

Playmates Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | EY277351 |
| Inspection date | 12 July 2007 |
| Inspector | Josie Lever |
| Setting Address | Gipsyville Community Centre, The Greenway, Hull, East Yorkshire, HU4 6JG |
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| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Playmates Pre-School Management Committee |
| 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Playmates Pre-School was registered in 1999 and is run by a committee of interested parties including parents. It operates from three rooms in a community building, situated in the west of Kingston upon Hull. A maximum of 39 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 until 11.45 term time only. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 31 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local community and surrounding area. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties.

The pre-school employs six staff, all of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn through practical everyday routines about good health and hygiene. For example, they participate eagerly in washing down tables and chairs outdoors, knowing this makes them clean. They independently wash their hands in the playroom sink with soap and water after completing a painting, moulding clay or rinsing off wet sand. Adults support children well in learning through discussion about the importance of hand washing after attending the toilet area and before eating food.

Written records are maintained to inform staff of any food allergies or intolerances and parents are consulted to ensure that children's individual health needs are fully addressed. Children access fresh drinking water throughout the session and benefit from the additional range of healthy drinks and snacks that are provided. The introduction of a snack café bar enables children to make choices about when they wish to eat and drink and successfully encourages the formation of self-help skills, such as pouring drinks and, if they want to, washing and drying their plates and cups. Positive steps are taken to ensure that fresh fruit and vegetables form a large part of the healthy eating plan, for example, apples, oranges and carrot sticks. Children have planted a range of seeds in the garden vegetable patch, such as lettuce, carrots and peas, and carefully tend to their growth by watering them. Children learn about the implications of a good and bad diet on their teeth and the importance of good dental hygiene. A dental hygienist regularly visits the setting to talk to the children about this and teaches them about good brushing techniques.

A detailed policy to exclude children when they are unwell is shared with parents. This means that the risk of cross-infection within the setting is minimised. Consent is sought from all parents to ensure that children's well-being is maintained appropriately; for example, written permission is in place to ensure the staff may administer medication and seek emergency medical treatment or advice. In addition, most staff have attended first aid training, which ensures that they are prepared to deal with any accidents or incidents involving the children.

The children enjoy a varied range of play opportunities that address many aspects of their physical development. For example, they skilfully use fine motor skills to put pegs into peg boards and they manipulate bread dough by squeezing, twisting, pulling and stretching it to make models. Additionally, the daily use of physical play resources, such as a large climbing frame and tunnel, small slide and bikes, significantly enhances the children's balance, agility and co-ordination. When the weather is bad, staff pay particular attention to ensuring that children can move and dance to music indoors using the smaller classroom.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean, well-maintained environment which is effectively organised to enable them to move around freely and be independent, for example, from indoors to outdoors. Children self-select resources from clearly marked boxes at their height, and all toys and equipment are maintained in good condition through regular cleaning and examination for wear and tear. They are chosen by adults for their suitability with regards to safety and to create suitable challenges to promote the children's learning. The premises are colourfully

decorated and wall displays of the children's drawings and pictures help to create a stimulating and welcoming environment for the children and their parents.

Adults take positive steps to ensure that all play areas are risk assessed in order to keep children safe and sound. For example, the outdoor play space is inspected thoroughly before use and precautions, such as using plug socket covers and restricting access to the kitchen, minimise hazards. The children know and comply with some safety routines; for example, they understand that running indoors is dangerous, that scissors should not be used whilst walking and that spillages of water should be mopped up quickly to prevent a slipping hazard. Children develop a good awareness of safety within the community, for example, through discussion about 'stranger danger' and wearing car seatbelts when travelling in vehicles. Their knowledge of road safety is given particularly good attention by staff, who ensure they can practise crossing roads by role playing using small scale safety equipment, such as traffic lights, pelican crossings and zebra crossings, loaned to them by local authority.

