

Park Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	110515
Inspection date	22 June 2007
Inspector	Catherine Greenwood
Setting Address	Gloucester Road, Aldershot, Hampshire, GU11 3SL
Telephone number	01252 338607
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Registered person	Park Children's Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care, Crèche

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?

Park Children's Centre is situated in the grounds of Park Primary School and serves the local community. It is run by a management committee. It includes a full day nursery, crèche and a holiday play scheme as well as a variety of community based groups and activities.

The centre is registered to care for a maximum of 105 children at any one time and there are currently 134 children on roll. Of these 72 receive funding for early education. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school offer up to 10 sessions a week during term time. Sessions are from 09:05 to 11:35 and 12:45 to 15:15. The holiday play scheme is for children aged three to under eight years and runs from 09:30 to 17.00. The crèche provides care for children whose parents attend sessions at the centre and training courses.

The centre employs 10 full time members of staff and seven part time staff, of whom 14 have appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority and the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are given regular drinks throughout the day, for example, during physical education sessions older children use the water fountain within the school. However, water is not made easily accessible to toddlers. All children have a healthy snack during the morning which is usually fruit, raisins or crackers. Older children take it in turns to prepare fresh fruit for the snack bar where children help themselves and pour their own milk and water. Children who have dietary needs have their own place mat with a photograph. Children are provided with a lunchtime meal prepared by the school which is presented on individual trays. Staff phone the school each day to inform them of children's individual requirements. Babies and younger children over the age of one year have school meals or jars provided by parents. However, school meals may not always be appropriate for babies' dietary needs, for example, if food needs to be presented differently according to their age and stage of their development. Staff take it in turns to prepare children's teas, which include healthy organic home cooked food and fresh vegetables. The setting is working towards employing a cook. Children are protected from the risk of cross infection because all staff hold food handling certificates and have received training on 'safer food better business'. Accident and medication procedures are in place and most staff hold a current first aid certificate.

Older children develop good gross motor skills as they take part in indoor physical education sessions in the school hall, where they climb up wooden ramps, jump off boxes, and move in and out of hoops. Children enjoy showing adults what they can do, such as pulling their own body weight along benches and how they can jump and land with both feet together. Staff take out additional resources such as foam balls which children use to roll down ramps and throw into basketball nets. They use ribbons and scarves, a parachute, skipping ropes, bats and balls, and bean bags and quoits. Children show very good steering and manoeuvring skills as they use the bikes and scooters and have access to large apparatus in the garden to develop their ability to climb and slide.

Younger children look forward to weekly 'stretch and grow' sessions, where they follow the movements of an external instructor, such as jumping, bending their legs and running on the spot. Consequently, children develop good co-ordination and have fun. They concentrate well because the instructor uses exciting props each week such as foam batons and delivers the session in a way that captures children's interest. This encourages staff and children to join in with enthusiasm. Babies develop fine motor skills and co-ordination through using resources such as the chinks, threading beads, and take part in circle games where they learn to roll balls to each other. Babies who are not mobile are encouraged to move towards toys and consequently learn to crawl and become more confident in their movements. They learn to walk using wheeled toys in the outside playground and in good weather play on the grassy area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are able to move around the premises safely, freely and independently because staff identify and minimise potential risks. The school site manager completes a detailed risk assessment of all areas of the premises and daily premises check to remove anything hazardous from the surrounding areas. In addition, the centre completes a daily health and safety check list which includes broken toys. Comprehensive risk assessments are completed for all outings.

The manager and staff are aware of the potential risks to children. For example, all visitors, including users of the additional services within the centre are greeted individually at the front door, asked to sign in and their identification checked. All rooms have self closers and security locks and can only be accessed by staff using a key fob. This means that children are kept safe and secure when people using other services within the premises arrive and depart.

Evacuation practices, completed at different times of the day, mean that all children, including those who are part time know what to do in the event of a fire. Children are kept safe on outings within the school grounds because staff use appropriate safety equipment and have a good understanding of the procedures to follow. There is a good range of well maintained, suitable and accessible play equipment and furniture within all the children's rooms and other areas used for additional services. All staff have a secure knowledge of the child protection procedures if they have concerns about a child and current documentation is available. This means that children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies and younger children enjoy a wide range of activities which develop their senses. For example, they rub their hands around in paint and make prints, touch and feel shredded paper and ice cubes, dance spontaneously to Greek music, and play with corn flour, sand, water, jelly and baked beans. Babies show very good independence as they pull out wicker baskets with a range of play equipment and look at books on their own. Staff make good use of props, for example, by giving children objects such as plastic ducks from story bags. Consequently children sit still and concentrate well when listening to stories as a large group. They have an enthusiastic approach to all activities and babies are extremely good at occupying themselves.

