

Kestrel Under Fives Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	103816
Inspection date	18 June 2007
Inspector	Karen Scott

Setting Address	Newton Close, Lordswood, Chatham, Kent, ME5 8TR
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Registered person	Kestrel Playgroup
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Kestrel Under Fives Playgroup opened in 1976. It operates from two large rooms in a church in Lordswood, Chatham. A maximum of 40 children may attend the group at any one time. The playgroup is open from 09:15 to 15:15, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and from 09:15 to 11:45 on Wednesdays, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 73 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 59 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The group currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The group employs nine members of staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a further qualification. The play group receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children understand the need for daily exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Weather permitting they have access to an outside area throughout the sessions. During inclement weather the group ensures that the children can participate in large physical play indoors or they visit the local park where there is some shelter. Children are protected from the sun as they wear hats and the setting receives parental written permission to apply sun lotion. Infectious children do not attend, helping to prevent the spread of any ailments.

Children remain hydrated as they can ask for a drink whenever they wish and are encouraged to do so particularly when the weather is hot. However, children are not trusted to pour their own drinks. The setting has a good understanding of healthy eating and children receive a range of nutritious snacks. Procedures are in place to protect children from food that they should not eat. Lunch and snack time is a social occasion with children learning good table manners as adults join them. However children are not provided with plates to put their food on and although they wash their hands before lunch they do not do so before eating snacks and are therefore not protecting themselves from germs at all times. Good hygiene practices are in place at other times as children help themselves to tissues to blow their noses on and discard of them in appropriate places.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from playing in a spacious and well-organised environment that allows them to move around safely. They make choices about what they wish to play with from the many toys and resources that staff arrange around the setting for them. Requests from children to play with other resources in order to extend their play are met by the staff. Children enjoy their play in a safe and secure environment. Regular risk assessments are undertaken and appropriate measures taken to keep children safe from harm. Children are unable to access rooms or items that could be dangerous. In order to prepare the children for an emergency the group practises regular evacuations of the building in case of fire. Children are closely supervised, particularly in the garden where staff position themselves near both fences so that they can see children at all times. Procedures are in place detailing what the setting will do if a child should become lost or is not collected. These are shared with parents and carers meaning that everyone is aware of the processes for keeping children from harm.

The staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and the procedures involved should they suspect it, helping to protect the children in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and relaxed. They have built relationships with the staff and each other. They learn important social skills such as sharing resources. Children show independence, making choices about what to play with and where they wish to play, indoors or outdoors. Children are encouraged to undertake tasks themselves but staff give good support when children are learning new skills. However, their independence is not promoted at other times such as during snack time when they do not pour their own drinks. Children play with a range

of resources. Some activities are adult led but the majority are child initiated. They enjoy regular outings to places of interest such as the local shops, the library, park and bus rides. The group plans activities using the Foundation Stage Framework. They also use this to assess children's stages of development regardless of their age. The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and the group is using the framework to assess the developmental stages of children under three years of age.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff show a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the different areas of learning. Activities are planned for the whole group. The staff discuss children's individual learning needs and how to adapt activities to meet these needs. However as there is no formal planning for individual children some developmental needs may be overlooked. Regular observations are made of children and these are used to assess children's stages of development rather than to plan the next step for them. Children enjoy their time at the setting. They understand right from wrong. It is difficult to assess how good children's achievements are compared to their starting points, as these are not currently recorded.

Children are confident to talk in a large group, sharing information about things that they enjoy. They show pride in their achievements, describing in detail things that they have made. They have made good friends and are well behaved. Children feel a sense of community. Local police officers, paramedics and the dentist are regular visitors. Children learn about self-care, for example practising road safety in the setting and then for real outside. There are many examples of the written word displayed in the setting and children hang their coats and bags at named pegs. Children enjoy stories in large groups and on a one-to-one basis. They are free to take books around the setting and outside if they wish. Children are encouraged to write their names on drawings. They practise their pre-writing skills during role-play. For example, children play at post offices, writing letters, posting and delivering them.

Children see numbers in the setting. They have opportunities to play with resources that help them to calculate, such as toy money, and resources to learn about shape and measuring, such as scales, jigsaw puzzles and various toys with different shapes in. Adults rote count with children, for example at snack time to find out how many crackers are on the plate. There are many opportunities for children to explore different textures such as sand and paint. They take an interest in the local environment and wildlife. Children show an interest in technology; however, there are limited opportunities for them to pursue this interest.

