

Brockenhurst Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109732
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Inspector	Carole Gronow
Setting Address	Village Hall, Highwood Road, Brockenhurst, Hants. SO42 7RY
Telephone number	01590 623708
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Registered person	Brockenhurst 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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Brockenhurst Playgroup opened in approximately 1968 and operates from a room in the village hall. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 26 children aged from two to under five years may attend the group at any one time. There are currently 25 children on roll and of these, 22 receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup is open each weekday during term time from 09:00 to 12:00 and there is an optional lunch club between 12:00 and 12:55.

The playgroup welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup employs six staff, five of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment where their good health is fully protected and the risk of illness from cross-infection is minimised through the comprehensive procedures that are in place. Children are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times, paper towels are provided and there are visual prompts to remind them. Children clearly understand the importance of cleanliness as they talk about germs with staff. They tell staff when a child puts the fork in their mouth which was being used to serve fruit, so that it has to be changed. They also know that they cannot blow the Ocarina because it has been in the supervisor's mouth. There is all the relevant documentation to ensure that children are appropriately cared for in the event of a medical emergency however, not all entries in the accident book have been countersigned by parents. Children's good health is also supported through the healthy snacks and drinks that they are offered. Children chose from a selection of fresh fruit that they help to cut up and prepare. They peel oranges and bananas, segment the oranges and slice the bananas and put them on plates. They drink either water or milk which they pour for themselves. Children's individual dietary needs are well respected. All staff are fully aware of these and a large notice is placed on each snack tray to act as a reminder.

Children have daily opportunities for physical exercise when they play outside in a play area which has fixed equipment in it, and is just across the car park. Children practise their balance and co-ordination as they clamber on the climbing frame, run along the bridge and go down the slide. They enjoy the swings and walking on flower-pot stilts. They practise their aim by rolling balls to each other in the hall at circle time and outside by throwing bean bags at a target. They use balls, hoops and enjoy playing games, such as 'What's the time Mr Wolf?' Children move confidently and safely, negotiating spaces for example, when they are engaged in physical activities such as acting out the story of the mermaid under the sea and pretending to be different things such as a surfer, a crab and a shark.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

There are inadequate systems for the vetting of adults connected with the group. However, children are cared for in premises that are suitable for their purpose and which are self contained for the duration of the session. There is a kitchen for the staff's use. Toilets are low level and children access these independently. Entrance to the playgroup is made welcoming by the information that is placed on the doors and by staff who greet each family and child individually as they arrive. However, inside the hall there is little on display to help make the room attractive to children. Children are provided with suitable furniture, equipment and toys, all of which are clean and in good condition. Appropriate measures are in place to ensure that the premises are safe for children, for instance cleaning materials are stored up high. Also, children know not to enter the kitchen or the store room and there are specific risk assessments in place which cover areas of concern, such as the outside play area.

Children are safe when going out to play because there are well considered procedures in place which staff and children are all familiar with. Children have opportunities to learn about how to respond in an emergency because they participate in fire drills. However, the playgroup does not keep their own log of these and is reliant on the centre's records to check dates, which are not always documented accurately. Children are protected in areas of concern because there

is a thorough child protection policy in place and an identified member of staff who is clear in her role. However, the policy is not shared with parents prior to children commencing at the playgroup.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are pleased to be at the playgroup, they enter confidently and most quickly settle to play with their friends. Children who find it difficult to separate from their carer are supported by staff and are soon happily occupied. Children form good relationships with others and staff alike and are confident to approach staff calling them by name. Settling-in plans completed with parents by the key worker, help to ensure that staff are fully aware of each individual child and how best to help them when they start at the group. Children under three benefit from staff's awareness of the Birth to three framework and the adjustments that are made within the daily plans for them to be fully involved in all the activities that are offered.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although all staff are becoming familiar with the Foundation Stage of learning few have yet received training in it. Staff are all enthusiastic about their work and are committed to providing good quality care and education for children, and are willing to undertake training to achieve this. The manager ensures that staff are aware of the planned activities prior to children arriving and provides plans which inform them of the intended learning outcomes. Staff are also given observation sheets to record children and this is transferred to their individual red books in which observations are logged. Because staff are not yet fully conversant with the stepping stones they do not always record observations about the specified outcomes for the activity which are linked to the stepping stones. They do however make relevant notes about the discussion that the child has with them. The playgroup is committed to offering a continuous curriculum where play is child initiated. However presently, when staff are undertaking tasks which take them away from their direct work with children, such as tidying away equipment or preparing fruit for snack time the noise levels rise and children become restless as there is insufficient equipment to occupy them or staff to work with them. Focussed activities work very well, practitioners thoroughly plan and well resource these providing appropriate props which gain and sustain children's interest. For instance, for the current theme of 'Cowboys and Indians' there is a tepee, logs to make a fire, some dressing up clothes and relevant reference and story books. There are saddles for the children to sit on and also a focus activity linked to this where children can make dream catchers. The skilful use of a props bag encourages children to be curious, eager to find out what is in it. Staff at snack time sit with the children having interesting conversations with them about what they have been doing and introducing new words to them such as that slices of oranges are called segments.