The premises remain secure at all times. Staff are vigilant and monitor access to the premises effectively at arrival and departure times. Children are also involved in the regular evacuation of the premises and are familiar with the procedures to follow when they hear the alarm. Children are safeguarded because staff have a secure understanding of the procedures to follow if they have concerns that a child is being abused or neglected. The written child protection policy is shared with parents and they sign to say they have understood the policy and recognise the staff's roles and responsibilities in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children enter the playgroup with smiling faces and leave their parents and carers confidently. They are sociable, happy and settled. They are comfortable in their surroundings and self-assured in their play. Children show good levels of independence; for example, they pour their own milk and water at snack time. They help to set out and put toys away and put on their own aprons when painting or playing at the water tray. Children work together well in small groups and persevere with their chosen tasks, for example, cutting out cards and gluing them onto paper. Staff are effective in enabling children to initiate their own learning. The organisation of the sessions is sufficiently flexible to allow children ample time to become engrossed in activities. For example, children explore a range of creative mediums very well for an extended time. They enjoy the sensory experience of squeezing clay through their fingers and kneading the homemade play dough with vigour. Children are grouped accordingly into their individual age groups and rising three-year-olds join in enthusiastically to action rhymes and songs, such as, 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat'. They listen attentively to a story, for example, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', and join in enthusiastically to the repetitive storyline of 'The Gingerbread Man'.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Adults have a suitable understanding about the Foundation Stage and children's progress is appropriately monitored through written observations. Children make steady progress towards the early learning goals. However, staff lack confidence and are confused by the recent changes implemented to the way they plan and assess children's learning. They are unclear of how this links to the Foundation Stage and the way they record children's achievements. Children's key-workers have a suitable understanding of their individual stage of development and make regular observations to assess

their progress. However, they are less confident in using the information gained in these assessments to plan for the next steps in children's individual learning and, consequently, children may not be sufficiently challenged in their learning. Adults have attended training on the 'Birth to three matters' framework, which supports children under three years, and are developing confidence in using their observations of children and their evaluations well in this area to plan the next steps in children's learning.

Children respond well to instructions and many speak clearly and confidently to adults and their friends. For example, they respond to adults' questions about what they think the play dough looks like, describing objects such as 'sausages', 'worms' and 'wiggly snakes'. They are beginning to link sounds to letters, for example, the letter S as they complete phonic work in small groups. Children recognise basic shapes as they complete shape pictures and jigsaws or talk about their plates at snack time being circles. They use simple mathematical language, such as 'full' and 'empty' when filling containers with sand and water. Staff use everyday experiences well to help children to count; for example, they are confident in counting up to four children sitting at the snack bar table or up to 18 children waiting in a line. Some older children are beginning to develop early calculation skills, for example, as they add two groups of three objects together, knowing it makes six. Most older children can recognise their name through the use of name cards as they self-register in the morning; however, some younger children are less confident about recognising their names because adults find these for them and they have few opportunities within the session to practise their early reading skills. Older children enjoy listening to stories in the book corner and sometimes access this area independently, choosing from a range of well-stocked books and making up their own stories as they turn the pages.

Children experiment well with a range of sounds as they play musical instruments in the garden and listen to a range of songs and stories. They enjoy interesting opportunities to learn about living things, for example, as they care for the large snails housed in the glass tank. They note the changes that take place when they plant flowers and grow seeds in the garden. They investigate using a range of small tools, such as magnifying glasses to look at the patterns on leaves, and explore the effects that too much water can have on clay. They understand when it is too dry they need to add more water to make it malleable and recognise if they add too much it will become too soft and sticky. Children have access to a good range of information and communication technology equipment, which they are confident in using spontaneously. For example, a computer, a cassette player, or a tape measure to measure the room. Children are aware of their routine and the days of the week, and show a good understanding of weather conditions. For example, they are aware that it is sunny because they can see their shadow cast on the ground.

