

Woodchester Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101715
Inspection date	06 June 2007
Inspector	Pamela Edna Friling

Setting Address	Woodchester Primary School, Church Road, North Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5PD
Telephone number	01453 873004
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Registered person	Woodchester 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Woodchester Playgroup is set within the grounds of Woodchester school. The group operates from their own building with an enclosed garden for outdoor play. They also have use of the school playground. The group is managed by a committee of parents and serves a wide rural area around Stroud, Gloucestershire.

The playgroup is open each weekday from 9.00 to 12.00 during school terms. It is registered for a maximum of 24 children aged between two and five years of age. There are currently 43 children on roll. Of these, 32 children are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The group supports children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

The group employs four staff, all of whom are qualified in childcare. Rota parents support the group at each session. The playgroup works closely with the primary school and receives regular support visits from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in premises that are both clean and welcoming. Children have a positive attitude to exercise. They have daily opportunities for active play both in the premises and the well designed outdoor play area. The outdoor area encourages development of physical skills as the children test their climbing and jumping abilities. Older children recognise the changes to their bodies after exercise as they describe themselves as 'hot and tired'.

Children have access to drinking water at all times to keep themselves well hydrated. There is a jug of water and clean cups available throughout the session and children are able to pour their own drinks. Staff keep up-to-date information about dietary requirements to ensure that children are fed according to their individual needs. Healthy eating is promoted through provision of daily fruit and cheese snacks. However, the same snack is offered each day limiting the variety of tastes and textures that the children experience.

Older children are very independent in their personal care. They are aware of the importance of personal hygiene and wash their hands after visiting the toilet. Older children describe the need to remove 'germs' from their hands before eating their snacks. Staff act as good role models and encourage children to practise good hygiene. All staff hold valid first aid certificates and demonstrate a clear understanding of the treatment of minor accidents. An effective system is in place to ensure that an accurate record is maintained of all accidents involving children. Details of what happened, and of any treatment given are recorded, and entries are countersigned by parents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The playgroup environment is safe and secure. The premises are warm and welcoming to both children and their parents. Colourful displays of children's named art work promotes a sense of belonging. The organisation of the inside space meets the needs of children by providing well-defined areas for quiet play and table-top activities. Children play with a wide variety of good quality toys, books and resources. These are easily available in low level, clearly labelled, storage to encourage children's independent choice.

Children remain safe because staff take positive steps to ensure potential hazards are identified and reduced. For example, staff carry out regular written and visual risk assessments to ensure that children are able to use the indoor and outdoor areas freely. Risks to children from fires have been minimised through well thought-out emergency evacuation procedures and regular fire drills to ensure all children and staff are familiar with the routines. Staff are very well deployed so children are appropriately supervised during free-play activities. Children are not able to leave the premises unsupervised, or visitors to arrive unannounced, as doors remain secure throughout the session.

Children are well protected by knowledgeable staff who are trained in and clear about child protection procedures. Written procedures are available to provide staff with clear reference information about what to do should they have concerns about a child's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are enthusiastic and motivated. They arrive at playgroup happy, keen to attend and settle quickly to the well established daily routines. Children feel safe and relaxed in the setting. Staff are friendly and approachable and have a warm relationship with the children in their care. Children's confidence and self-esteem are raised by staff who are sensitive to their needs and know them well. Children are curious and have a positive approach to new experiences. For example, children showed great enthusiasm and interest when using a laptop computer. They demonstrated skills in sharing, taking turns and co-operation as they patiently awaited their turn or assisted their friends to manoeuvre the mouse and navigate through an art program.

Time is mostly given over to free play so children have opportunities to make decisions for themselves, for example, modelling with play dough, reading books in the book corner or instigating role play situations in the home corner. Staff join in with children's play appropriately and sensitively. Children are also encouraged to participate in staff led activities, for example, making Father's Day cards or baking cakes. Children are confident and articulate as they engage adults in conversation.

