



Calton Road Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101623
Inspection date	07 February 2007
Inspector	Angela Cole
Setting Address	Calton Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 5ET
Telephone number	01452 522202
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Registered person	Calton Road 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?

Calton Road Playgroup is managed by a committee made up of parents of children at the group and members of the local community. It opened in 1984 and operates from a specially adapted building with a new extension within the grounds of Calton Road Infants School. The school is situated in a built-up, residential area that is close to the centre of the city of Gloucester. The building consists of four play areas and children have direct access to a playground and a garden. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open on weekdays from 09.00 to 11.30; afternoon sessions are from 12.30 to 15.00, except on Friday.

There are currently 65 children aged from two years nine months to under five years on roll. Of these, 42 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the school catchment area and surrounding districts. The playgroup currently supports a number of children

with learning difficulties. The staff have experience of supporting children with disabilities and those learning English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs four members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The staff are supported by an administrator and a volunteer parent on rota duty. The group has close links with the school and uses some aspects of the High/Scope educational approach.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy daily opportunities for fresh air and exercise. They climb, crawl and balance in the physical playroom where they set their own challenges, such as kneeling on the slide. Children play outside each day, carefully negotiating the playground space at playtime alongside older children and controlling a variety of wheeled vehicles. They regularly visit 'the forest' to explore the undergrowth and to manoeuvre natural materials, such as branches.

The children are cared for in very clean, warm premises. Staff and children follow good personal hygiene routines, for example, washing their hands before eating and after play with ice or cleaning the fish tank. Children benefit from good continuity of care regarding accidents, administering of medicine. Children who become ill are well looked after by the caring staff and their parents are informed immediately.

Children begin to understand the importance of drink as they help themselves to available drinking water and pour their own milk or water to go with their snack. They learn about 'foods we can have a lot or a little' and benefit from a healthy diet as they help themselves to a variety of bread, fruits and vegetables. The nutritious snacks are well presented and comply with all special dietary requirements to ensure the children remain healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The children's play environment is safe and secure as the staff are pro-active in identifying potential hazards and taking steps to minimise risks to children. They are protected from harm because the health and safety officer reviews the risk assessment on a regular basis. All staff follow daily procedures to ensure the areas accessed by children are safe and suitable for their purpose.

The children easily access the exceptionally well-maintained play areas. Each of these is attractively resourced with high quality equipment and age-appropriate toys that are stored at the children's level for easy and safe access. Children help to keep the play areas clear and safe as they eagerly fulfil their helper duties that include pushing chairs under the tables.

The children learn to take responsibility for their own safety as they tell each other the safe way to move around the building. They are encouraged to take small risks within the controlled

environment of the playgroup premises and outdoor area under close supervision from the staff. For example, they handle hammers and tacks carefully to create neat constructions and enjoy visiting the natural area of 'the forest' within the school grounds. They regularly practise fire drills to ensure they are able to evacuate the premises quickly and safely in the event of an emergency.

The children's welfare is given very high priority. All staff have current child protection and first aid training. They are extremely knowledgeable about child protection issues and confident in their ability to address any concern. They promote open discussion with parents about children's existing injuries. Staff's excellent knowledge of the highly detailed policy and procedures ensures that the children's wellbeing is given paramount importance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children greatly enjoy their play at the setting. They have very good opportunities during the planned free play to make decisions and participate in a wide variety of activities of their choice. This sustains their interest and effectively promotes their progress and development. For example, children are intensely interested in computer activities and choose difficult programs at which they persevere and succeed. The youngest children also make good progress. This is because staff are aware of guidance such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework, and ensure these children are supported and challenged appropriately as they explore the resources. Children benefit from choosing whether to be active or play quietly in the different play zones. Their care needs are smoothly incorporated into the routine so that they gain good independence. Staff plan and provide experiences and play opportunities to develop the full range of children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. The children's development is supported well by effective interaction with the attentive staff. This ensures they enjoy a broad range of activities to develop their language, mathematical thinking, imagination and creativity. For example, children freely talk with supportive adults as they imaginatively act out the story of the 'Three bears'; they use excellent resources including the differently-sized beds they have created.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children receive very good support to develop their communication and listening skills. For example, they join in conversation and recall events they are interested in, such as making strawberry 'cakes' with playdough. Children enjoy rhyming words in songs and recognise initials of objects shown on the computer. They eagerly scribble and write their names in paint. They listen enthralled to a group story and some 'read' their own in the excellent library area. Children play in an environment that is rich in print and come to recognise some of the labels, including numbers of children allowed in play areas. Some children confidently use counting to solve problems, for example, to find there are six randomly placed items. They have very good practical opportunities to compare numbers of children with the chairs available and to calculate how many are left during number songs, such as 'Three little monkeys'.

