. They have good access to outdoor play all year round and enjoy obstacle courses, races and parachute games. Consequently, they have plenty of fresh air, and exercise, which helps to keep them fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very welcoming environment. The rooms are bright and attractive, with pictures and displays on the walls, and a wide variety of interesting activities set out for children when they arrive. Staff promote children's safety and security through minimising risks. They carry out an annual risk assessment of the premises and also risk assess spontaneously so that potential hazards are avoided. Daily safety checks are carried out by the leader. Children do not have access to the kitchen and staff ensure that other doors are either wide open, or shut, so that children move around the building safely. These procedures contribute effectively to keeping children safe and secure at all times.

Children use a range of suitable, and safe, resources and equipment. These are all checked for safety on a regular basis. There is a vast quantity of good quality resources, all sorted into labelled boxes and drawers so that staff can select different ones each day. This helps to maintain children's interest over time. The resources cover all areas of learning, for example, there are puzzles, story sacks, technological toys and role play equipment. Children learn to keep themselves safe during play, for instance, when jumping off steps they are reminded to climb carefully and land on a mat. Children learn about people in the community who help them to keep safe and about safety near roads. Consequently, children have a growing awareness of personal safety.

There are good fire precautions in place in the building. The main door is kept locked and the keys are always handy. Staff are able to identify visitors visually through the glass panes. If children are playing outdoors, the gate is padlocked and a play area is cordoned off where they can play safely. An evacuation plan is displayed in the building and children practise this regularly so that they know what to do in the event of an emergency. Children are always well supervised at the end of each session to ensure that they leave safely and with a known adult. Staff have a good understanding of child protection issues. There is a detailed procedure in place for dealing with any concerns and the necessary information to enable staff to seek advice if necessary. Therefore, children are well protected in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are well settled and happy at playgroup. They show much interest in the activities on offer and get on well with each other, for example, talking together and sharing toys as they play in the sand pit. They enjoy plenty of choice and benefit from the interaction of staff, who enhance their play by getting involved with the children. For instance, children make up a travelling game with an adult and talk about the various animals they find en route. They have great fun singing songs with staff while marching up and down steps. Children have good opportunities to explore independently and also enjoy group play, for instance, setting up a train track or modelling with play dough. They are encouraged to join in conversation with staff and in this way develop their use of language. They enjoy much praise from adults which helps to boost their confidence and self esteem.

Children are involved in a range of activities which support their development and learning effectively. The playgroup leader makes very good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, and the Foundation Stage curriculum, in planning activities which promote children's learning in all areas. The activities are planned around themes and provide opportunities for children to consolidate their learning before moving on to the next theme. The written planning shows what children are expected to learn from each activity and enables staff to make observations on children's progress. They use assessment sheets to set targets for children's learning and guide future planning. This system provides a very good framework for the educational programme.

Children have some excellent opportunities to learn during adult directed activities, for example, listening to, and talking about, stories linked to the theme or working out which numerals are required to set a date on the calendar. Children are encouraged to think for themselves through

staff posing open ended questions, for instance, about the weather and animals. Children practise counting in different situations and learn to recognise, and write, their own names. They respond to adults who show an interest in them, for example, they enjoy the company of staff while looking at books. There is a good choice of creative activities and children learn to express their own ideas using an assortment of different materials. However, during free choice activities staff do not always interact so effectively to challenge individual children and extend their learning. Overall, children are acquiring new skills through a wide variety of learning experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children feel valued and included. They have a real sense of belonging and feel very much at home in the setting. They have close relationships with staff and are very happy. Staff make sure that all children have an opportunity to take part in organised activities. Children split into small groups for story sessions and this works particularly well in ensuring that they all engage in, and benefit from, the experience. Children's individual needs are met very well because staff find out about children in discussion with parents before they start playgroup. Staff are very attentive towards children and this engenders a feeling of security and promotes self confidence. Staff maintain very good adult to child ratios and so children have good access to adults throughout each session. Children are becoming aware of others' needs, for example, learning that sometimes they need to listen to other children or adults. They are learning to respect others in society through using resources which reflect diversity and celebrating festivals.