Children learn about the features of their environment when on local walks and talk about the changes in the weather and seasons. They move confidently both indoors and outdoors and show increasing skill when using finer manipulative skills to use brushes, squeeze bottles, pour drinks and manipulate play dough. They are excited and animated as they explore different painting techniques using brushes, rollers, sponges and their hands. They can differentiate colours well. Children enjoy good opportunities to play imaginatively, for example, as they pour out cups of tea in the home corner and make fried egg sandwiches. They have continuous opportunities to mark-make, for example, by making lists and cards and jotting down food orders on the paper and clipboards situated in many areas. This aspect of their play is particularly well supported by staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children gain a good sense of belonging in the relaxed atmosphere as they see their pictures and photographs displayed within the playroom. They have their own individual baskets in which to place their belongings and artwork to take home. They are looked after by a caring and positive staff group who give them good individual attention and know them well. For example, children who occasionally become upset are comforted with a cuddle and quiet story. All children have access to resources that help them to become aware of a diverse society and their understanding is developed further through adult discussion and their participation in planned activities. For example, when celebrating the Chinese New Year, children use a range of cooking utensils in their role play, such as a wok and chopsticks, and eat noodles at snack time. Additional resources, such as play people, puppets, dolls, books, jigsaws and dressing up role play all promote positive images to children, including disability. Staff promote an inclusive environment where children's needs are identified and well supported. Due to this positive approach, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Positive interaction between staff and children promotes their self-esteem and encourages good behaviour. For example, children are excited as they help to mix the flour and water play dough with staff members. Good behaviour is encouraged by staff, who act as positive role models; for example, they speak to children in a calm, friendly manner, help them to take turns, and address any incidents by using praise and encouragement. A reward scheme is in place using cards and stickers for children's good efforts and behaviour. Children respond well and interact positively with each other, building good relationships. For example, they are keen to attend the café snack bar at the same time and save places for one another, in order to sit together. Friendly relationships have been built between parents and staff, who take time to exchange information at the beginning and end of the session. There is a complaints procedure displayed that meets requirements; however, parents are less familiar with the procedure of how complaints would be dealt with. An incident log has been established; however, it is not kept accurately up to date by staff completing the record. At inspection parents commended staff on their approachability and indicated that they are happy with the care given to their children and their progress made.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. The pre-school has an open-door policy and encourages parents to be involved in their child's learning by sharing what their children can do and taking part in some activities. For example, bringing in photographs of their pets or family members to support the theme. Parents read useful information about the educational provision within the setting, as they are provided with a welcome letter detailing the Foundation Stage and early learning goals and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Events and topics are detailed in newsletters, which keeps parents informed about children's learning, and some planning is displayed, although this is not consistent. Children's progress is recorded and verbally exchanged. Parents also receive an annual report written by their child's key-worker. However, the infrequent system in place to share this information does not effectively ensure that parents are kept fully up to date with their children's development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care needs are appropriately catered for because space and resources are organised well. Their welfare is promoted because staff are deployed effectively, enabling them to supervise children appropriately and offer them support. Time, space and resources are used effectively

and children enjoy good freedom of movement and have access to a good-sized outdoor play space. The daily routine is well planned to enable children's play to flow freely and uninterrupted, for example, by providing continuous play areas, such as the creative area and café snack bar. Children benefit because they are cared for by a well-qualified staff group who have made a commitment to ongoing training. Staff work very well as a team and are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. All of the legally required documentation is in place, including a register of children's attendance, accident and medication records. Documentation remains secure and confidential.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager is committed to the ongoing professional development of staff, who attend a variety of relevant training courses and briefings. There is a system of staff induction, appraisal and development in place. Regular staff meetings are held to loosely plan activities and to keep all staff informed and up to date with regard to changes in ways of working and good practice. The setting takes positive steps to effectively evaluate the nursery education provision by working with the local authority in identifying ways in how they can improve, and are willing to change ways of working to improve the outcomes for children. For example, changes have been made to the outdoor area to enable children to move freely from inside to outdoors and to the snack time routine to give children greater choices and increase a free-flow routine. The staff group have positively addressed most issues from the last inspection. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to devise a more accurate system for recording visitors. This has now been addressed effectively. Visitors to the setting sign in a visitors' book, recording time of arrival and departure and reason for their visit. This safeguards children.

At the last education inspection the group were asked to improve planning to include how all children would be grouped and how information relating to the curriculum would be shared with parents. They were also asked to introduce systems to monitor the provision with regards to what was going on in the setting with regards to staff. Additionally, they were asked to provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of calculation and what is expected of them in terms of acceptable behaviour.

The group have addressed most points well. Parents receive written information about the nursery curriculum and planning is displayed, although not in a consistent manner. This benefits parents from increasing their understanding about how and what their children learn. Children are divided into small groups for part of the session, where they are able to interact in learning opportunities applicable to their age and stage of development. All children now have good opportunities in everyday play to develop early calculation; for example, staff encourage them through questioning to respond to, 'How many pieces of fruit do you have? If you eat one piece, how many more will you have left?' Staff now participate in an annual appraisal system which identifies their training needs. They have attended training in managing children's behaviour and this has benefited all children because they deal with behaviour in a positive and consistent way, working together well. Overall, children are well behaved within the group and have a good understanding of the ground rules; this therefore benefits them as they develop a better understanding of boundaries and acceptable behaviour within the group.

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 can be seen 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 satisfactory.

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):

- ensure incidents are accurately recorded with up-to-date information
- raise parents' awareness of how complaints will be recorded, investigated and reported.

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):

- further develop the use of assessments to plan for the next stage of children's individual learning
- ensure planning and assessment clearly links to the Foundation Stage and is clearly understood by staff
- increase opportunities to help younger children to develop their basic reading skills
- further develop systems to make parents fully aware of their child's development.

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