Children gain a meaningful understanding of shape, space and measure through practical problems, for example, as they pattern lines of prints and say their quantity of dough is 'bigger'.

Children gain a very good knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They look carefully to explore indoor and outdoor materials, for example, to talk about changes to melting ice and find what is encased. Children concentrate on making their own designs, for example, with construction sets to create a wooden 'spaceship'. They most effectively use information technology to support their learning as they choose and complete computer programs. Children gain a very good sense of time as they compare photos of themselves as babies and explore the garden to note the growth of plants. They begin to gain an interest in the wider world as they learn about the special days of people they know. For example, a family member shared items connected with Chinese New Year and children celebrated through crafts, foods and imaginative dance as a dragon. Children have very good opportunities to handle a wide range of media to explore colour and texture. They respond through all their senses, for example, as they describe their hands made red from dough and the feel of materials such as coloured wood shavings. Children's creativity is highly valued as their drawings and paintings are carefully displayed, including a picture of 'My Gruffalo with purple spikes'. They eagerly join in favourite songs and freely access an excellent range of musical instruments to explore many different sounds.

Children consistently make very good progress towards the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning. The staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage so children learn in the ways most helpful to themselves. The adults know children well and record regular observations of their achievements and interests to successfully plan for the children's progress. Children are truly interested by the teaching as adults foster children's learning through play and focus on what interests them. Their concentration and progress towards becoming independent learners are best encouraged during the longer period of free play and at the activities that are organised in smaller groups. Children of all ages are well challenged through staff's open questions and by the very good use made of plentiful, high quality resources.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children receive a warm, personal welcome from the waiting adults so they feel valued and respected as individuals. They settle quickly and gain good self esteem as staff create frequent opportunities for them to make their own decisions. For example, they choose the play zone and the activities that they are interested in during free play time. The staff ensure that resources, such as books and small-world figures, positively represent the children who attend as well as some individuals from the wider community. This helps children to develop a positive attitude to others.

Children with special needs are well supported. This is because the experienced staff are skilled in identifying additional requirements and work hard to enable children to meet their full potential. The staff liaise sensitively with parents and work closely with outside agencies to draw up and implement appropriate individual plans for the children. The adults skilfully manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way that promotes their welfare and development.

The children are well behaved as they are fully occupied in interesting play. The atmosphere within the playgroup is always positive and staff are good role models so children are calm and polite. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from the staff's friendly, open relationship with parents. They receive consistent care as parents' wishes are well implemented, including arrangements for collection. Families receive detailed information about the children's playgroup and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parents sometimes get to know about the children's daily activities. They are invited to share the children's records though their comments are not regularly included to support the children's development. Parents have effective opportunities to be actively involved in the children's learning. For example, their voluntary help is valued and children take home books and 'Benjamin Bear' for families to host for the weekend.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children receive good care and education as a result of conscientious and competent organisational skills. The systems to check the initial and continuing suitability of staff are robust. Children are well supported by an experienced team of staff, and formal induction is available should they be joined by a new adult. The playgroup operates most effectively under a detailed operational plan to foster the children's safety and welfare. The indoor premises are highly organised so children have a variety of well-equipped play spaces and ample adult support, particularly when they are working in smaller groups.

The setting's documentation is accurately maintained and confidentiality is well kept. The policies have recently been reviewed by the committee and staff, and the prospectus is to be revised to make it even more welcoming to families. The group has sheets to set up a log to record any complaint and this is compliant with Ofsted's requirements. Staff make consistent use of a daily diary to back up the completion of, for example, the registers and accident records.

Leadership and management are good. The staff are very well supported by a knowledgeable and active management committee. The staff team works very well as adults support one another and feel confident to delegate responsibilities to each other. The leader is highly committed and is working to further improve the provision. This is shown, for example, in far-reaching action plans for the outdoors that reflect an in-depth understanding of children's care and learning requirements. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the playgroup improved procedures for risk assessment. Staff now regularly revise the document used to identify hazards within all areas of the setting and they record the methods used to minimise these. This has further improved the provision for the children's safety.

In the previous education inspection, no significant weaknesses were noted and the group was asked to further consider the provision for children's mathematical development. Children now

regularly use problem solving and simple calculating within routine activities, for example, to find the number of plates needed at snack time. This has improved their mathematical thinking and further supports their learning.

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 the 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):

- further develop systems to inform each parent about their child's daily activities and achievements, and to record parents' observations to support the children's development.

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):

- consider the routine and use of small groups to maximise opportunities for children to respond and to organise their own activity and learning.

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