

The Learning Station Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113771
Inspection date	17 April 2007
Inspector	Gill Moore
Setting Address	Rose Green and Pagham Youth Centre, Hawkins Close, Rose Green, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO21 3LW
Telephone number	01243 264439
E-mail	
Registered person	Emma Ide
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 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?

The Learning Station Playschool is a privately owned group and opened in 1998. It operates from Rose Green and Paghams Youth Centre, Rose Green, Bognor and serves the local and surrounding areas. The group share the premises, although have sole use of the building when sessions are running. A maximum of 26 children may attend the group at any one time. The group is open Monday to Friday 09:00 - 12:00 during the school term. Children are provided with the option of bringing a packed lunch and staying for an additional 50 minutes. They stay for a variety of sessions and have access to an enclosed outside play area.

There are currently 32 children from 2 years to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 26 children receive funding for nursery education. The owner is a qualified early years practitioner and works directly with the children across all sessions. In addition, four staff work with the children, three on a full-time basis. One practitioner is qualified and another two are currently working towards a child care qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children show a very good awareness of how to take care of their bodies. They follow good hygiene procedures washing their hands before they sit for snack and recognise why this is important. Their awareness of health issues are enhanced through planned activities and experiences. For example, during the topic 'health awareness' the local dentist visits the group. He brings the instruments he uses in his surgery and talks to children about the importance of caring for their teeth. Children each receive a toothbrush to take home and are encouraged to clean their teeth more regularly. The importance of following good personal hygiene routines is extended as children use their imagination to act out their real and imagined experiences in the role-play area, which is transformed into a dental surgery.

Children's understanding of the importance of keeping active is promoted across the session helping them to recognise the benefits of exercise as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They use a range of large and small apparatus to develop their physical skills and negotiate bicycles and scooters developing good co-ordination. Children throw beanbags to one another, enjoy crawling through tunnels and laugh and giggle as they push their dolls around in the pushchair moving in and out of cones. Their climbing and balancing skills are developed through the use of climbing apparatus and balancing beams. Children recognise when they become thirsty and help themselves to a drink of water from the dispenser inside. They talk about how to take care of their bodies when playing in the sun recognising the need to wear a sun hat and sun cream in really hot weather.

Children's health is well-maintained because practitioners implement effective health and hygiene policies, for example using anti-bacterial spray to clean tables. Suitable procedures are in place to deal with accidents and record this information effectively sharing it with parents. Snack times are extremely well organised and children's self-care skills are promoted as they make their own decision about when they want to have their snack during the morning. They have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and this is enhanced through options available at snack time. Children pour their own drinks of water or milk and choose from healthy options, such as bread sticks, salad vegetables, and a wide variety of fruits. They discuss how vegetables help their bodies to grow and talk about the different types of food that each child likes. Consequently, children begin to recognise the need to eat a healthy, balanced diet.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children gain a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and this is promoted through discussions across the session. For example, children recognise why it is not safe to go beyond the fence outside to fetch the ball. They remind one another not to run inside recognising the potential danger if they should trip and fall over something. Their safety is promoted across the provision because practitioners are vigilant and ensure risks and hazards are removed, although no formal risk assessments are in place. Written procedures highlight arrangements for outings and for the safe collection of children. The effective deployment of staff at the beginning and end of sessions helps to ensure children are safe. However, procedures for recording children, staff and visitors to the group are not fully developed. Children are marked in the register about half an hour into the session during group registration time. No

records are kept relating to times practitioners arrive and leave the premises, and although a visitors book is in place, it is not accurately maintained. Consequently, children's safety cannot be assured, for example in the event of a fire during the early part of the session as exact times are not recorded of who is present at playschool.

Children know the procedure to follow should emergency evacuation be necessary and fire drills are practised. However, these are infrequent and no evaluation is made, which does not ensure that all children have practised this procedure. Safety gates and locks on main doors contribute to ensuring children are safe whilst in the building and playing in the enclosed outside play area. They benefit enormously from being able to freely wander between the inside and outside areas safely and independently access a wonderful range of equipment and play provision presented in low level moveable trolleys. Effective systems are in place to ensure this is safe, clean and well-maintained.

