

Harpenden Playscheme

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY339731
Inspection date	07 August 2007
Inspector	Hilary Preece
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Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Harpenden Play Scheme is one of eight Special Needs Activities and Play (SNAP) Hertfordshire Ltd play schemes, a registered charity managed by a board of trustees. It registered in 2007 and operates from the main hall and a classroom at The Grove School, Harpenden, Hertfordshire. The scheme is open each weekday for four weeks in the summer holidays from 10:00 to 15:00 and for limited days during the Christmas and Easter holidays. There is access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Regular outings to local amenities are planned, including swimming.

A maximum of 12 children under eight may attend the play scheme at any one time, although it is open to children and adults up to age of 19 years. There are currently 22 children on roll, of which nine are under eight years. The scheme supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

Harpenden Play Scheme employs seven members of staff. Of these four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health and hygiene is promoted through children's daily routines and effective policies. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children wash their hands at appropriate times and adhere to strict cleaning and hygiene procedures when managing children's personal care and preparation of snacks. This protects children from cross-infection. A robust sickness policy that excludes children with infectious conditions further protects children. Children's individual medical and dietary requirements are fully discussed and documented to enable staff to administer medication and manage children's health appropriately. Sufficient staff are qualified in first aid and medical supplies are readily available on site and during outings. Appropriate records of any accidents and treatment given are kept and shared with parents so that they are informed about any health issues. Arrangements for ensuring that children are protected from the sun in hot weather are less robust. Some children are provided with hats and sun cream which is applied at home but others are not, and there is no system for staff to know if they are wearing sun protection. This puts these children at potential risk from sun burn and over-heating.

Children eat a nutritious snack of fresh fruit each morning and a healthy approach to food is encouraged. Parents are given guidance on suitable and healthy options for their children's packed lunches and all perishable items are labelled and stored safely in the refrigerator. This ensures food remains fresh and safe to eat. Children take part in activities that develop their interest and awareness of healthy eating. For example, they sometimes walk to the local shops to buy a selection of fresh fruits for their snack and take part in making a fruit salad during a healthy eating week. Drinking water is available throughout the day, and children are reminded to drink at regular intervals when playing outside, so that they do not get dehydrated.

Children are encouraged to be physically active and enjoy fresh air each day. This contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Children are provided with a range of equipment for indoor and outside use that helps develop their physical strength and co-ordination. They enjoy playing table tennis and ball games with staff and they explore fixed climbing apparatus on site and in the local play park. Children are offered lots of encouragement and reassurance when climbing and working out how to use new equipment. This develops their confidence and helps to overcome any physical challenges presented to them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in safe, secure and suitably resourced premises. Children have access to sufficient toilet facilities and privacy is ensured when staff attend to personal care needs. There is a designated area for eating and food activities and provision is made in a comfortable book area for children who want to relax or rest quietly if they so choose. Staff are effective in supervising children as they move between areas so they remain safe. Space and resources are used well to provide children with independent access to a range of play facilities that meet the varied needs of the children who attend. Children use a wide range of developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. These are regularly cleaned and checked for safety so that children do not come to any harm.

The setting has some rigorous policies and procedures that enhance children's safety and well-being. Risk assessments are carried out on the areas of the premises, for outings and planned activities to ensure children can safely access and enjoy the facilities. A fire evacuation procedure is practised so that children and staff understand what action to take in order to protect themselves in the event of an emergency. Children are kept safe on outings because staff follow clear guidelines, including taking essential supplies, making regular head counts and reinforcing safety boundaries with the children. Additional adult support is provided by volunteers on outings to ensure that higher adult to child ratios are maintained. This provides children with close one-to-one support on activities with a higher degree of risk, such as swimming.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by a comprehensive child protection policy. All new staff receive thorough induction training that provides them with the necessary awareness of how to recognise and deal with any concerns about a child, and procedures to follow in the event of allegations being made against staff are clear. Furthermore, staff are vigilant in monitoring visitors to the premises and challenging unauthorised persons in order to protect children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily and quickly settle into their chosen play. They are warmly greeted by staff and volunteers, and relationships are very positive. This helps children feel secure. Throughout the day, children benefit from the high levels of interaction and communication from caring staff. The atmosphere is relaxed and the focus is on having fun. This means children are able to make their own choices and decisions about what to play with. Children are enabled to understand the routines of the day and when certain activities will take place because staff use clear visual reminders when necessary, such as signing and pictures on the daily plan. This provides reassurance and security for the children.

