



Little Clacton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650093
Inspection date	22 January 2007
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith
Setting Address	Engaines Primary School, 4-11 St. Osyth Road East, Little Clacton, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO16 9PH
Telephone number	07745 849279
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Registered person	Little Clactonplaygroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Little Clacton pre-school is privately owned. It opened in 2000 and operates from a double demountable classroom within the grounds of a primary school. It is situated in Little Clacton in Essex. A maximum of 40 children may attend at any one time. The pre-school is open from 08:30 to 15:30 every day of the week during term time and occasionally during school holidays. All children share an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 66 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 30 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding area.

The pre-school employs 11 staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept healthy at this pre-school as they follow the staff's clear directions with regard to hand washing after using the toilet and before snacks and meals. The children's environment is kept clean and hygienic as staff wipe the tables in between each use with anti-bacterial spray.

Children's medical needs are appropriately met as staff have clear written policies on accidents and medication. Children who have accidents within the group are comforted and their injuries are efficiently dealt with by staff using their up to date first aid knowledge. Their injuries are recorded in an accident book which is shared with parents, however, the current format does not allow confidentiality to be maintained.

Children are provided with a mid session snack and drink which comprises of fresh fruit and biscuits. They sit together and share this important time of the day and a different child each day is chosen to help to dispense the soap to the other children and to hand out the plates. Some children bring a packed lunch with them and stay at the group during the lunchtime period. Children's dietary needs are well met as staff demonstrate their knowledge of each child's individual dietary needs, likes and dislikes. Children are encouraged to learn about healthy eating through themes and general conversation with staff.

Children experience fresh air on a daily basis when they play in the pre-school garden and when they go for walks within the school grounds. They enjoy playing outdoors and parents are encouraged to provide them with appropriate clothing to enable them to experience outdoor play in all kinds of weather.

Children's physical development is promoted through a range of activities both indoors and outdoors. They learn about space and negotiating clear space to play in when they run around, ride bikes and join in with large singing games such as 'the farmer's in his den'. Children's fine motor skills are developing as they are provided with a good selection of tools to use such as pens, scissors, paintbrushes, dough cutters, shapes and stencils to draw around. They proficiently place correct puzzle pieces in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a welcoming and child-friendly environment. They play in one of two rooms which are separated according to the children's ages. The children aged under three years are cared for in one room and the children aged over three years are cared for in the other room. Children's creative work and bright colourful posters decorate the walls making the environment interesting and cheerful. Children's well-being is compromised as the breakdown of two of the setting's storage heaters has prevented the environment from being able to be kept at an adequate temperature during cold weather.

Children safely access a good range of toys and play equipment which is stored in low level containers and low level shelving. They are encouraged to self-select equipment at various times during the session and to replace the toys when asked to clear away what is out. Children play with clean and hygienic resources as staff have clear procedures for ensuring that any toys which need cleaning are taken out of circulation until they have been cleaned.

Children's safety is considered by staff as they follow the setting's written policies and ensure that daily risk assessments are carried out both indoors and outdoors. Children are reminded by staff to keep themselves safe when moving around the premises, for example, when they are asked to carry the toy boxes carefully together and to be careful not to bump into the tables when playing group singing games.

Children are protected from potential harm as the staff follow the group's written policy on child protection. Their ongoing safety is compromised as the written policy has not been updated to include information about the remit of the Local Safeguarding Boards. Visitors to the premises are monitored and clear procedures are in place to ensure children are collected by an appropriate adult.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have fun at this pre-school. They are provided with a wide range of different toys and resources to choose from. They self select some resources from the low level shelving available to them and have good opportunities to make choices over their play.

Children are valued and play an active and important role in the setting. They are encouraged to 'have a voice' and to speak confidently in front of their friends, for example, when they tell the rest of their group about the item of interest they have brought with them. The show and tell session create roars of laughter from the children when a toy cat meows, purrs, moves it's head and closes it's eyes.

Younger children attending the group are cared for in a separate room to the older children. They enjoy lots of individual attention and develop a warm and caring relationship with each other and with the adults caring for them. The calm and relaxed environment enables them to settle easily and to enjoy playing with the interesting range of resources and activities on offer to them.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching within the setting enables children to make satisfactory progress in all six areas of learning. Staff demonstrate some understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn and their knowledge continues to develop through further training.

Long term planning is in place and staff are developing a system for ensuring that medium and short term plans cover all six areas of learning. Improvements to the planning generally will

include information about how staff differentiate the activities to meet the needs of all children attending the group. Advice and support is being sought through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

Children's progress is observed and recorded through the key worker system. Most staff are knowledgeable about how children progress through the stepping stone towards the early learning goals and can plot the children's next stage of development from their observations.

Children play and learn in a calm and relaxed environment, good adult interaction ensures that they receive support where required and they follow the staff's clear behaviour management policy of 'giving the staff five' when they need to call for their attention.

The timing and organisation of the session is not conducive to progressing children's learning. The timetable does not enable the session to flow smoothly or to provide children with adequate time to complete a chosen task.

Children are confident and enjoy each other's company. They develop lively and caring relationships with each other and with the adults caring for them. Some children are motivated to learn and will sit for a prolonged period of time, others are still developing these concentration skills. Children are beginning to understand the difference between right and wrong and are learning about the consequences of their actions.

