

Pelican Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY342539
Inspection date	05 June 2007
Inspector	Alison Edwards
Setting Address	Pelican Centre; United Reformed Church Hall, High Street, East Shilton, Leicestershire, LE9 7DH
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Out of School 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 satisfactory. 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?

Pelican Playgroup is a privately-run group which registered under its current ownership in 2006. It operates from the Pelican Centre United Reformed Church in Earl Shilton in south west Leicestershire serving families in the local community. The playgroup provides sessional care for a maximum of 28 children from two to five years. Children are cared for in the main hall and adjacent Lion Room, with use of cloakroom facilities off the main foyer. Kitchen and storage facilities are provided off the main hall. There is no enclosed outdoor area.

The playgroup is open from Monday to Friday during term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:30 each day and from 12:30 until 14:45 other than on Fridays. Children can attend a variety of sessions. There are currently 73 children on roll, of whom 49 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and identified special needs. Including the proprietor there are nine regular staff, of whom six hold relevant qualifications at Level 3.

The group is also registered to offer out of school care to school-aged children under the age of eight years. This includes term time care from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 09:00 and 15:00 and 18:00 and holiday care from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 18:00.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to have regard to children's individual health needs. For example, information is obtained from parents and any other relevant professionals with regard to the management of any specific identified medical conditions. A rolling programme of first aid training for staff, and written parental permission to seek emergency treatment, help ensure children's welfare is maintained in the event of a sudden accident or incident. Staff are familiar with the need to arrange appropriate training for the administration of any invasive treatment, such as use of an adrenaline pen for use in the event of anaphylactic shock.

Children follow simple hygiene procedures within daily routines. For example, they ensure their hands are clean at snack time by using individual cleaning wipes, or by washing their hands in the cloakroom and drying them with individual paper towels. Consequently, risks of infection are minimised. Children begin to show some awareness of the reasons for these procedures, for example when older children say that they wash their hands to get rid of germs so they do not get ill.

The clean and suitably maintained premises provide sufficient space for children to rest and move freely between activities, so helping to maintain their physical well-being. For example, they relax on comfortable bean bags or low chairs when looking at books in the quiet area. Children frequently use their hand-eye coordination when handling items such as paint brushes, pencils and crayons. However, some adult-directed mark-making activities, such as copying name cards, are not always well-matched to children's individual stage of development. For example, younger children find it difficult to form letters because they are not yet confident in holding a pencil with an appropriate grip. Older or more able children are not consistently encouraged to extend their dexterity through independent and purposeful mark making, or use of other small tools such as hole punches, treasury tags or scissors. Sessions usually include some time during which children are able to participate in more energetic activities. For example, they enjoy using hoops and balls at the end of a session when most other equipment has been packed away. However, such resources are often only available to children for a short period each day, so limiting their opportunities to fully and freely explore and extend their large movement skills.

Snacks including fresh and dried fruit help contribute to a healthy diet. Children have access to drinking water throughout the session and are also offered milk at snack time, so helping to ensure they take sufficient fluids. Children show growing independence when pouring their own water from covered jugs. They sometimes begin to learn about different aspects of food as they plant bean seeds or mix pancakes or porridge and see how they change on cooking.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have sole use of the main and side playroom at all times of operation, and have sole use of the cloakroom facilities during most sessions. However, other groups using the church

have access to the foyer and cloakroom areas during two sessions each week. Children are accompanied by staff when accessing the cloakrooms during these sessions to ensure they do not have unsupervised contact with other adults. However, a portable screen used to divide the foyer and cloakroom areas at these times is unstable when pushed or knocked, so posing a potential hazard to children.

Access to the external door leading to the foyer and playroom is carefully controlled by use of high bolts and a buzzer system. However, internal doors from the playroom to other areas of the building, such as the church, stage area and basement, are not always kept secured at present. Current arrangements are therefore not fully effective in ensuring that children are unable to access other areas of the premises.

Children receive good levels of supervision throughout the session because a good adult:child ratio is maintained. A number of sensible safety precautions are in place and staff regularly review these in order to help reduce identified risks to children. For example, emergency evacuation procedures are regularly practised and evaluated to ensure staff know how to maintain children's safety in the event of a fire. The new proprietor has also reviewed and adapted existing practices, such as the provision of refreshments for staff, consequently ensuring that hot drinks are not brought into areas used by children. Clear written policies are in place identifying the procedures to be followed in the event of a child going missing or being uncollected at the end of the session. Staff are aware of these, so helping to ensure they are able to act in children's best interests in the event of any such incident.

