



The Play Hut

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	301135
Inspection date	23 June 2005
Inspector	Pauline Pinnegar
Setting Address	347 North Road, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 3BL
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Registered person	Lindsay McCaskill
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 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?

The Play Hut Day Nursery opened in June 1994. It operates from a two storey property with a large two storey extension. To the rear of the property is a purpose built baby unit. There is also a fully secure outdoor play area with a separate enclosed area for children under two years. Each area has its own toilets. The nursery is situated on the north side of Darlington within easy distance of Darlington town centre. The nursery serves the local and surrounding community.

The nursery opens from 08:00 to 18:00 five days a week all year round except for bank holidays. The facility is registered for 56 children from birth to five years. There are currently 84 children on roll, including 32 children who receive funding for Nursery Education. The nursery is not currently caring for children who have identified Special Educational Needs and children who speak English as a second language but there are suitable procedures in place.

There are 18 members of staff. All staff have early years qualifications to at level 2 or above. Four members of staff are working towards higher qualifications on training programmes.

The nursery receives support from the advisory teacher linked to the local Early Years Childcare and Development Partnership, and is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

The nursery receives support from the local education authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children learn about the importance of being healthy and good hygiene practices through consistent routines. They are aware for example, of washing their hands after using the toilet and before meals. Older children are increasingly independent when managing their personal toileting needs. Children are learning the importance of good oral hygiene through well planned activities. Older children have a good understanding about keeping healthy and one child stated he " had to wash his hands properly to get rid of the germs as he may get a poorly tummy and have to go hospital " The environment is clean with good standards of hygiene maintained, however the temperature in the pre-school room is not monitored effectively to ensure it is comfortable for children in hot weather.

Children begin to learn about a healthy diet; they have good access to drinking water and fluids throughout the day. The food provided for children promotes healthy eating. It is varied, well presented and full of fresh ingredients. The menu complies with all individual dietary needs to ensure that parental wishes are followed. Children under two are very well nourished, they benefit from the same nutritious menu as older children. They are gaining increasing independence, as meal times are used as an opportunity to support children in becoming independent in feeding themselves. Children are offered choice and good quality snacks. Older children have a good understanding about healthy foods through varied activities such as healthy eating. These projects contribute to children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

Children enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities which support and help to develop their physical skills. All children benefit from good access to activities that promote their large physical development. They have access to a well stocked outdoor play area which benefits from focused play equipment to promote physical development. Children move with control and co ordination, they can successfully negotiate

obstacles and move around the environment safely. Older children are aware of changes in their bodies after exercise, for example one child said "I am having a drink as I am thirsty and it is very hot" after playing outdoors.

Children under three are beginning to benefit from the settings adoption of the Birth to Three Matters framework. Staff ensure the components relating to 'a healthy child' are referred to, to provide appropriate care. Individual rest and sleep needs are respected for all children. They benefit from this sensitivity to their routine and are beginning to develop securely and confidently in a nurturing environment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment minimising the risk of accidents. The setting has good safety and security precautions such as visitors log book and locked external doors. When children are taken on visits they are kept safe as staff comply with and understand clearly, all health and safety policies.

Children can move around freely and safely in the space available and make independent choices about where and what they wish to engage in. They confidently select from a good range of age appropriate, good quality play equipment. Children can independently access this equipment as it is stored and mainly displayed at child height in easily accessible storage units. Children under two, have good opportunities to choose their activities in a safe environment closely monitored by the staff.

Children's welfare is given high priority by the setting and all appropriate and required documentation such as medication and accident records are in place and up to date. Most staff have an appropriate valid first aid certificate. Children are well protected, as staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and guidance in line with local Area Child Protection Committee procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies are well nurtured, they have good bonds with their key person and make relationships with other members of staff easily. This has a positive impact on their well being and sense of security. The children benefit from familiar routines and they experience consistency of contact in their personal needs, for example, nappy changes are completed by key person. Young children enjoy a good range of discovery and exploratory resources. Staff encourage them to interact and use sound, gesture and basic language by playing with them on their level and responding to them appropriately. Older children between one and three years are confident and are becoming increasingly independent, for example they can wash their hands after using the toilet with a little assistance. They are becoming competent learners and access a good range of stimulating resources including, natural materials such as sand and water. Babies also access treasure basket to promote their senses. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Birth to Three Matters

framework and have developed a programme to increase stimulation and support the development of children's senses and creative abilities.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Children enjoy their time at nursery and they achieve well because staff are skilled and use their understanding of early years guidance to provide good quality nursery education. Planning is detailed and covers all areas of learning.

Children's achievements are clearly linked to the stepping stones. Staff use ongoing observations well to plan the next steps for their learning. Skilful use of observation and assessment also means that all children are challenged appropriately. Children are enthusiastic and eager to learn as they access a varied range of stimulating, relevant activities related to their needs. A good range of resources are provided to support children's development across all areas of learning. Children are self assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen intently to stories and eagerly select books to share with each other and staff. All children use marks readily to represent their ideas and more able children are adept at writing their own names and other words. Their early reading skills are developing well with the effective use of Jolly Phonics. All children can recognise simple sounds and older children are successfully linking sounds and letters. All children recognise their first name and older children can recognise their surname and other words. Children are skilful in their use of number. Some are able to count correctly to over 10 and show a clear awareness of size. They confidently compare numbers and use them independently to solve problems for example when putting out cutlery for lunch one child remarked "I have two too many left "

Children's physical development is good; they move confidently and safely and are gaining good control of small tools and equipment. Children develop an awareness of time and place; and gain knowledge of the local environment by planned walks, outings and visitors. Children have opportunities to increase their knowledge of simple technology and explore 'how things work' through regular use of the computer and other technology. They are able to complete simple programmes and are skilled at using the mouse and keyboard. Children use their imagination well in role and small world play and explore a range of craft and design activities spontaneously.