Children communicate verbally in an effective way. They are beginning to use language which enables them to express their feelings and ideas and to share their thoughts with their peers. Children have opportunities to make marks throughout the session and some are beginning to form recognisable letters. Children have some opportunities to see how words hold meaning from the labelling displayed around the room. They have opportunities to listen to stories, however, the timing of the group stories within the session are not always conducive to capturing their interests and attention.

Children learn to count when they count the children attending each day and when they count the ticks on the register. They have opportunities to recognise numerals from the various posters and wall displays around the room and some are able to count to ten and over. Children play with a range of mathematical equipment. Opportunities to use simple calculation in everyday activities such as snack time are limited.

Children learn about nature and how things grow when they plant daffodil bulbs and watch them grow. They go for nature walks around the school and observe the pond life. They watch the birds through the windows of the pre-school and are encouraged to experience outdoor play in a range of weathers. Children construct with a range of resources such as plastic construction sets, wooden sets and cardboard boxes. They have some opportunities to learn about other people's cultures and religions when they celebrate a range of festivals and special occasions.

Children actively express themselves through role play. They make good use of the play food and kitchen equipment to extend their game. They form excitable and lively games whereby they use their imaginations to guide their play and learning. Children are encouraged to

participate in the creative activities available to them and enjoy messy play. Children enthusiastically join in with a range of songs and rhymes and enjoy entertaining their friends by performing on their own in front of the group.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled, happy and content at this group. They enjoy their time at pre-school and play an active role in the session. Parents share relevant information about their children with the staff who use the information to inform their practice. Good ongoing verbal communication between the parents and staff ensures that both parties are aware of any changes to the children's needs. Children develop some understanding of other people's customs and practices through the celebration of festivals and special occasions; plans are in place to extend these learning opportunities to cover a wider range of special occasions. Children who require additional help are appropriately supported by staff working closely with their parents and with other outside agencies.

Children are busy and active at the group; they behave well and follow the staff's clear directions with regards to behaviour management. They are learning about right and wrong as staff use clear methods of explanation to enable children to understand about being nice to each other and sharing the toys and equipment.

Children's well-being is promoted as the staff and parents work well together. They share information on a verbal, informal basis and staff demonstrate their sound knowledge of the needs of the families who attend the setting.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

Parents receive ongoing verbal communication about how their children are learning and progressing through the stepping stones. Parents express their satisfaction in the way the group shares information about their children's education and comment on how well they believe their children are developing and progressing. Newsletters provide parents with information about the themes and topics which are to be covered, but do not yet contain information about how parents can play an active role in their children's nursery education.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are kind and caring towards each other. They understand friendship and have fun playing together in the role play areas and generally throughout the group session. Their self esteem is developed as staff use lots of praise and encouragement to enable them to feel important and to play an active role within the group.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a stable staff team, many of whom have worked together for a number of years. Some new staff have recently joined the team creating a good balance of mature and

younger staff. Greater emphasis is being placed on staff to undertake training and to update the existing knowledge base with current thinking on childcare and education. Vetting procedures are in place to ensure that all children are protected and careful monitoring of the pre-school door and visitors ensures that all visitors to the group are known to staff.

The setting operates with a good adult to child ratio, enabling children to feel settled and supported. Children are appropriately grouped by age and are sometimes placed in smaller groups for specific activities such as stories.

Children's well-being, achievements and safety are supported through the use of appropriate records and documentation. All records are securely stored and available for inspection at all times. Some of the written policies have not been updated in line with changes to the National Standards.

The leadership and management is satisfactory.

Children's care and education is provided by a team of staff who work well together. The setting has recently undergone some changes to the set up and many further changes and improvements are in place for the future. The main change to occur has been a separation in partnership between the two joint owners. They both continue to work within the setting but the group is now owned by an individual owner.

The group is now making good use of the two separate playrooms by grouping the children attending by age. This enables staff who enjoy working with younger children and those who enjoy being involved in the nursery education aspect of pre-school life to focus their interests in a productive way.

Procedures for managing staff effectively, such as an induction programme and an appraisal system are in their infancy as the current owner is in the process of implementing these aspects of her role. Staff training is positively encouraged and new staff who are beginning to undertake courses feel valued and able to bring their new found knowledge back into the group.

The setting is working closely with representatives from the Early Years Partnership to identify the group's strengths and weaknesses and to implement appropriate procedures for staff management and for improving planning and general organisation.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection the setting was asked to formulate an operational plan, ensure all electrical equipment was regularly tested for safety, introduce an induction procedure for new staff and ensure that all written policies were reviewed and that they comply with the national Standards.

Children's well-being is now promoted as the group has an operational plan in place which informs parents and visitors of the group's set up and organisation. They are now safe with regards to the electrical equipment and appliances as they are all tested regularly. New staff

follow an informal induction procedure, which is currently being formalised and the written policies which were in place have been reviewed, these are however, in need of a further review and update in line with changes to the National Standards. A recommendation has been set to address this.

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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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 children's well-being continues to be promoted by updating all written policies and procedures in line with changes to the National Standards especially the complaints and child protection procedures
- ensure the rooms to be used by children are maintained an adequate temperature at all times.

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 long, medium and short term planning covers all six areas of learning, shows differentiation for more and less able children and provides opportunities for adult led activities to be evaluated
- ensure children are provided with a well balanced routine to the session which provides them with time to play independently, initiating their own activities and exploring their environment freely as well as appropriately timed activities which require more support and direction from staff

- provide a wide range of activities, play opportunities and first-hand experiences which allow children to build on their natural curiosity as learners.

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