Activity planning for younger children is good. Toddlers enjoy a good range of experiences such as making frog sporn from bubble wrap, vegetable and fruit painting, and gloop. They help to make play dough, and use water that is presented in different ways, for example, with glitter. However, wall displays are adult orientated and do not include a wide variety of children's independent creative work. This means that children have less opportunity to feel proud of their own designs and art work. Staff complete good written observations of children's progress under the outcomes for Birth to three matters and review these every month to identify and record the next step for children's learning. These are made available to parents who sometimes write their own comments.

Children enjoy imaginative play because staff change the way they present the resources. For example, the home corner is changed into a laundry area, where they peg dolls' clothes onto a washing line. Consequently younger children who are reluctant to communicate are keen to talk about things that happen at home, and develop their confidence with speaking to staff. All children benefit from weekly music sessions where they sing, use musical instruments, and take part in action games with an external teacher. Babies enjoy going outside each day either into the adjacent playground or in the six seater buggy in the school grounds, where they look at flowers and go for a run. This means that children have good opportunities to explore their immediate environment. Older children who are leaving to go to Park Primary School have the opportunity to attend an outreach centre where together they can explore sensory resources and build dens. This means they increase their ability to learn as part of a large group. Additional visitors to the nursery include a storyteller from the library services and a play bus full of soft toys and ball pools for children to explore and have lots of fun.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff include objectives for children's learning within planning and evaluate activities. They join children at some of the activities, are receptive to what children say, and ask questions that encourage children to say what they know, for example, when counting the pieces of fruit they have cut up for snack time. However, not all staff have a secure knowledge of the stepping stones and therefore do not extend children's learning through sufficient questioning and conversation in all areas of Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff complete well organised observations of children's learning. However, these are not used on a regular basis to identify the next step for children's learning in all areas of the curriculum or used to link to planning. This means that children may not reach their full learning potential.

Most children are well behaved, form good relationships with each other and play together co-operatively. They have a good understanding about taking turns through independently using a large egg timer during play. Planning identifies objectives for children to learn to care for each other and staff encourage confident and more able children to help others complete tasks and activities. Staff remain patient when dealing with challenging behaviour, but do not give some children clear guidance about what is expected. This means they do not always understand the consequences of their behaviour. Children show good independence as they wash their hands, help themselves to a snack, and put on their own shoes and socks. Children listen with interest and volunteer information about what they know and understand during large group story times. They can recognise and find their name from name cards and on trays that contain their own work. More able children are beginning to recognise familiar words that are displayed around the room, for example, 'plate' in the snack area. Children use chalks and crayons to make marks and more able children can write their name with all letters correctly formed. Staff help children to learn to count and identify shapes during practical activities, for example, when using the mobilo and the cubes. Children confidently identify colours as they draw pictures of rainbows.

Photographs show children enjoying a visit from an animal road show, where they handle rats, snakes, centipedes, and spiders. As a result, children learn about the habitats that animals live in and the food they eat. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to experience planting and growing activities throughout the year. There are accessible resources that help children to discover how things work, for example, a CD player, magnifying glasses, kaleidoscopes and calculators and children can operate simple programs when using the computer. Children learn about the ingredients to use in cooking activities and where to buy them, for example, through making scones and entering into large group discussions with a chef who visits the nursery. They really enjoy experimenting with mixing sand and water and noticing the different texture it produces. Children learn about their local environment through projects which encourage them to create pictures of buildings in their surrounding area. They learn about the roles of others through visits from the police, fire service, ambulance service, postman, Mayor and local Church minister. Children visit residential homes for the elderly at Christmas and Harvest where they take food that is donated from the public. This means they learn about the needs of others and people who live in their community.

Children enjoy singing nursery rhymes and taking part in singing and movement sessions where they copy intended movements, for example, 'the farmer's in his den'. They have the opportunity to do creative activities such as bubble painting, and handle a wide range of media such as jelly and wet porridge. Children use sand and water when playing outside and are persistent with using the rolling pins to manipulate dough. They play imaginatively together as they dress up

as fairies and postmen and use small world toys in the pretend castle. Children really enjoy using buckets of water and brushes to 'paint' outside walls, and create their own designs at the easel using paint and paper shapes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Most children are well behaved and staff have a very patient approach to managing any incidents. Babies and younger children learn right from wrong because staff get down to their level, use facial expression and distract them. For example, they make a sad face so children understand. Staff recognise that often very young children express themselves inappropriately, out of excitement. Children who are new to the setting or find it difficult to settle, benefit from sitting closely with staff on the rocking chair in the baby room. Staff also use the rocking chair for giving babies their bottles. Consequently they feel comforted and secure. Staff have a good knowledge of children's individual needs, and there are well organised details of babies' individual routines which include sleep times, meals and snacks.