Practitioners have a very good understanding of child protection issues and recognise the different types of abuse. They work extremely closely with children and their families, supporting them when concerns are raised. Practitioners know the procedures to follow and liaise closely with appropriate agencies to ensure children are fully protected and safeguarded from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and arrive confidently to playschool. They are familiar with the daily routine selecting their name card and placing it in the basket. Children eagerly begin to participate in activities making their own decisions about where they want to play. Younger children benefit from playing alongside the older ones as they develop high levels of independence, although are confident to seek reassurance and support when required. They develop early counting skills and become skilful communicators because practitioners use children's self-chosen play to extend their learning. Children explore different objects in water and make predictions about which will sink. They competently fill the jug and empty water into smaller sized containers. Children use sieves and funnels when exploring sand and notice the glitter as it sparkles in the sand. They develop good imagination suggesting they fill their dumper trucks and take the sand to the building site.

The relaxed structure of the session ensures younger children fully involve themselves in activities. Practitioners are very effective in the way they adapt their questioning and teaching methods to sustain children's interests and capture their attention. For example, younger children recognise their photographs on their name cards helping to develop their sense of belonging. They sit and cuddle practitioners when they become tired and bring toys onto the 'magic carpet' during group discussions, as practitioners recognise their attention span is much shorter than the older children. In practice, younger children's needs are fully met and they enjoy learning and developing in safe and nurturing surroundings. Practitioners make observations of children's progress, however this information is not used to plan and identify children's next stages in their development.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are very motivated and eager to participate in activities, playing an active role in their learning. Their independent and self-care skills are extremely high and children concentrate well completing individual tasks to their satisfaction. They use an excellent range of vocabulary and communicate well contributing

confidently to group discussions. For example, children talk about their families and tell their peers what they have been doing over the weekend at registration time. They talk about the day and weather as practitioners hold the corresponding word and recognise letters and initial sounds using their name cards. However, few opportunities are available for children to extend their understanding of sounds and letters and practitioners make little use of resources and vocabulary displayed around the room to help promote this.

Children enjoy wonderful opportunities to develop their curiosity and investigative skills. They use magnifying glasses to examine a range of shells and cones and show great excitement when one child discovers a ladybird outside. The use of non-fiction books and stories are used to enhance children's understanding, for example as they learn about the life cycle of a frog. Children show great fascination examining the frog spawn and describe how this changes into a tadpole and later a frog. Resources such as magnets are used to promote children's understanding of different materials and children observe how things change by participating in cooking activities and planting seeds. Children's understanding of time is well developed and they use sand timers when using the computer, which helps them negotiate taking turns. They confidently control the mouse as they move the cursor around the maze using one of the computer programmes.

Children play extremely well together and their behaviour is very good. They recognise the need to share and show good spatial awareness as they count the number of children already at the snack table to see if there is a space for themselves. Children develop a very good understanding of mathematical concepts and practitioners encourage them to solve their own problems, for example around shape and size when completing a jigsaw puzzle. They freely access a wide range of mathematical resources learning to sort, match and compare a range of objects. Children confidently use weighing scales, recognise numbers and shapes and use very good mathematical language in their play. For example, children attempt to measure the fence outside using a measuring tape. With support from the practitioner they recognise that the tape is too short for the length of the fence and suggest that they should perhaps measure how tall it is instead.

Practitioners are very effective in the way they use everyday opportunities to extend children's learning in most areas. For example, one child notices her shadow on the ground outside when she lifts her hand to use the chalk. Practitioners talk to children about how shadows are formed, which promotes much discussion and excitement as children run around in search of their shadows and enjoy watching how they can move in different ways. They count the number of children present each day at registration time and begin to gain an understanding of subtraction, using number rhymes such as 'Five little speckled frogs,' although opportunities to compare numbers during routines and self-initiated activities are not fully promoted.

