

Sparklers Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	131560
Inspection date	19 April 2007
Inspector	Judith Reed
Setting Address	St. Denys Church Centre, Dundee Road, Southampton, Hampshire, SO17 2ND
Telephone number	023 8034 4377
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Registered person	St. Deny's Community Help Projects
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Sparklers Playgroup is owned and managed by the St Deny's Community Help Projects, a registered charity, which is based at St Deny's Church Centre in Southampton. It was first established in 1997. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday morning from 09.00 to 11.30 during school term time. An outside play area is available.

There are currently 36 children aged between two and five years on roll. Of these, 31 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup serves the local community. The group currently supports children who have learning difficulties or disabilities as well as a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup has two full-time staff and four part-time staff as well as a regular volunteer. Of these, six members of staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have daily opportunities to take part in physical play activities. The climbing frame is available everyday and children take frequent opportunities to climb up the step ladders and slide down the slide. They join in parachute games at the end of the morning, taking turns to run underneath as they lift the parachute up and down. Children have use of an outside play area where they can dig the garden and plant seeds. They also join in small group games throwing and catching a ball.

Children are offered a healthy snack during the session. The setting provides water or milk drinks. Some parents bring individual drinks for their children. These are collected when children arrive and a staff member writes the child's name on the container. Parents are made aware that drinks are not stored in the fridge. A healthy eating policy is in place. Children relish the snack of toast or fruit pieces which staff hand to them. Staff are very aware of children's individual dietary requirements and allergies.

Children are healthy as they help themselves to tissues from a box and dispose of them in a waste bin. They also use individual paper towels for drying, when they have washed their hands. Children ask to be taken to the nearby toilets by staff members. A well stocked first aid kit is available at all times and staff have completed suitable first aid training. All staff carry a pair of plastic gloves to protect both the children and themselves in case of emergency. Accidents are recorded on individual sheets and small notes are prepared for parents, to keep them fully informed when children are collected by childminders or other adults. Staff have not obtained permission to administer emergency medication which is left at playgroup each day. All children currently share a bowl of water for hand washing within the playgroup room. This is used all morning following activities such as gardening, painting and gluing.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have use of a large hall within a church centre building. Toilets are along the corridor and children are accompanied by a member of staff. A kitchen is adjacent to the playgroup room, although this is not accessed by the children. Children also use part of the large outdoor area. Staff erect a temporary fence each day to designate the children's play area within the grounds. Children use the outdoor area in both large and small groups, and are accompanied by staff at all times.

Children are safe as the staff team are vigilant regarding safety issues. When children are taken to the toilet the member of staff accompanying them takes a walkie talkie radio, in case of emergency, and displays how many children she has taken on the door hooks. In the case of an emergency all staff can immediately see how many children are out of the room, with which member of staff, and they can be contacted. The walkie talkies are also used if a member of staff takes a small group of children into the garden. She can call for help if necessary. Regular risk assessments are carried out and daily visual checks are made. Staff are particularly aware of safety regarding children with allergies. They have recently ensured that the junk modelling materials are suitable for all children. The staff team are also particularly careful about the safety of the children at the end of the session. Children wait on the mat until their name is

called when their parent or carer has arrived to collect them. Fire evacuation is practised each half term, although there is no record of the drills and evaluation is not carried out.

Children make their own choices about their activities. They have a wide range of equipment around the room and further toys are available if required. For example the box of trains is brought out when the track has been put together in preparation. Staff ensure all toys and equipment are suitable, safe and clean for the children when they arrange the room. An annual cleaning programme is carried out and toys are cleaned as necessary in between.