Children have many good opportunities to make their own choices. For example, they choose pictures of animals and then, whether to cut, stick or just collect them in an envelope. When playing on steps, they choose numbers, or colours, according to how they climb and where they jump. These activities help them learn to make decisions for themselves. Children are learning to look after their own personal needs through having good access to toilets and washing facilities. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are extremely well supported. The playgroup leader works closely with other professionals to assess children's needs, also to prepare, and review, individual plans to help meet these needs. She liaises closely with parents so that they can work in partnership to offer the best care and education for each child. If necessary, children are offered one-to-one support to help them to learn and integrate successfully into the setting.

Children's behaviour is very good. Staff encourage them to share, and take turns, and occasionally remind them of the rules. There are very effective behaviour management strategies in place. These deal with different situations so that adults take account of children's age and understanding. Staff are good role models for children, maintaining a calm atmosphere. Children are aware of their boundaries and respond positively to staff. If necessary, they wait quietly and follow instructions positively. Therefore, children learn to distinguish between right and wrong and behave in an appropriate manner.

The playgroup works in partnership with parents and carers of children. There is a good settling in procedure in place. New children are linked to a member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Prior to starting playgroup, parents make an initial visit when they talk individually

with the playgroup leader. This enables them to exchange information so that staff can offer the most appropriate care for each child. The prospectus includes good detail about the playgroup's practice, policies, and procedures. It also contains information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and Foundation Stage of learning. This information is repeated and extended on large, attractive displays in the setting so that all parents and carers are aware of how staff promote learning. Parents receive information on the current theme and this allows them to become involved with their children's learning. They can discuss their children's progress with staff at any time. When leaving, children take home an achievement record in the form of a profile. Children benefit from the close working partnership between parents and staff at the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The playgroup's policies and procedures work extremely well in practice to promote the outcomes for children. All the necessary policies are in place and readily available on file. Each policy is detailed and specific to the playgroup so that readers can be very clear as to the group's procedures. Children's registration forms are completed by parents and kept securely on the premises. Staff maintain attendance records appropriately so that there is a good record of which children and adults are on the premises at any one time. The leader has a particularly good understanding of the National Standards and, consequently, provides an excellent written framework for the provision. This enables staff to work as a team and promote the outcomes successfully.

Children are safeguarded because there are good procedures in place for ensuring all staff are vetted. New staff follow a thorough induction procedure in order that they can be fully aware of the group's policies and procedures. Staff meet together regularly to monitor the provision and to discuss children's needs. The playgroup leader carries out regular appraisals of staff and encourages them to attend training courses in order to further their professional development. Since the last inspection staff have attended training in First Aid, the 'Birth to three matters' framework, Child Protection and aspects of play, special needs and food hygiene. Children benefit greatly from staff's acquired knowledge and skills.

Staff have a very high regard for the well-being of all children and maintain good adult to child ratios at all times. They make very good use of the available space in each room to offer a wide choice of resources for children. There is good access to outdoor play, either on the hard area at the side of the building or in the attractive garden to the rear. Staff are deployed effectively so that children are well supervised and able to engage in a wide range of learning experiences. A set daily routine helps sessions to run smoothly and offers children plenty of free choice time alongside organised group times. Transition times are organised particularly well, for example, children are given a large box of toys to explore while staff clear away the main activities prior to snack time. Staff are committed to providing good care for children and continually looking to ways of improving the provision. Their effective organisation contributes successfully towards this aim. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the playgroup was asked to devise a written procedure for a lost child, extend the child protection policy and make the complaints procedure accessible to parents. The procedure for a lost child is now in place, and on display, so that all adults are aware. The child protection policy has been developed appropriately and information about the complaints procedure is readily available to parents. This response has contributed to improving children's care.

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

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.

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 staff take opportunities to extend children's learning during free choice activities.

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