Practitioners have a very good knowledge of children's particular interests and build on this extending their learning. For example, children compare and recognise a variety of shapes as the practitioner draws a dartboard. They show excellent imagination acting out their real and imagined experiences in role-play. One child runs around pretending there is a fire. This promotes much interest from other children who take on roles of the firemen and pretend to use their hose to put out the fire. Effective use is made of this situation by practitioners who talk to children about how they would respond in a real emergency situation and they discuss the number to call. Children have fantastic opportunities to be creative as they freely access a vast array of media, tools and materials. They explore paint in a variety of ways, for example printing with cotton reels and making patterns using string and bubbles. Children design and build

models from recycled materials, talk about different textures as they explore media such as gloop and pasta, and confidently use scissors, staplers and a range of writing tools.

The structure of the sessions enhances children's learning because it provides many opportunities for them to initiate their own activities as well as working together in large groups. Children delight in participating in story sessions and 'fly to the moon' on the magic carpet with practitioners. They laugh and giggle singing songs and action rhymes and enjoy opportunities to explore sound and rhythm using a range of musical instruments. The use of space is extremely effective in that children have the use of both the inside and outside learning environment across the session.

All practitioners recognise how children learn most effectively and use exciting and inspirational teaching methods to encompass children's learning. However, the systems for planning and assessing children's progress are insecure. Although practitioners make written observations of children's achievements, their ongoing progress towards the early learning goals is not monitored. Children's starting points are not assessed and information gained from observations is not used effectively to plan the next steps in their learning. As a result, although younger children receive very good support and boost their confidence, insufficient challenge is provided to those more able.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children flourish and develop secure, positive relationships with practitioners and their peers. They are extremely settled and self-assured and show high levels of self-esteem and confidence. Children display a very caring attitude towards one another, for example older children help younger ones to put on their aprons and they sit with a new child helping her to feel secure and confident in her surroundings. Children are very considerate towards one another remembering not to shout when singing because some of the younger children, and those new to the setting, are frightened by these loud noises. All children develop a sense of responsibility helping to pack away activities when they have finished playing. They wheel the trolleys to the cupboard and help sweep up sand with the dustpan and brush recognising that it is everyone's responsibility to help tidy up. Practitioners are highly effective in the way they manage children's behaviour. They use methods of distraction to divert their attention, for example when they become noisy in group activities. Positive reinforcement is given continually and children respond extremely well to this learning to value themselves and one another. They negotiate taking turns and talk through problems together without the support of an adult. Consequently their behaviour is extremely good.

All children benefit because they are highly valued as individuals and practitioners know their individual home and family circumstances well. Children recognise and talk about the similarities and differences between themselves and others and this is promoted through discussions, use of stories and activities linked to topics, such as 'All about me.' They visit the local park and library, post letters in the post box nearby and enjoy visits from people who work in their local community, including the dentist and fire brigade. This increases children's awareness of their local community. Children's understanding of diversity is promoted as they use a range of multi-cultural resources, including dressing up clothes, and celebrate a range of special events and cultural festivals. For example, children use the globe and non-fiction books to find out about how people live in Africa, what they wear and how near this country is to where they live. They use chopsticks to eat stir fry vegetables and make lanterns as part of their festivities when celebrating Chinese New Year. A range of practical experiences, together with the use