Children are safeguarded as the staff have an understanding of child protection procedures. A child protection policy is in place and parents are made aware of procedures. Staff are aware of their professional responsibilities regarding child protection, recording concerns on clear documentation, and storing it in a confidential manner.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the pre-school confidently and happily. They are busy and well occupied and enjoy their time at the setting. Children form friendships and talk quietly to one another about their activities. Most children concentrate well on their activities. Children who are unsettled when they enter are helped to separate from their parents by skilled staff and quickly become involved in tasks. Children are familiar with the routine of the playgroup and know that when music is played during the session it is time to tidy away the toys. They are all involved in putting toys back into boxes and containers before sitting on the mat to receive their "helping hand" rewards. Children follow instructions well and they sit where they are told for snack time.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and develop well. Staff know the children very well and ensure they note individual development and attainments for entry into their personal records of achievement. Staff help children gain confidence by encouraging them in their activities. Children with English as an additional language are helped to learn as staff use their facial expressions and hands to demonstrate numbers, recognition and encouragement. They join in activities and are particularly successful when using the computer matching pictures and making pairs. The computer talks to the children and helps them to learn English by naming the picture or pair matched. Children enjoy a period of free play during the first part of the session. They are individually invited to join some staff members, at set areas, for target tasks during this free play session. The tasks are directed by staff with clear objectives for learning. Tasks include a counting to five game, with children matching the number of items in boxes, and a craft activity with children being shown some seeds to stick onto a paper plate to make a picture. Also children are invited to observe and draw trees with blossom on them or take part in a digging activity in the garden.

During free play children are actively involved in their own learning. They make choices and move from one activity to another. Children take regular opportunities to look at books and one child pretends to be the leader, showing other children the pictures in a book and holding it away from himself. They listen to a story tape and turn over pages on the signal. Children also appreciate the opportunity to look at a home-made book about themselves. They look at the photographs and see their own contributions of pictures and writing. Children begin to recognise letters in their own names saying "That letter is in my name".

Children have many opportunities to count and use numbers. They use observation and calculation to say how many more items are needed to make number five in the counting task. Staff also use incidental opportunities to introduce counting, for example, during observation games, saying "How many seeds are there?". Children also join in games which involve number recognition. They relish the chance to use the computer and confidently select games for the group to play. Children use the computer individually and match items in the games with a click on the mouse. They learn about growing seeds and begin to prepare the ground for growing by clearing out the weeds. Staff encourage children to observe the changes in trees around the car park.

Children use their imagination to tell stories and pretend to be unwell. One child signalled that she had lost her voice. When asked what she could do she signed that she would rest on some cushions. After she had rested for a few seconds she excitedly said "It has come back and it is better". Then her voice disappeared again and she said it had gone up to the ceiling and outside the windows. She covered her mouth and pretended that her voice was coming from somewhere else in the room. She said "I hope my voice will be blown back in the wind!" Children have free access to a range of tools and materials on the art trolley, this helps them develop hand eye co-ordination and small muscles. Children help themselves to paper for painting. They choose the size and colour of paper from the trolley and paint their pictures on the painting table. Children also join in creating large scale pictures and displays for the walls.

Children have good manipulative skills and use pencils, pens and scissors with confidence. They use scissors to cut paper and glue to stick it together. Children write letters to a giant who lives at the top of the beanstalk they have created. They post their letters in the box at the base of the beanstalk. They also receive individual replies from the giant.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from the acceptable relationship between the staff and their parents and carers. Staff have a brief discussion with parents and carers as children are dropped off, or collected from playgroup. Parents receive a copy of the prospectus when their children start at playgroup and this informs them about policies, procedures and the Foundation Stage of development. They are also invited to join in sessions and support staff. Parents state that they are very happy with the care provided by the playgroup and feel they can approach staff regarding any concerns. They are happy with the good progress of their children, although, they are not involved or aware of the plans of the playgroup. Staff ensure parents and carers are aware of the complaints procedure but they have not prepared a complaints record for parents to view on request.

All children and their families are valued. The playgroup staff invite families to contribute by joining in story-telling, as well as writing words of welcome for the entrance and translating nursery rhymes. Children use a variety of equipment and toys which reflect diversity including a range of dressing up clothes, dolls, books with dual language text and jigsaws showing celebrations from other cultures.

