

Snakes and Ladders Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY269789
Inspection date	25 May 2007
Inspector	Jasmin Myles-Wilson

Setting Address	C/o St Aidens Community Centre, Princes Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE3 5NP
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Registered person	Snakes and Ladders 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?

Snakes and Ladders Playgroup have been registered since 2003. It is located in St. Aidens Community Centre in the Brunton Park area of Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne and operates from one room. Local amenities and public transport systems are within walking distance. The group have sole use of the large hall within the centre. Although there is no outdoor play space there is a park within a short walking distance.

The provision is registered to care for a maximum of 34 children from two years to five years and sessions run from 09.30 to 12.00 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at term time only. There are currently 40 children on roll; of these, 19 receive nursery education funding. Children attending the provision are from the local area.

There are 10 members of staff who work directly with the children; of these, eight are qualified. The teaching methods used are the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. The provision receives support from childcare and educational consultants.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is protected because staff have good and consistent hygiene practices and procedures in place. Children are encouraged to develop good personal hygiene skills. For example, staff encourage children to wash their hands and as they do so they sing a rhyme about washing germs away. Good arrangements are in place for the exclusion of sick children and reducing the spread of common illness and infections. Children increase their understanding of a healthy lifestyle through various topics and discussions.

Snack time is an unhurried occasion and children socialise with each other. Children are well nourished and have appetising food which they enjoy and sufficiently meets their individual dietary requirements. They have worthwhile sessions, such as fruit tasting which introduces them to new tastes and textures. Children are hydrated well because they have good access to water throughout their day and those who are able independently help themselves to drinks from an accessible jug of water.

Staff recognise the need for children to exercise, therefore, good opportunities are given to children which they enjoy. For example, children exercise their whole bodies by jumping off and running around soft play equipment. Children show good awareness of space as they safely manoeuvre around objects and people. They also confidently use and handle tools correctly using fine motor skills and hand and eye co-ordination. Children's need for rest is also considered and they are given opportunities to rest according to their needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming setting and can move safely and spontaneously around the premises, which increases their independence. They are kept safe as staff have a good level of understanding and take positive steps to promote safety to ensure risks to children are minimal. For example, they do daily written and signed risk assessments. Children begin to learn about dangers through purposeful activities, fire drills and discussions. For example, children begin to understand they must not run inside and remind each other.

A wide and varied range of activities are provided which children have good access to. They are of good quality and well maintained. Children have fun with the resources as they choose activities of their choice. For example, children choose activities from the low-level drawers or from those already set out. Children have good assistance to carry out some personal care for themselves as staff provide furniture and equipment, such as toilet seats and steps to reach the sink.

Children are safeguarded and their welfare is protected through staff being well informed of child protection issues and procedures. Staff have secure knowledge of their role and responsibility in protecting children from harm and continually update this knowledge through attending training courses. Parents are kept informed of the procedure through the provision's policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children quickly settle in to activities of their choice. They are motivated and enjoy activities because they choose activities of interest to them. The staff use a good selection of props to encourage participation and children engage very well, for example, children listen and watch as staff use a puppet to communicate positive messages to them. They develop in their next steps as staff effectively implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework, the Foundation Stage and build on the knowledge that children already have. This is clearly seen through what staff observe, the planning they do and the activities they provide.

Children play very well alongside each other and are interested in what they are doing. Most of the time their individual needs are met as staff are aware of children's starting points through discussion with parents and written information they receive. Staff communicate with children in a calm and respectful manner and this is clearly notable by the calm atmosphere. Staff are very aware of the children and know when to become actively involved and support them in their play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan activities well and bring the six areas of learning alive for children. For example, children show interest in the transition of a caterpillar into a butterfly so staff provided tadpoles so children can see a similar transition. Staff work well together in providing an environment that is organised which helps children to take initiative and develop independence. They know the children well and provide activities that centre on children's abilities and stage of development. Planning covers all areas of learning quite well but they sometimes miss opportunities to further develop children's independence. Assessments and observations of children's development are efficient and children's progress is clearly marked so staff are aware of how to help children move forward in their development. Staff listen well to children and are patient in their approach, valuing children's choice, therefore, children's self-esteem is increased and good connections are formed and established. Although there is not an outdoor play area children have good opportunities to develop their physical skills indoors which they thoroughly enjoy.

Children make attachments and relate well to members in the group, for example, children invite others to join in their play. They settle and play well together in small and large groups and individually. They also learn to share and take turns. Children interact well with adults and in conversation and are confident in making requests. They follow instructions well, for example, when indicated to tidy up, they tell each other 'it's tidy up time' and begin to tidy the toys away. Children willingly solve problems and demonstrate pride in their achievements, for example, children's faces light up when they manage to work out what size brick they need to use to balance on top of a small brick so they can complete building their house.