of stories, such as Handa's surprise, helps children to increase their understanding of the wider world. Consequently, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Every child is valued as an individual and all play an active role in the setting because practitioners promote a fully inclusive environment. Effective systems are in place to support children with specific requirements or learning difficulties and detailed information is obtained from parents relating to children's individual needs and requirements as part of the registration procedures. Children benefit enormously and settle well into the group because practitioners establish secure, informal relationships with parents. Regular letters and information displayed on the notice board helps to ensure parents are well informed about topics and events that are happening within the group. Parents are extremely happy with the provision and feel confident to raise concerns with the provider should they have any. However, the complaints procedure has not been developed to include the requirement to keep a complaints log and insufficient information is provided to parents relating to how they can make a formal complaint.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents are helped to understand how children learn through play as they receive detailed information about the curriculum and the different areas of learning. Informal discussion takes place regularly, for example when children are collected, however procedures for parents to discuss their child's ongoing progress towards the early learning goals have not yet been developed. Opportunities for parents to share information about what their child can do are not provided and parents do not receive suggestions of how to extend their child's learning in the home. This impacts on their ability to fully contribute to their child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children really enjoy their time in the setting because all practitioners have a secure understanding of how children learn and recognise the importance of play in their development. The playschool is well organised and management and practitioners have clear, defined roles and responsibilities. They work extremely well as a team and share the same vision. As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Effective communication takes place informally on a daily basis and through the implementation of frequent staff meetings. Consequently, operational issues are addressed on a regular basis and the group promotes satisfactory outcomes for children. Children benefit because practitioners are qualified or working towards a child care qualification and use exciting teaching methods to capture their attention and interest. Procedures are in place to recruit, appoint and induct new staff, although these are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure children are protected and systems to establish the ongoing suitability of existing staff have not yet been introduced.

The leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. Some improvements have been made since the last inspection and there have been recent changes in the staff team. Management recognise the strengths of the group and identify areas for development, many of which have had a positive impact on children's learning. For example, recent changes include reviewing the structure of sessions, organisation of space and implementation of staff appraisals. However, little attention has been paid to improving systems to assess children and link this to the planning of activities. Evaluation is informal and insufficient emphasis is placed on evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and the impact this has on children's individual progress towards the early learning goals.

Practitioners understand the requirements relating to the National Standards, across most areas, and implement effective policies and procedures within the group. Most of the required documentation is in place, although there are weaknesses in relation to the recording of some information, which impacts on practitioner's ability to fully safeguard children. The implementation of a successful key worker system enhances relationships within the group and children become extremely self-assured and confident. They have a wonderful time at playschool and are extremely happy becoming competent and autonomous learners.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were asked to ensure appropriate supervision for children when accessing toilet provision. Children access the toilets independently, which helps develop their self-care skills. Younger children are supported effectively during toileting and hand washing, ensuring they begin to develop their independence in a safe environment. Practitioners are aware of when children go in and out of the toilet area and monitor this across the session, ensuring they are safe and well protected. The group were also asked to ensure details of significant incidents of behaviour and pre-existing injuries are recorded appropriately. These procedures have now been developed to ensure parents sign the entry and confidentiality is maintained, although some records do not include the full names of children.

At the last nursery education inspection four key issues were raised. The group were asked to develop children's individual assessments and observations and link with future planning and to introduce staff appraisals and more team meetings. They were also asked to provide parents with formal details of children's achievements and to include opportunities for children to write during free play. Staff appraisals have now been introduced and staff meetings take place every half term. This helps to ensure training needs and operational issues within the group are discussed on a regular basis. Children have many opportunities to practise emergent writing across the session and confidently use a range of writing tools and materials, which they access independently.

Procedures to develop children's assessment records and link with future planning are still insecure and remain a recommendation following this inspection. Systems to share details of children's individual achievements are not yet in place and this also remains a recommendation.

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 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

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 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):

- develop the procedures to recruit, appoint and induct new staff and ensure the ongoing suitability of those already working in the setting
- develop the procedure for making complaints to include the requirement to keep a complaints log and ensure parents are informed of this procedure
- improve procedures to record staff and children to and from the setting, ensure an accurate record of visitors is maintained and develop the procedures for practising fire drills with children

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):

- improve the recording and monitoring of children's assessments and ensure this information is used to plan the next stage in their individual learning promoting sufficient challenge
- increase opportunities for parents to be informed about their child's ongoing progress towards the early learning goals, next steps for their development and how they can support this in the home
- increase opportunities for children to recognise letters and sounds and make comparisons between numbers

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