Staff do not yet use the Birth to three matters framework in the care of the youngest children as they do not have a secure knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Planning for and assessment of this youngest age group is limited. The youngest children join in, at their own level, with activities planned for the older children. Staff know the children well and are able to extend their development through careful questioning and inclusion in appropriate activities. However, progress is not systematically recorded to inform future planning for individual children's next steps in their development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. Staff know the children very well and support their educational progress with a wide variety of planned activities and experiences. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of the stepping stones and plan activities to cover all six areas of learning. However, learning objectives are not always clear within the planning or sufficiently differentiated to ensure all children are consistently challenged to build on what they already know and can do. Staff recognise that the most able children require more challenge to maintain their progress and motivation. Staff observe children as they play to form a record of their progress across the areas of learning. However, observations and assessment methods are not systematic in ensuring each child has a comprehensive record of their progress across the stepping stones or their time at playgroup. Evaluations of daily activities highlight some points for future planning.

Children show curiosity and are able to persist for extended periods of time at a chosen activity, such as making models from play dough. They make attachments to others in the group, forming firm friendships and seeking out others to share their experiences. They behave very well and show an awareness of the acceptable boundaries. Children willingly take part in tidying the room when the lively music signals tidy up time and they dance as they put away toys and fold table cloths. Children have an awareness of, and show an interest in, cultural differences, enjoying the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year. Children show increasing independence. However, children's involvement in snack time routines is limited with staff taking responsibility for pouring drinks and passing around food.

Children communicate confidently. They willingly join in circle time discussion regarding the daily weather and share news from home as they place their treasured toys in the box. They question words they have not heard before, for example, asking for an explanation of the word 'avoid' as part of a conversation about snakes. Children respond positively to simple instructions, tidying up when asked. Children also listen intently to stories and carefully answer related questions. Children use language well as they take part in role play situations, for example, they instigate role play scenarios where children become doctors and go in search of their patients. They politely ask adults if they have 'fallen off a cliff' and needed a doctor. Injections are given, temperature taken, bandages applied and prescriptions written. Some children are beginning to ascribe meaning to their marks, using pens and pencils to record information as they play. For example, children are encouraged to name their paintings and add their own writing to Father's Day cards. However, emerging writing skills are not fully encouraged during outdoor play activities to extend the challenge to more able children to continually build on their skills.

Children confidently count the number of children present at circle time and some are able to recognise and name numbers written as part of their play. Children perform simple practical calculations as they sing familiar songs and take part in baking activities. For example, children count the number of cakes they have made and are asked to add on one more. Children confidently recognise simple shapes and produce repeating patterns as they make necklaces.

Children enjoy opportunities for exploration and investigation. They show curiosity and interest in the building project at the adjacent school. They eagerly watch the cement mixer delivering cement to the building site. Children enjoy the opportunity to explore a laptop computer and demonstrate good levels of skills and understanding for the technology. However, the group do not, at present, have resources to extend this enthusiasm and further challenge the most able children to build on what they know. They use simple tools such as scissors competently with resources readily available for children to use for their own purpose. Children show an understanding of the natural world as they busily water the vegetables and flowers they are growing in the garden.

Creative development is generally well promoted. Children recognise and name colours. They enjoy singing, joining in enthusiastically with familiar songs such as 'Ten Fat Sausages'. Appropriated actions are added. Rhythm is explored as children use ice cream tubs as individual drums to beat out a defined rhythm. Role play and small-world games develop children's imagination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are valued as individuals and staff work hard to ensure that all children can be included in any activities on offer. Children's awareness of cultural diversity is extended well through books and resource specially chosen to reflect the nationalities of the children attending. For example, the home corner is redesigned to reflect aspects of other cultures. In addition, dual language books are made available. The celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year further promotes children's knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Children are very well behaved. Staff provide excellent role models through their calm and polite manner and have reasonable and realistic expectations of children's behaviour. They set and maintain clear and consistent limits using positive behaviour strategies. Children respond promptly to guidance about conduct and boundaries. Children are kind to their friends. Boys