Children are keen to take part in activities and remain engaged and absorbed for considerable lengths of time. Some play co-operatively and enjoy chatting together as they sit around the table. Social interaction with others is skilfully supported by staff who sit with the children and encourage conversation. Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they are praised and encouraged, for example when persevering with a sticking activity, and the art work is proudly displayed in the children's gallery.

Children benefit from a wide range of planned activities and outings. They excitedly talk about their visit to an activity centre and the swimming pool. Visitors to the play scheme broaden the experiences children have and enable them to take part in some stimulating activities. These include an African drumming session and tactile story telling session from the librarian. Children show interest in the resources set out for them and are very keen to explore new toys, such as a bubble blowing machine. They explore different musical sounds and tones. A child enthusiastically copies a rhythm played on a drum and listens as staff sing songs. Overall, the well balanced programme of activities and play opportunities is stimulating, fun and appropriate to the developmental stage of the children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are warmly welcomed to the play scheme and staff show genuine interest in getting to know them. This helps children feel valued and fosters a sense of belonging. Children's individual needs for security and familiarity are supported as they are encouraged to bring in personal toys or comforters from home. Children's individual needs and care routines are met well. Parents complete a detailed child profile at the outset that staff use to plan appropriate care and activities, and receive a written review at the end of the play scheme. They also receive some detailed information prior to the play scheme about planned activities, policies and procedures. Further communications are sent out as required, such as the recently reviewed complaints procedure. This keeps them well informed about general issues. However, arrangements for sharing specific information about the children at the end of the day are inconsistent. Some parents, if requested, receive written feedback in a communication diary from a key worker. Other parents are not sure who their child's key worker is and have to seek out staff for feedback. This impacts on the effectiveness of communication with parents and carers. Overall, most parents questioned during inspection were generally very pleased with the service provided and confirmed how much their children enjoyed attending.

Children develop awareness of the local and wider community through outings and visitors to the play scheme. They use books and play resources that reflect diversity. Children are becoming aware of their own needs and those of others because staff take time to explain differences within the group. When some children display unwanted behaviour or find it difficult to communicate verbally staff skilfully explain to others why this is in a way they can understand. Children's positive behaviour is consistently encouraged by staff through praise and acting as good role models. For example, for meals and snacks they sit with the children and all eat together to foster social skills and responsible behaviour.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The overall good organisation of the play scheme is attributed to an effective management team and strong staff. The management is able to identify areas for further development and respond promptly to address any issues. For example, the organisation is currently reviewing the way in which they maintain records of staff checks and qualifications to make their system more robust. Recruitment of staff is secure. All staff undergo a vetting procedure to ensure they are suitable to carry out their duties. There are clear procedures for ensuring that staff whose vetting is not complete are not left in sole charge of children so children's welfare is safeguarded. All staff undergo an induction programme and in-house training is provided to ensure staff are competent in first aid, health and safety and child protection. Key staff are qualified and experienced in working with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This helps staff to manage the range of needs of the children who attend and act as good role models to other staff and volunteers.

Children's safety and enjoyment is clearly supported by the high staff to children ratios that exceeds minimum care standards. Staff are well deployed throughout the day to help children engage in activities and to keep them safe. Their caring and dedicated approach ensures that children have fun. Good use is made of space on site and resources in the local community to provide sufficiently varied experiences for the children.

Some comprehensive policies, procedures and records are maintained that support the safe and efficient management of the play scheme. Most of these are effective in practice and meet National Standard requirements. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the first inspection since registering under new management.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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

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.

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):

- review procedures for sun protection in hot weather to ensure all children are adequately protected
- review arrangements for the regular exchange of information between key workers and parents and carers.

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