Children show good levels of personal care. They put on and take off their coats and cardigans when going out to play. Nearly all of them can take off, and most can put on, their own shoes and socks. Some can even put their tights back on. Children pour their own drinks at snack time and serve themselves fruit using a fork or spoon then pass the plate to the next child. Children help each other, for example, two of them carry a bowl of water from the sink to the water play. Children are good talkers and have lots of conversations between themselves. They are thoroughly absorbed and attentive at circle times with stories, rhymes and songs. Staff engage them with the use of prompts and actions. Children enthusiastically join in with familiar lines such as 'We're going on a bear hunt'. Children's listening skills are developing because

they are given opportunities to listen to and distinguish different sounds. Children enjoy sharing books as a group and when a member of staff reads to them, but they do not readily access the books that are on display and there is nowhere comfortable for them to sit quietly and look at them. Children get some opportunities to count within the daily routine, for example when going out to play, however staff do not encourage this at other times such as when handing out cups at snack time. Children find out about and identify some features of living things, they look at footprints including their own, look at snowdrops, plant bulbs and grow cress. They study frogs, following their life cycle and make a collage which includes leaves, flowers and frogs spawn. Children competently use scissors to cut and expertly squeeze glue out onto their craft work. They use crayons of varying sizes – brick-shape, wax and larger wooden triangular ones. They use knives when they help to cut up the fruit at snack time. They use glue spreaders and are provided with a range of different sizes of paint brushes. They enjoy playing with dough, cutting and rolling it. Children thoroughly enjoy music. They sing familiar songs and join in marching to the beat when out to the play area to the Grand Old Duke of York and they beat out rhythms with the 'beat baby'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel valued and respected because their individual needs are met. Staff find out all the relevant information when children start in a discussion between the key worker and the parents. For example, one child only spoke French when she started and so staff ensured that they included some French during the session. This also helps other children to realise that other people use different languages to communicate. Visitors to the group help children learn about the local community and they visit the local school and they also learn about other people who live in the world. There are however, no resources available that reflect disability. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported because a member of staff has been identified as the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and she links with parents and other professionals.

Children's positive behaviour is encouraged by all the praise that staff give. They explain to children about any unwanted actions and the consequences such as why they must not throw a ball but roll it even though it is soft. Children are very polite many routinely saying please and thank you. They are learning to recognise their feeling and those of others because staff use cubes with different facial expressions to discuss these with the children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The setting keeps parents informed about the provision and things that are relevant to their children. Letters are issued about topical things such as head lice or to explain the purpose of the dream catchers. There are newsletters to tell them of forthcoming events and to give other information. Parents enter the playgroup in the mornings and many stop and speak to the staff. A welcome pack is given to each family when a child starts which informs them about how the provision runs and about how their child will be cared for.

Partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funding for nursery education is satisfactory. Initially parents are given some brief details about early years education in the welcome pack, however they receive no further information, for example about the stepping stones. Record books of staff observations are accessible near the entrance so that parents can look at them at any time and children's records of achievements are stapled inside these. However, not all parents are aware that these are available and some of the hand written entries are not easily legible. The only planned opportunity for parents to formally meet with staff to

discuss their child and their records after they have started at the playgroup is just before children start school.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The registered person, in this case the committee, has not implemented a robust system in order to ensure that all adults connected with the group are vetted. Neither has the registered person informed Ofsted of changes in its members, so they have not been subject to checks to ensure their suitability. It has also failed to inform Ofsted that the playgroup had increased the hours of operation, to four daily. However, they immediately rectified this so that they are now operating for under the four hours. These are breaches in regulation and consequently the setting does not meet the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Records of visitors are kept as are records of staff and children's attendances. However, times are not recorded for children who do not attend for the entire session. If children go early their attendance mark is written over to show they are absent. The total number of children attending is reduced which provides an inaccurate account of the total number of children present at any one time. As a consequence the playgroup does not keep an accurate record of children's hours of attendance.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The committee supports staff in their work with children and provides any necessary resources that are asked for. All the required policies and procedures are written and in place and have been reviewed within the past year. Annual appraisals have been introduced for all staff. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake training that will enhance their development and that of the playgroup. The committee however, has insufficient knowledge and understanding of the regulatory requirements in relation to the National Standards.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the playgroup received four recommendations concerning the care of children. To develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a level 2 qualification in childcare. To conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying actions to be taken to minimize identified risks both inside and outside the building. To ensure good hygiene practices are in place regarding the cleanliness of the toilets in accordance with the pre-school policy and also to ensure that all staff are aware of, and are able to deal with, children's individual dietary requirements. These have all been addressed. Over half the staff hold qualifications at level 2 or above and risk assessments are in place for both inside and outside the building. The toilets are maintained in a clean condition and all staff are made aware of and are familiar with individual children's dietary requirements.

With reference to the nursery education provided the playgroup was asked to consider five things: develop the role play settings, including a greater level of staff participation - children enjoy role play in activities such as 'Cowboys and Indians' when a well planned range of props are provided and staff involve themselves with the children and read stories related to the themes. To plan more opportunities in art and craft for children to construct and select resources for their own purpose and children now have some opportunities to do this. They were also asked to re-organise the grouping of children for story time to allow them more space and opportunities to participate. Although story time is still done in a group, skilful story telling with the use of prompts engages the children and holds their interest. Also to continue to

develop observations and assessments, so that planning can be used to help children make progress in their learning. Staff are responsible for observations and assessments and key workers record this and check to see where children need more help in order to make progress. The playgroup was also asked to use the home language of children who have English as an additional language. Staff are very much aware of children who speak other languages, such as French and they include some in the session, for instance when counting the children outside.

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.

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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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that there are effective procedures in place for checking that staff are suitable to work with children
- ensure that Ofsted is promptly informed of any changes to the registered person or key staff
- ensure that Ofsted is informed in advance about any proposed changes to the type of provision being offered
- improve the system for registering children and staff by clearly and accurately recording their hours of attendance.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- make effective use of staff and resources in order to provide children with a stimulating environment which offers them challenges throughout the session
- provide parents with more detailed information about the early learning goals and with regular opportunities for them to discuss their child's record and to share what they know about their child

- develop staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage in order to ensure that they can support the delivery of the curriculum more effectively.

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