Staff are skilled in using communication techniques, such as listening well to children and using open-ended questions to converse with children and develop their thinking. For example, children tell staff where they are going on holiday and staff ask them questions beginning with 'what', 'when' and 'how' which gives children the opportunity to give a detailed picture of what they will be doing. Children listen intently to stories read by staff, join in repeated phrases and familiar rhymes, for example, children engage and emphatically shout 'Grandma, grandma' in the rhyme 'Little mousey brown'. Children increasingly give meaning to marks made with pens, for example, children make lots of lines with a pen on an envelope and refer to it as writing a

letter. Older children are beginning to recognise their names in written form while younger children recognise their name card by the picture. Some children can distinguish between big and tiny, for example, children curl their little finger up saying, 'this is tiny'. They are also developing awareness of different shapes and similarities. Children are beginning to develop a sense of time, for example, a child can recall and explain that yesterday they fell over at home and now has a sore leg.

Children competently use one-handed tools and equipment, such as paintbrushes, pens and pencils. They show a high level of interest in using information and communication technology, such as telephones, microwaves and tills, for example, children press buttons on the telephone to make a call. They are intrigued as they explore a real-life bird's nest, sand and shells. Children use their imagination well, for example, they take food onto the carpet area and begin to have a picnic. They imitate what adults do, for example, a child sits on a chair, tells other children to sit down, puts a finger on their lips and says, 'shh' then begins to read a story to the audience sat on the carpet. Children concentrate well and enjoy sensory play, such as hand painting and printing.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are warmly welcomed, included within the group and treated with equal concern. Staff have a very good understanding of equality and diversity and appreciate children's differences. Children have a good supply of activities that give them opportunities to develop and acquire an awareness and appreciation of differences in the wider world and in their community. For example, children do various topics on celebrating various festivals, such as Chanukah.

Children follow directions well, such as tidying up when asked and behave positively towards one another most of the time. For example, they help each other to do what is expected of them, such as leading others over to the carpet area for a story. Children know right from wrong and what is expected of them by the rules of the group, for example, they know not to bump into each other when using the bikes. Suitable behaviour is reinforced by staff being good role models and having a positive attitude. Children develop in confidence and boldly approach staff with their requests. Their self-esteem is boosted as they attempt new things, such as tasting different food, receive affirming smiles and praise for their achievements or for the positive things they say or do. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. This is fostered through staff's polite and friendly approach. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the provision and the activities it provides for their children. For example, parents bring things in related to specific topics, such as snacks ate by the 'Hungry caterpillar'. Staff give parents good and detailed information regarding the provision which includes their operational plan. The provision's policies and information regarding nursery education, which incorporates 'Birth to three matters', is also available to parents. Staff communicate with parents in a variety of ways, for example, informal chats, newsletters and children's development files. However, parents do not have easy access to information regarding their child's developmental progress due to confidentiality, as all children's progress is recorded on one sheet. Parents approach staff with ease and are able to share concerns and information regarding their children so that they meet children's individual needs effectively.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting is organised in such a way that enables children to have the confidence to move freely and safely around their environment. As the children are of a similar age, the space effectively meets their needs. Most of the staff are qualified and experienced in providing care for children. They have good knowledge of the provision's policies and procedures and realise the importance of keeping documentation to ensure the safe running of the group. Parents work in partnership with the staff to ensure children are signed in and out on the daily registration system. The manager is very informed and knowledgeable regarding her role and responsibility towards children and Ofsted.

Effective procedures are in place for new staff and parent volunteers which informs them of the expectations of the provision. Staff morale is good as they work extremely well together to provide children with a caring and happy environment. Staff continually update and refresh their knowledge and skills through training which in turn enhances their practice, such as 'Birth to three matters' framework and safeguarding children. This shows that staff consider children's welfare as a priority. Staff dedicate their time to ensure children are supported to feel secure and settled, thus, enabling children to progress in their development.

The leadership and management of the provision is good. The manager leads by example and motivates staff by her hands-on approach. Staff are valued and are supported to provide good quality care and education for children. Together with the expertise of childcare and educational consultants, they develop plans to help children develop in the six areas of learning. The manager is committed to improving the service provided for children and identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses which are discussed with staff and together they decide what steps to take to improve learning opportunities for children. Unqualified staff are empowered to undertake training through the manager's vote of confidence in them. Most of the staff have good knowledge and understanding of the 'Curriculum for the foundation stage' and 'Birth to three matters' framework to help them plan interesting and challenging activities for children. The manager and staff review and assess the quality of teaching through regular evaluation. Part of the provision's future plans is to create an outdoor play area to give children the scope to access more fresh air and physical exercise. All previous recommendations from the last care inspection have been met. Good links are established between the provision and other professionals and they work well together to effectively help individual children to make progress in their development.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was recommended that the provision provides a range of activities and resources to promote equality and diversity. It was also recommended that they put in place an effective procedure for keeping parents informed of their child's development and progress.

The provision now has resources and provides activities that promote equality and diversity so children have a wider knowledge and understanding of the wider world in which they live. The development and progress of children is now shared with parents in the form of termly reports. However, this remains an area for development. Information shared with parents enables them to encourage their children in their progress, therefore, children benefit from this.

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 complaint 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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide opportunities to further develop children's independence.

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):

- consider improving children's individual files so that they show children's development and keep parents fully informed of their progress.

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