

Caldecote Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221769
Inspection date	02 May 2007
Inspector	Jean Goodrick

Setting Address	C/O Caldecote Primary School, Highfields Road, Highfields, Caldecote, Cambridgeshire, CB3 7NY
Telephone number	01954 210857
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Registered person	Caldecote 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 good. 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?

Caldecote Playgroup has been registered since 1991. It currently operates from the community room of Caldecote Primary School. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area and the pre-school also has use of the school's playing fields. The group serves mainly the local community.

The playgroup is open term times only. Hours of opening are five mornings weekly 09:10 - 11:40, and two afternoons 12:30 - 15:00. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The playgroup is registered to accept 25 children aged from two to five years. At present there are 44 children on roll, 38 of whom are funded three or four year olds. The group has four children on roll who have English as an additional language and has supported children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The group is a member of the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills and learn about a healthy lifestyle. A high priority is given to outdoor activities in the extensive school grounds where children pedal, balance on the wooden maze, and play exuberant games. Children play outside regularly in all weathers, if necessary, well wrapped up and using umbrellas. There is free flow throughout the session from indoors to the enclosed outside pre-school area which provides a learning environment for all types of activities. Children use a wide range of tools and resources to develop their skills as, for instance, they push play dough through the grater to make 'spaghetti', spread marmite on their toast with plastic knives and make marks with chalks on the paving stones.

Children learn about healthy eating as they delight in taking turns to visit the local shop, helping to choose their snack from a range of healthy options including fruit, crackers, and toast with drinks of water or milk. They really enjoy their 'rolling' snack time when staff sit with a small group of children at a pleasant social occasion. Children learn good social skills saying 'thank you' and 'can I have another one please'. They pass things to each other and develop independence as they pour their own drinks.

Children learn about good personal hygiene as they wash their hands after using the toilet and before their snack drying their hands under the low level dryer. Staff are very good role models cleaning the tables and following rigorous hygiene procedures when dealing with body fluids. Children's emotional needs are very well met as staff tenderly support children when they are upset or frustrated helping them to understand and express their feelings and develop good self-esteem.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children learn and play in a clean, bright and well maintained building, and great emphasis is given to making sure that the environment is welcoming for children. Risks have been minimised so that children move freely between indoors and outdoors, accessing equipment and activities independently to follow their own interests. Areas are clearly defined, such as a computer station, book area and wet or messy play. Good security measures are generally in place to restrict access to the setting and prevent children leaving the premises unaccompanied. However staff are aware that the school side gate is not always locked by the school before children have access to the playing field and although staff are extremely vigilant and children are well supervised this presents a risk to children's safety.

All children have access to an extensive range of good quality, accessible and safe equipment. This ensures that they engage in purposeful activity and safely choose items themselves to promote their independence. Resources have been carefully chosen to support children's play and these are cleaned and checked regularly to ensure that they remain in safe and in good condition. The low-level accessible storage of equipment significantly enhances the children's independence and development.

Children are very well protected and kept safe from harm as all practitioners have a good understanding of their role in child protection. They regularly access training to ensure their

knowledge is up-to-date and in line with local procedures, which means that children's welfare is safeguarded. Parents are well informed about the setting's responsibilities through a clear and detailed policy, which is made available to them. Adult helpers and visitors have clear guidance on appropriate roles.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children arrive happy and with eager anticipation at the setting. They relish their time in the highly stimulating and very well resourced environment, which puts them first. Staff create a calm, purposeful atmosphere in which children actively pursue their own interests with sensitive support. Children are extremely confident and independent as they busy themselves, becoming absorbed in their self-chosen activity. For example, children sustain attention for long periods of time as they explore play dough and gloop, make constructions with wooden bricks and develop imaginative games in the role play area. Children play effectively on their own or with others and form strong friendships with their peers. Close and caring relationships throughout the setting increase children's sense of trust and help them to develop a strong sense of self. Practitioners are sensitive to children's needs and consistently interact with them with enormous respect listening to their comments and ideas so that children develop confidence and self-esteem. Younger children receive plenty of encouragement and support and activities are tailored to their needs so that they are confident to develop new skills and independence.

Practitioners have an excellent understanding of child development and how children learn. They use the 'Birth to three matters' framework as a reference tool to create an environment where all children thrive. The key worker system ensures that individual children are well known and have a strong sense of belonging. Time, space and resources are used extremely effectively to promote children's enjoyment and achievement in all areas.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress in their individual learning because staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and recognise how children learn most effectively. A variety of exciting and varied teaching methods helps to ensure children remain motivated and keen to learn. For example, excellent use is made of open questions to help children to extend their thinking. Children are making good progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Their continual progress is observed, assessments are thorough and staff use this information to guide their planning. This ensures that activities build on what individual children know, understand and can do and it also ensures that children receive appropriate support and challenge. Practitioners have identified this as an area for continual evaluation.

Children have a very positive attitude to learning, show good initiative and enjoy making their own decisions selecting their own resources, to pursue their own interests and ideas. For example they independently choose cars and a road mat from the drawer to develop their imaginative play. Children concentrate very well for increasing periods and persevere with tasks showing high levels of confidence and self esteem as they use a hammer and nails to cover the wooden board with different shapes telling the inspector it is a 'witch's house'. They confidently contribute to discussions in small and large groups and listen to each other as, for instance, they talk about what their seeds will need to help them grow. Children develop early writing skills and recognise their own names and those of other children. They have some opportunities

to link sounds to letters and write for a variety of purposes. Children handle books with care and enthusiastically choose books to borrow from the 'library'.

