

Albert Bear Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218081
Inspection date	05 October 2007
Inspector	Sarah Jane Rhodes

Setting Address	Chesterton Community Centre, London Road, Chesterton, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 7EA
Telephone number	07808 552451
E-mail	albertbear@ntlworld.com
Registered person	Judith Ellis
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Albert Bear Playgroup is privately run and opened in 1994. It operates from Chesterton Community Centre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. It normally occupies the first floor and also has use of the ground floor kitchen, toilets and dining room. The group serves the local and wider area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the group at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 07:30 to 17:00.

There are currently 70 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these 11 receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup employs six staff. All the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a further qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene through daily routines. They are able to use recently refurbished hand washing facilities and are generally independent in their self care skills. They know that they need to wash their hands before eating their snack and after using the toilet to get rid of the germs. This helps reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Children's medical needs both in an emergency and with regard to ongoing medication are met through the use of accident and medication procedures that are understood by all the staff. Clear procedures for sick and infectious children help prevent the spread of infection and keeps children healthy.

Children benefit from a healthy and varied diet. They have access to drinks throughout the session ensuring they are not left thirsty. Staff remind them to have a drink after physical exercise, such as climbing. The playgroup provides mid session snacks and a cooked lunch prepared from fresh ingredients by staff on a daily basis. The five week rolling menus are displayed and staff are very aware of all dietary requirements which are discussed with parents. Staff sit with the children, ensuring mealtimes are social occasions. The careful, appetizing presentation and appropriate encouragement from staff at mealtimes, helps children develop a positive attitude to healthy eating. They are also very independent selecting their own cups and plates at snack time, buttering their own toast and are very competent in clearing away at the end of the meal.

They enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. Being active is encouraged. Physical activities, such as skilfully riding tricycles and using climbing and scrambling equipment are undertaken by all children on a regular basis. Most children join in enthusiastically as the staff support and monitor their play. Children develop their physical skills and have a positive attitude towards exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally welcoming environment. During building work they are using the ground floor hall and side room, along with toilets and kitchen. All have been recently refurbished and are brightly painted. Equipment is set out by staff to make the environment safe and stimulating. However, the heating is not currently working and no provision is in place to ensure the building remains at an adequate temperate. Risks to children are limited through clearly documented safety and security procedures. Staff monitor access to the group at all times and are very vigilant in managing the arrival and departure of children. Risk assessments are completed and emergency evacuation procedures are fully understood by staff and practised twice a term. Staff explain safe practices to children, such as not to run in the building. They plan activities that cover safety topics, like crossing the road, looking at the use of traffic lights and using maps to decide which is the safest route. This helps children remain safe and allows children to develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Children can access a vast range of safe, inviting, high quality resources, appropriate for the interests of pre-school children. These are well presented by staff and children are able to choose from the inviting range on tables, floor space and dedicated areas, such as the messy play room. They also have access to numerous low-level units with further toys. This creates a

pleasant and safe environment that children can enjoy and facilitates their ability to be independent and play constructively.

Children are adequately protected by staff that have a clear understanding of the signs of child abuse and understand the procedures to follow within the playgroup if they have a concern which ensures children are protected. The manager is aware about the latest reporting processes and the child protection policy has been revised to update staff's understanding of the outside agencies involved in child protection issues.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have warm and comfortable relationships with staff and each other, they are very well supported by staff to settle and gain confidence to enable them to play happily together. Most children are confident in the setting's welcoming and caring environment. They use the whole of the hall and side room, which are creatively set up to provide a large amount of table top games, areas for creative play with modelling materials and glue, or imaginative role play. Throughout the sessions most children confidently decide which areas to play in; they are very comfortable to play alone or in groups, often with adult support. Children's language and communication skills are promoted by staff through constant conversation and regular singing sessions. They play games and role play situation with adult support to extend their vocabulary. Consequently, children are learning to develop their speech and are able to express their needs with growing confidence. There is an excellent range of resources throughout the setting to promote imaginative play and children play together in small groups, for example, with small world play at the fire station or preparing a meal in the home area. As a result children's social skills are developing well.