Children develop a positive approach to differences through using resources such as the dressing up clothes, puzzles and books and through taking part in activities such as 'around the world days', where they learn about other cultures and countries. This involves trying different food, listening to music and dancing and talking about the celebrations within different countries. Interesting pictures and accessible resources are attractively displayed in the pre-school room for children to handle and explore. However, staff do not plan objectives for children to learn about differences, such as disability.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents receive a portfolio which includes information about groups and courses run by the centre, and children's learning, including the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parent questionnaires include positive comments such as 'friendly, approachable and competent staff', 'the stimulating atmosphere in the centre' and 'the development of children's literacy skills'. Communication with parents is good. They receive termly newsletters, and additional information letters on a more frequent basis. They are invited to attend formal meetings with key workers every six months to discuss children's individual progress. Parents of all children attending full day care receive a daily diary which has information about activities and events and what children have enjoyed doing.

The centre is currently caring for a number of children with learning difficulties. Staff complete individual education plans and weekly action plans with identified targets, which include activities using Makaton for children with speech and language delay. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator takes a lead role in supporting staff and liaising with parents, the family link worker and other agencies to meet children's individual needs. Children's Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The environment is very well organised and welcoming to both children and their families. Good use is made of the available space for additional services and there are clear plans in place for further improvements which are due to take place this year. For example, to provide additional sleep areas for children and undercover outdoor play areas. Children in the pre-school room benefit from using the school premises, for example, for activities such as physical education.

Toddlers use an attractive 'pod' which is a small outdoor area adjacent to their room, for a range of activities such as painting, sand and water play and story times.

Play opportunities for older children are maximised because the room operates a free flow system where children can choose to play inside or outside. This means they make good use of the available space. However, the adjacent outside play area is not used in the same way for the three year olds, and all children are currently taken to play outside as a large group. This means that they do not have the opportunity to independently choose some resources such as sand and water throughout the session. In addition, the main play areas have a large proportion of carpet and do not enable staff to make good use of the space for creative resources.

Teamwork and communication between staff is good and they are very receptive to making improvements to their practice. Children benefit from having a high proportion of qualified staff who are effectively inducted. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place. For example, spread sheets clearly identify that all staff have undergone necessary checks to ensure their suitability to work with children. In addition, the centre has a very well organised operational manual which includes all written policies and procedures.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The centre manager has a clear vision for improvements to the premises and takes an active role in co-ordinating all the community services as well as the crèche, play scheme and nursery. She is a confident communicator who has a welcoming approach to all the parents, carers and their families who visit the centre, and is very committed to providing high quality affordable child care and on-going support for parents. The centre manager and nursery manager aim to provide good role models for staff and influence practice through regular meetings and identifying training needs. Staff attend additional training such as 'play with a purpose', 'developing children's thinking and learning skills through play, and Foundation Stage planning'. The centre has successfully completed a quality assurance scheme. All staff receive an annual appraisal and informal one to one sessions. However, the centre manager and the nursery manager have not ensured that all staff who work with children in receipt of funding for nursery education have sufficient knowledge of the stepping stones within the Foundation Stage curriculum to help all children achieve well. The lack of systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, and evaluation of how planning and observations of children's progress are linked, mean gaps in children's learning continue unnoticed. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the provider agreed to review and update documentation, review dual language resources, snack time procedures and children's safety. All necessary documentation is in place including records of medicine administration, a bullying statement is included in the behaviour management policy, the complaints procedure includes Ofsted's address and phone number, procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer have been added to child protection statement, and a register of children's attendance is kept in the pre-school classroom. Staff have obtained dual language books for children to use, children's snack time has been changed to 'café style' where they help themselves, electrical sockets are fitted with safety covers and the outside patio area does not present any tripping hazards. This means that children's health, safety, welfare and independence have been improved.

At the last education inspection, the provider agreed to provide more opportunities for children to operate independently in the setting, develop children's phonic awareness, linking sounds and letters, develop children's calculating skills, and plan opportunities for children to find out about the place where they live and learn about other cultures. Children are now encouraged to access activities independently from labelled boxes and drawers, older children help to prepare fruit for snack time and pour their own drinks and take their shoes on and off for movement sessions. Children are encouraged to recognise and find their own name using name cards and on their coat pegs and individual drawers. They learn the sound that their name begins with and are also beginning to recognise and read other words displayed around the pre-school room. Children are encouraged to develop their counting and calculating skills, for example, when counting the number of girls and boys during circle time and identifying the total number of people. Staff plan activities for children to find out about the place they live and learn about other cultures through walks in the local environment, discussions about countries, houses, climate and celebrations, access to multi-cultural dolls and clothes, puzzles, instruments, utensils, books and multi-language posters, and tasting fruit and bread from different countries. This means that opportunities for children to develop their independence and make progress in areas of learning have been improved.

Complaints since the last inspection

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. 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 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):

- review the purpose and presentation of creative activities and children's individual work
- review the use of the outside play area so that all older children have independent access to creative resources throughout the day and can choose to play inside or outside

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):

- ensure observations of children's progress are consistently used to identify the next step for their individual learning in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum and use this information to link to future planning
- extend children's learning through appropriate questioning and conversation

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