Children have excellent opportunities to use a wide range of everyday technology as they follow programmes on the computer, find coins in the sand with the metal detector and use headphones to listen to their own choice of music. They learn about patterns and change in the natural environment as they observe and discuss the weather and the changing seasons and plant their own seeds. Children enjoy visits in the local community, such as the local shop, and welcome visitors to the group. For example, children learn to count to ten in Chinese and see how Chinese characters are written with the help of a parent who is bilingual.

Children respond well to the very effective questioning techniques of practitioners. For example, early calculation skills are very well supported as children are asked how many more plates are needed when one person is without a plate at snack time. Mathematical language and problem solving is exceptionally well integrated into everyday practical activities and children spontaneously make links as for instance, they join the two triangles of toast together and say 'it's a square!' Children make comparisons in height and weight as they are measured and weighed as part of their 'growth and change' theme. Practitioners make excellent use of planned activities and also follow children's own interests and enthusiasms as children excitedly explore the gloop in the outdoor area, adding water from containers they carefully carry from the indoor sink and investigating the changing consistency.

Children use excellent imagination as they communicate their real and imagined experiences through role play and small world activities. The school's play area provides a superb environment for imaginative games as children say they are going 'to the seaside' on the 'train', and follow the curving trails through shrubs and over small bridges playing hide and seek and pretending to make fires with twigs. Children thoroughly enjoy familiar stories and rhymes joining in with actions and predicting what happens next. They have some opportunities to move imaginatively to music. Children use all their senses exploring a variety of media and materials saying, for example, the gloop is 'sticky and gooey'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children and their families are welcomed into the provision. Practitioners respect and value children's individuality and work very well with parents to ensure that the needs of all children are met. Children benefit from the setting's strong emphasis on working with parents and carers. Parents say that they 'cannot fault' the provision in any way, that their children are very happy there and that they receive excellent flexible support in the settling-in process. The head teacher of the school also reports a 'seamless transition' for children from the pre-school. Parents receive clear and detailed information about the setting so they know about activities and events, and they have daily opportunities to discuss their child with practitioners. All records, policies and procedures are in place to share information with parents and carers.

Resources and activities help children to celebrate and value their differences and similarities. They learn about festivals such as the Chinese New Year, and about New Zealand culture as a parent teaches them the rugby team's traditional Maori dance. The 'welcome' poster reflects the languages of the wider world and of the bilingual children who attend. There are currently no children attending with disabilities or learning difficulties but the setting has recently made excellent provision for individual children who have had experienced and caring one to one

support. Staff attend relevant training and are willing to work with all those involved so that children's individual needs are very well met.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They interact confidently with adults and their peers, learning to consider the needs of others and to work together co-operatively, for example, as they help each other to tidy up. Children have plenty of opportunities for energetic play in the fresh air when they can let off steam. Practitioners set clear boundaries and have high expectations for all children in the setting, which helps them learn to negotiate with others and take responsibility for their own behaviour. For example, they use a sand timer and understand that this is to help them know when it is someone else's turn. Practitioners use positive language to reinforce the rules of the setting and as a result children work harmoniously together. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. Practitioners actively seek parents' views about their child's needs, interests and achievements before the child starts, and on a regular basis throughout their time there. This contributes significantly to children's well-being in the setting. Children's records are available to parent's on a regular basis and parents share information with their child's key worker to ensure that they know how their child is progressing and developing. Staff are keen to involve parents in their children's learning and arranged a meeting which fathers were encouraged to attend. They have set up a book lending scheme and provide parents with information about activities so that parents can contribute to current themes and topics and support their children's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from an exceptionally well prepared environment that promotes positive outcomes for all children and enables them to make decisions and pursue their own interests. This contributes significantly to their enjoyment at the setting. Children are happy and confident because practitioners develop warm and caring relationships with them. An effective key worker system ensures that all children's needs are clearly known and met. Staff respond flexibly to the needs of the children. For example, parents feed back that younger children are not able to benefit fully from their afternoon session because they are tired so staff rearrange the sessions. Clear recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that practitioners are suitable and have appropriate skills and knowledge to work with children. The staff team work very well together and they are exceptionally well qualified and experienced. All adults involved in the setting are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Training is given a high priority.

The high adult to child ratio enables the setting to work flexibly to support children's learning in small groups and on an individual basis when appropriate. Practitioners demonstrate great enthusiasm for creating a learning environment that stimulates, excites and challenges children of all ages. Policies, records and procedures are clear and comprehensive and generally contribute to children's health, safety and well-being.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The managers have a clear vision of high quality childcare and education and the provision is managed very well. There is a strong commitment to the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of nursery education to develop excellence in all areas of learning. A staff appraisal system has been introduced and practitioners demonstrate a real commitment to continuing professional development so that all children have access to high quality learning experiences.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was agreed that large equipment would be made safe or inaccessible to children. Children are extremely well supervised in the school outdoor play area and they are clear that the large climbing equipment is not for their use. The children's safety is a high priority.

At the last nursery education inspection it was agreed that further information would be made available to parents about the nursery education provision at the playgroup. Parents now receive an excellent range of information about the Foundation Stage, including the welcome pack, meetings with staff and a workshop for parents about the Foundation Stage and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Parents report that they found the workshop very useful.

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.

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 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):

- continue to monitor security in the school playing field so that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised

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):

- continue to ensure that the rich learning environment provides opportunities for individual children to build on what they know, understand and can do.

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