Staff plan activities which cover areas identified in the Foundation Stage and make regular reference to the 'Birth to three matters' framework in their planning. Some staff concentrate on being key worker with children under three-years-old and develop experience of using the framework. This means they are able to utilise the 'Birth to three matters' framework to develop children under three years. Staff take regular observations of what all children in the group can do, they have a good understand of individual children's personalities and learning styles. The next steps in children's learning are identify and linked into the planning of future activities to help maximise children's progress. Staff are particularly aware of the need to be sensitive and supportive to children finding the transition from home to group care a difficult one. Patient individual support and the analysing and adjusting how the whole group is managed helps these children grow to enjoy the sessions and therefore start to achieve.

Early Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and clear practical understanding of how young children learn and progress. Planning is broad, links to the stepping stones and the 'Birth to three matters' framework, covering general play activities and adult focused activities. It provides detailed guidance for staff to ensure a range of activities and experiences are provided for children to extend their learning in most areas. The short term plans include sufficient detail to enable staff to make the best use of activities and experiences to promote the learning of all children to the maximum extent. Staff use active methods to maintain children's interest, sitting with children, asking questions, for example, when a child had told the adult he was giving her a tree which would mean she would now have three trees, she asked the supplementary question, 'How many trees are there on

your model and my model?'. Staff also provide help and support to extend their play. Staff help raise children's awareness of the community and the wider natural world in a variety of ways. Assessment and evaluation of children's achievements during activities is undertaken. Use is made of observations to help staff plan for the next steps in children's learning therefore utilising their knowledge to help children reach their full potential. Behaviour is well managed and this results in a generally calm and caring environment for children. The rooms are well organised and offer a stimulating environment with a vast range of resources set out by staff to promote children's learning.

Children are interested and eager to take part in activities. They show good concentration, are actively engaged and some persist for considerable periods of time. This they do with or without adult support as they play with, for example, the fire station or board games. Children behave very well and have warm relationships with both staff and each other. They are able to start to take care of themselves, being given lots of opportunities to develop their independence. They are very competent at buttering their own toast or pouring drinks and clearing their plates after lunch. Children's language skills are appropriate for their age. They speak clearly and often with confidence, sharing their experiences in one-to-one conversations and through using props like telephones. Books are available in the book corner but this has limited use and they rarely listen and interact with stories or engage in discussion in group situations, such as circle time which limits their experience in these areas. Writing skills are developing with staff providing opportunities for children to write and mark make.

Children understand and use numbers appropriately for their age. Most count up to 20 or beyond with adult help and are able to match number to object as they count the number of trees on their model or cars on a map. They demonstrate that they understand shape, size and colour during board games. They develop an initial sense of time and place through discussion with staff and activities, such as using a map to discuss a journey. They explore and investigate, through adult-led activities, for example, looking after stick insects or growing plants. Also through their own role play and using play equipment in small world situations. Children have access to information and communication technology, for example, using a compact disc player as part of a sound game or using a computer.

Children can move with skill riding tricycles around obstacles or climbing on a tower and through a tunnel. They understand that they get hot after physical activity and need a drink. They use tools competently as they draw their pictures and use glue sticks to create a collage. They are able to express themselves freely through music having access to a wide range of high quality percussion instruments and use their imagination well, as they play with home play equipment and with the cars and roadway.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are seen as individuals and their confidence and self-esteem is developed by staff, with use of praise and encouragement on arrival and during their play throughout the session. Children feel a sense of belonging, staff know them well, often having cared for older brothers or sisters and having information from parents about pets and favourite activities at home. The children move confidently round the hall and messy room, are generally settled and happy and they make choices and take decisions between play activities. For those children who are still trying to settle into playgroup life, there is the support of a member of staff who becomes a base from which the children can spread their wings. Staff ensure that the resources and activities positively represent the children who attend, as well as individuals from the wider

community and festivals are celebrated. Children from different religious backgrounds are accommodated sensitively. Children are developing their knowledge of the wider world, through visits by members of the local community, such as the school crossing patrol officer and by taking part in community carnivals and flower festivals. The setting's policies promote inclusion for all children, active support is provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their needs are met adequately.