Staff generally use time effectively, however on occasion the period that children are engaged in very structured activities such as circle time impinges on their free play. Staff work well to inspire, praise and encourage children to try things for themselves and continue to develop and practice their skills. Behaviour is managed well resulting in children make good relationships and having a clear awareness of the boundaries and rules of the setting.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed into the setting warmly fostering their sense of belonging

and security. Children of all ages are developing positive attitudes to others. They have access to a satisfactory range of resources and positive images that reflect diversity and the local wider community. However resources are not as easily accessible for children aged two to three years. Children respond to consistent adult expectations of their behaviour and are well behaved. They begin to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and age appropriate methods staff use to manage behaviour including explanation, distraction. Staff encourage children to resolve their own differences which helps them to learn, take turns and share. Children begin to make choices and take decisions, such as a child saying to the staff "right I am going to play with something else now" and "I want a drink". Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of funded children is satisfactory, as they are not given sufficient detailed information about activities and children's intended learning. This means they are not able to participate and contribute to their child's learning at home. Staff ensure that all parents know how their children are progressing and developing. Children's records of achievements are shared twice yearly with parents formally at parents evenings and informally on a regular basis.

Children under three benefit from good parental partnerships. Personal information is sought and recorded so that staff ensure that they follow the child's individual routine as closely as possible. Babies settle particularly well, for example, a seven month old child who had only been attending a few weeks' smiles and interacts with staff and other adults confidently, secure in his environment. Babies and younger children develop confidence as staff effectively respond to their sounds and gestures and sensitively support them as they develop their personalities and individuality.

Older children develop good self esteem as they feel valued and important as staff effectively encourages them be 'helpers' work as part of the nursery family. Children of all ages benefit from warm exchanges of information between staff and parents. Their needs are identified by good quality child detail records.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff enhance children's care by the good quality of organisation and the effective leadership and management of nursery education. The premises are well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for children. The welfare, care and learning of children is appropriately promoted by the clear comprehensive policies and procedures. All are available for parents to keep them informed of the service. The children are kept safe by the good range of well completed documentation, which is, up to date and stored on site in an accessible yet confidential manner. This contributes well, to the continuity of care for the children. Induction, training and the enthusiasm of the staff have a positive impact on children's welfare and development.

Staff have a clear understanding of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and the Birth to Three Matters framework. They successfully apply these in practice to support children's development. They have effectively identified areas to

improve their setting with clear plans in place to achieve their aims. This affects their ability to monitor the provision well and prioritise aims.

Children benefit from highly qualified staff who are effectively inducted. The clear appraisal system ensures that the nurseries comprehensive policies and procedures are consistently applied. Overall, the quality of the provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care and nursery education inspection the setting was asked to; deploy staff more effectively in pre-school room when covering staff absences; ensure all hazardous substances and exposed sockets are inaccessible to children; ensure all records are stored securely; ensure all toys and resources are easily accessible for children aged 3 to 4 years; ensure that children do not have access to the kitchen except with direct staff supervision; ensure that the premises are secure; ensure that toys and equipment are well maintained and safe; ensure that younger children have access to the full range of resources that promote positive images of cultural diversity; record times of children's, staff and visitors arrival and departure in nursery rooms; provide a suitable range of outdoor toys, in order to offer sufficient challenge for children aged 3 to under 5 years; provide opportunities for children to become more independent at meal times; provide appropriate resources outside for more able children; make sure all staff are familiar with the early learning goals;

The setting has made significant improvement in safety, organisation and staff deployment. Children do not have access to the kitchen and the building is fully secure. All records are stored securely with the implementation of locked filing cabinets in each room. All toys and equipment meet safety standards. All hazardous substances and exposed sockets are inaccessible to children. A clear record of children and staff attendance is maintained and a log of visitors present. Toys and resources for outdoor play have been updated and provide appropriate challenge for all children's physical development. Although there is a satisfactory range of toys and resources available to promote diversity, younger children still do not access this equipment freely. Pre-school children now have very good opportunities to develop their independence at meal times. 'Helper's' put out cutlery and plates and each child serves out their own meal from the table. Resources in the pre-school are accessed satisfactorily by children to promote their independence. Staff have completed training with regard to the foundation stage to give them a greater understanding of the curriculum for funded nursery education and plan activities which promote all the areas of learning. Staff are employed effectively in all rooms of the nursery to promote children's welfare and development.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- ensure the temperature in the pre school room is carefully monitored to ensure children are comfortable at all times
- ensure children aged two to three years access freely the range of resources which promote diversity.

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 structured sessions do not impinge on children's free play time
- provide parents with more information regarding their children's learning and of how they can contribute.

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