Many children have English as an additional language and the staff team endeavour to work one to one, or in small groups, to help them understand and learn. They use their facial expressions as well as their hands to signal and direct children. Staff support children with learning difficulties and disabilities by identifying their additional needs and working with other professionals to help them learn. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with

advisors from the Local Authority and attends regular support/training groups to develop her skills. The whole staff team ensure all activities are suitable and appropriate for all children attending the playgroup.

Children's behaviour is very good. They have good manners and staff consistently encourage the use of "please" and "thank you". Staff are good role models for children and a behaviour management policy is in place. Children are rewarded with "Helping Hands" cut out shapes when they have been helpful and tidied away the toys. These are displayed on a wall chart, with each child's name, until the end of the session. Certificates are handed out on a regular basis with the total of "Helping Hands" awarded shown on the certificate. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are protected as staff are trained and the leader ensures all necessary checks are completed. Suitable recruitment procedures are in place and a range of documentation has been prepared. All staff have job descriptions and ongoing training is valued. Two members of staff are currently on training courses. The emergency contact information for all staff members is available if required.

Children move around freely in the well organised environment. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children register themselves into the setting by placing their name cards in a box as they enter. A further register of attendance is completed by staff soon after the start of the session. Times of arrival and departure from the playgroup are noted if they are different from normal. The leader ensures a high ratio of five staff present during each session. Some organisational planning is weak as staff are not fully clear on their duties or roles during the session. Written plans are not always available and they are not shared with parents. Emergency medication administration is not fully documented to ensure children's health at all times. Fire drills are not recorded and a complaints record is not available as required. Also children are not able to be clean and hygienic as the hand washing water is not changed regularly.

Leadership and management is good. Staff take part in regular staff meetings where they discuss planning, records of achievement, new children and their key worker children. Individual records of achievement are kept up to date by key workers and show clear progression and development throughout the time at playgroup. All staff get to know the children very well and build sound relationships with their parents. Staff are aware of the individual progress of each child and how to help them progress. Task planning is clear and includes aims, objectives and links to the stepping stones. Overall written weekly session planning is inconsistent. All staff make brief observational records to add to children's achievement records. The leader and deputy have a good relationship with both the children and the staff team. They have built a well trained, supportive group of staff who continue to develop and value training opportunities.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to carry out several recommendations including improvements to; fire evacuation documentation, medication administration documentation, accident recording and recording of concerns. Staff have written a suitable fire evacuation procedure which is displayed for all to see. They have prepared documentation to record

medication permission and administration, although this has not been used to date. This remains a recommendation as medication is to be administered in an emergency.

Parents are informed about accidents through a small additional note, which is handed to childminders or other carers who collect children. Staff are aware of their duty to keep records of concerns and record any further steps taken to safeguard children.

At the last education inspection the setting was asked to improve the communication, language and literacy programme. The setting is part of a communication language and literacy project together with the local school. This has enhanced the provision of communication language and literacy within the setting. Children recognise letters and sounds and also enjoy stories and rhymes. They were also asked to ensure everyday routines included letter recognition and number. Children use number and calculation in games and activities. They observe letters and numbers around the setting and recognise those that are familiar to them. Finally the staff were asked to develop the planning system and include objectives. The current planning system of tasks includes clear learning outcomes for all areas of learning, although weekly overall plans are not always in place, and this remains a recommendation.

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 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 good.

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):

- keep a record of fire evacuation drills and evaluate the drill to make further improvements
- obtain written consent to administer all medication including specific emergency medication
- provide hygienic hand cleaning facilities for children
- provide a complaints record for parents

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 and improve written planning so that it is meaningful to staff
- enhance partnership with parents further by sharing Foundation stage plans with parents, offer information on the Foundation Stage curriculum and formally encourage parents to link the learning to their home environment

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