Children behave very well and respond positively to boundaries set by staff. They take turns and share, for example, when playing a board game or using the puppets, they help each other to tidy away and are learning to use their manners. Verbal praise, stickers or certificates are used as positive reinforcement of wanted behaviours. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

All children benefit from the positive partnership staff are developing with parents and carers. Children settle well because the staff work very closely with parents to ensure their child's needs are met. Children's individual needs are discussed and recorded with parents on the children's enrolment form. Parents are made aware of how the setting operates through discussion both before children start to attend and on a daily basis at the beginning and end of the sessions, as well as through regular newsletters. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children until they are confident to be left and all parents are pleased with the service and find staff approachable. However, parents rarely access the development records held on their child and have little knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework which the staff use to guide these assessments and the planning of activities. This limits the staff and parents ability to work together to meet the needs of the children in an optimal way.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. Information on the educational programme is shared at the beginning of the placement and newsletters explain themes and the learning intentions behind the activities as well as how parents can be involved in and enhance their own child's learning. Parents are kept verbally informed of their child's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are robust staff recruitment and vetting procedures in place for when new staff or volunteers are recruited, which ensures children are protected. Staff are well managed and there are systems in place to provide clear direction, support and leadership, for example, regular staff discussions take place and staff induction, probationary periods and annual appraisals have been introduced. All staff who work with the children are qualified and additional training courses have been attended with staff's training needs assessed on an ongoing bases in conjunction with the manager. This contributes to the quality of care and experiences provided for children. Appropriate guidance is given by the manager to ensure that staff are clear in their roles. She does this in two ways, firstly during each session roles are assigned to each member of staff by using a rota. In addition areas are allocated for staff to develop their knowledge as a resource for the group, for example, by expanding their knowledge of special educational needs or the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They work as a very supportive and stable team and are confident to take on a variety of roles within the setting and during sessions. Policies and procedures are in place to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. There are systems in place for recording accidents, medication and attendance. However, the provider has not informed Ofsted of some significant events which have the potential to affect the suitability of the premises, specifically the discovery of asbestos on the premises and

subsequent relocation of the care to different rooms during remedial work and the breakdown in the heating system.

The leadership and management is good. The manager has a vision for the early education understands individual children and groups development needs for the future. She is very involved daily, has a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and she is addressing areas she has identified. She is constantly evaluating how the sessions are flowing and makes changes according to what she sees. For example, during a period where younger children are finding it more difficult to separate from their carers, she has organised that the Foundation Stage children have some of the session in a different room to allow them to concentrate and enable staff to fully extend their learning. Guidance and support is given by the manager to ensure that the educational programme is delivered effectively. There are systems to develop the curriculum, internally staff are deepening their knowledge by focusing on the Foundation Stage or 'Birth to three matters' framework and developing activities for the children. Externally additional support is provided through regular visits by the local authorities advisory teacher and informal advice from another local primary school teacher and staff are active in implementing their suggestions. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed to ensure they had procedures to be followed in the event of a child being lost or not collected and inform Ofsted of any changes at the earliest opportunity.

They now have procedures to be followed in the event of a child being lost or not collected, but they have not informed Ofsted of some significant events which have the potential to affect the suitability of the premises, specifically the discovery of asbestos on the premises and subsequent relocation of the care to different rooms during remedial work and the breakdown in the heating system. This has not, however, put the children at any risk, therefore, only a recommendation has been raised following this inspection to cover notification of significant events.

At the last nursery education inspection the group agreed to: continue to increase staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn and introduce an effective system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching methods and techniques; clearly link planning and assessment to the stepping stones, provide for missing aspects of learning to ensure children receive a complete, well-balanced early years curriculum; offer appropriate challenges to support and question children's understanding and learning and utilize resources, group activities and routines to extend more able children's learning.

Staff have developed a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use appropriate methods to help children learn. A clear, proactive and effective system is in place to monitor the quality of teaching. Planning and assessment covers the stepping stones and ensures gaps in children's attainment are addressed. Also differentiation is clearly shown on planning and in practice, with staff knowing which children require extending.

Finally the group agreed to further develop staff knowledge of the revised Code of Practice for Children with Special Educational Needs in their identified role as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator for Albert Bear Pre-school Playgroup. An appropriate knowledge of the Code of Practice for Children with Special Educational Needs is in place allowing the setting to cater for children with additional needs.

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 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):

- provide facilities to maintain the rooms at an adequate temperature
- develop further information sharing with all parents to encourage them to have access to all written records about their children and for parents of younger children develop their understanding of the playgroup's use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework in organising children's activities
- inform Ofsted of any significant changes or events.

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):

- expand children's exposure to a range of texts to nurture their use of books for enjoyment
- develop group circle time as a resource to enable children to make as much progress as they can.

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