There are many opportunities for children to develop their gross and fine motor skills. An open door policy enables children to move in and outdoors, weather permitting. Children have use of large and small apparatus to enhance their physical development. They show an awareness of being healthy. For example, they have been learning about what food is good for them. They understand that they become hot when running outside and ensure that they take regular drinks. There are opportunities for children to explore different media and materials. For example, children are encouraged to explore the texture of paint with their feet. Children regularly draw and paint, using their imaginations to create pictures. However, adults often use work sheets with children which develop their pencil control but do not encourage children to use their imaginations. Children participate in music and movement sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The setting has a good understanding of equality of opportunity and a positive attitude towards diversity. Differences are acknowledged positively. Children are encouraged to talk about things that are important to them and staff make time to listen to them. The group strives to participate in the festivals celebrated by the children who attend. The group has a lot of experience caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The special needs co-ordinator works closely and sensitively with parents and other agencies to ensure that children receive the care that they require. Children's developmental needs are discussed with parents and concerns raised quickly, ensuring consistency of care for children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from lots of praise and encouragement and from some basic ground rules, which are consistently maintained. Appropriate strategies help children to understand right from wrong and consequently children are well behaved. A written behaviour policy is shared with parents and carers, encouraging them to become involved in devising strategies to manage behaviour. However, it is not clear as to whom the parents should approach if they need support or advice regarding behaviour management.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents and carers are invited to become part of the group. They are encouraged to stay for sessions and clear guidelines are in place to support them if they do. Parents are fully informed about the setting as they receive newsletters, see many photographs of their children playing, read the notice boards and have regular chats with staff. Before children start at the group they visit with their parents, filling in a book with them, which includes helpful information about family members and favourite toys, helping the group to care for children appropriately. A complaints procedure makes it clear to parents and carers the process involved should they have any concerns.

Parents are informed of the activities that their children are participating in through notices that are displayed at the setting and newsletters, which encourage them to participate too. They receive written reports on their children's progress and are invited to parents' evenings twice a year. However if they wish to see their children's portfolios at other times they must make a prior request as they are not stored at the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The group keeps themselves well informed of current childcare practices by attending relevant courses and then cascading what they have learnt on to their colleagues. This helps them to offer up to date care to children. All staff are first aid trained, enabling them to offer first aid in the event of an accident. The staff work together to monitor the service that they offer and to make any improvements to the care that they give children. All mandatory documentation is in place and policies and procedures are shared with parents and carers. Written parental permissions are sought, enabling the setting to offer children the appropriate care. The routine is organised to include a variety of activities; for example, free play, adult directed activities, group and snack time. Staff deploy well to ensure children are supported in their play, there is policy for deployment, but also know when to stand back and observe. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff work well as a team, meeting together regularly to discuss and review the playgroup. The staff have a clear vision for the setting and work together to make changes to the educational content. Activities are reviewed and assessed in order to make improvements to them when the group undertakes them again. Staff discuss children's individual learning needs and how they intend to meet them but do not make formal plans to do this.

Improvements since the last inspection

After the last care inspection, it was recommended that the setting continue to extend the range of information workshops and events for parents and that they plan to update child protection training for staff. After the last education inspection, it was recommended that the group review the opportunities for extending the learning of the more able children

Parents and carers are very involved with the group. There is a large parental committee and parents like to help in other ways such as at the summer fete. Regular questionnaires are sent to parents and they have recently been asked what workshops they would be interested in attending. The group plans to run these workshops while children are at the group. Parents and carers are encouraged to be part of their children's playgroup. A member of staff has attended training in child protection and cascaded this to her colleagues who show an awareness of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and the procedures involved should they suspect it. This helps to safeguard children.

Staff meet regularly to review the care and education that they offer children. Activities are planned for the whole group and staff discuss individual children's needs, adapting activities to meet those needs. Key workers extend the learning of their more able children. However, children that are more able tend to be extended when at adult led activities but not when playing freely.

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.

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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 that good hygiene practices regarding hand washing are in place at all times in order to keep children healthy
- further develop knowledge and understanding of promoting young children's overall development; for example by the use of Birth to three matters
- update the behaviour policy to include the name of the designated member of staff so that parents and carers are aware of who to approach when they need support.

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):

- develop the use of observations to inform the planning and ensure that activities are based on what children already know and what they need to learn next.

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