and girls share well and play together. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children with individual special needs are cared for well. Staff have completed relevant training and have developed firm links with other professionals so they are well placed to ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported. Procedures ensure that parents are asked to provide relevant information which is necessary for the care of their child.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents speak very positively about the setting and the good relationships enjoyed between staff, children and parents. Parents are provided with clear information about the setting, including an explanation of the curriculum their children are following so they are generally well informed. In addition, they receive newsletters detailing playgroup life and outlines of planned topics. A daily information board extends their understanding of the activities enjoyed by their children. Records are shared and staff are available to speak with parents on a daily basis to keep them up-to-date with their child's progress in the setting. However, discussions are primarily based on staff knowledge and understanding of individual children as written records are limited in their content. In addition, twice yearly written reports highlight children's continuing progress. Parents are encouraged informally to share what they know about their child's progress and to become involved in their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's welfare is well promoted through effective operating procedures and well-maintained paperwork. Detailed self assessment allows the group to recognise areas for ongoing improvement. The staff take positive steps to ensure that parents are kept well informed about all policies and procedures and playgroup events. However, parents are less well informed regarding children's developmental progress. Registers and records meet requirements and are easily available at all times. Detailed personal information is obtained and filed securely for each child.

Children are very well supported by staff who use their time efficiently to organise space, resources and themselves to good advantage, in order to ensure that children receive good levels of adult attention. Staff are well qualified and exceed the expected qualification requirements, but do not have a firm understanding of the curriculum used to support children aged under three years old. Links between observations, assessments and planning are not yet secure.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Effective links between the committee and staff, help to ensure the smooth running of the playgroup. The staff team are well established, have clear roles and responsibilities and work well together. However, further delegation of key roles within the group would enable staff to further develop areas of interest or expertise. Rota parents are well supported with sufficient information to allow them to take an active role within the group. Regular staff meetings allow staff to reflect on the day, share observations about individual children and plan next steps in learning and development. However, plans do not always show clear learning intentions, are not clearly differentiated for different abilities or based on systematic observation or assessment of children as they play. Attendance at group forum meetings with other settings allows the group to assess and compare its nursery education

provision. There are clear links with the school and children take part in school activities and entertainment.

The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group was set an action to develop an action plan, including timescales, detailing what action the group will take to ensure the person in charge has a Level 3 qualification. An action plan was drawn up and the playleader has now achieved the required level of qualification to lead the group.

In addition, the group was asked to provide more opportunities, through play, for children to make marks and practise their early writing skills and mathematical pattern making and to ensure all children have opportunities to develop their range of small motor skills, including those who mainly use their left hands. Children now have a wide range of opportunities to practise their emerging writing skills as they play. They are encouraged to name or mark their own art work and to 'sign' their Father's Day cards. Children make marks in sand, paint with water in the garden and make lists as part of their role play scenarios. They reproduce repeating patterns as they play with beads and make necklaces. Children develop their small motor skills as they model with play dough using a range of tools as they roll, cut and shape the dough. They confidently join puzzle pieces and manoeuvre cars and small world characters. Children have access to scissors designed for left handed use and scissors specifically designed for children to use with adult support.

Finally the group was asked to review snacks offered to children to include more variety and choice of nutritious snacks and to look at ways to involve parents in a variety of information sharing sessions. Snacks offered to the children are healthy and nutritious but still lack variety. Daily snacks consist of cheese and apple with a savoury biscuit or breadstick. Children enjoy their snacks but the lack of variety limits their experience of differing tastes and textures. Parents are now well informed regarding the play group. They receive regular newsletters, have access to informative notice boards and are able to discuss their child's progress with staff on an informal basis. Parent questionnaires offer positive feedback on play group life.

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 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):

- improve staff understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and its place in the planning and monitoring of the developmental progress of the youngest children.

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):

- refine methods for observation and assessment of children's progress so that they are systematic, equally inclusive of all children, show a clear progression across the stepping stones and are used effectively to inform planning so individual children build on prior knowledge and are sufficiently challenged.

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