Bright and sturdy tables and chairs are of an appropriate height for children to use comfortably and safely. Children confidently use books which are attractively displayed on low bookshelves, seating themselves on comfortable floor cushions or low foam seats to look at these. Play materials are in sound and clean condition. They are generally suited to children's stage of development and interests, though are not always presented to best effect to promote children's sustained and purposeful play. For example, children make limited use of an assortment of dolls and clothing piled on a play table.

Staff recognise what child abuse and neglect mean. They are aware of their responsibilities to follow national and local guidelines in the event of any child protection concerns, so helping them to safeguard children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and relaxed in the playgroup. They are often sufficiently confident to approach adults to talk about their experiences or current interests, such as their attendance at a recent birthday party or their interest in how a laptop computer works. They are usually occupied and busy in their activities, for example as they undertake adult-directed craft activities, or as they play sociably with others, sharing use of a garage and cars on a floor mat. Staff are aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework giving guidance on provision for younger children and have regard to it when planning for children's play. Children enjoy a fair variety of planned activities which are generally suited to their interests and stage of development, for example making shapes with playdough, singing songs, listening to stories and handling creative materials such as paint and glue. However, children do not always fully extend their learning in all areas because resources and play opportunities are not consistently used to best effect to fully promote children's independence, thinking skills, and creativity.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning for the nursery education programme is satisfactory. Staff are generally familiar with the areas of learning identified in the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage'. They use this knowledge to help them plan a variety of topic-based activities helping to give generally balanced coverage across the areas of learning. For example, children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, and an awareness of their local environment as they go on outings to nearby schools, or have visits from school crossing staff as part of a road safety theme. There are now systematic arrangements in place for staff to observe and assess individual children's progress, and to identify the next steps in their learning. However, as yet, these assessments do not effectively inform the short term planning of daily activities. These currently often focus on adult-directed craft activities. They are therefore not fully effective in ensuring there are high levels of independence, challenge and progression for individual children across all aspects of learning.

Children are generally developing appropriate personal, social and emotional skills within the playgroup. Most settle readily on arrival and quickly become occupied in their play, usually handling books and toys with care. They begin to develop independence in some daily routines, such as pouring out their own drinks at snack time. However, resources and activities are not always well presented to encourage their sustained, independent and purposeful play. For example, simple resources such as pencil sharpeners or safety scissors are not readily accessible to extend their purposeful independence in creative activities. Children usually respond willingly to staff's instructions and show familiarity with expectations such as sitting down together for snack time. However, whole group activities such as register time are not always planned and presented effectively to sustain children's interest, with the result that some children become restless.

Children are starting to use simple language to express their wants and preferences, as when they talk about which fruits they like at snack time. They begin to show independent interest in looking at books, and many show interest and enjoyment when listening to stories as part of a large group. Staff are beginning to experiment with ways of introducing different activities to encourage children's awareness of rhythm and sounds, for example clapping and rhyming games within whole group activities. Staff encourage children to make marks, for example by drawing shapes in sand, tracing over patterns, or copying name cards. However, these activities are not always well matched to children's individual stage of development and children are not consistently encouraged to develop their own independent purposeful mark making and writing, for example in free painting or role play activities.

Children take part in a range of activities through which they are able to learn about pattern, shape and size, for example as they make two-dimensional collages with different shapes of paper, or three-dimensional models with boxes and cartons of different shapes. Children routinely count in sequence together, for example when counting the number of children in the group. They begin to recognise numerals, for example when playing matching games. There are some activities enabling children to compare and combine numbers, for example when sorting out sets of plastic animals by type, colour or size. However, at present mathematical and problem-solving resources and activities are not consistently well-planned and presented to provide high levels of challenge and stimulation matched to children's level of understanding.

Children start to learn about the world around them as they visit schools or play areas in their local community, sow bean seeds, or mark different cultural events such as Diwali or Chinese New Year. They begin to learn about simple technology as they see a microwave oven used to

cook porridge, or as they use electronic toys. They sometimes build simple structures with commercial construction sets or use different fastening techniques such as gluing in craft activities. They sometimes handle different substances such as playdough or sand, so beginning to realise that materials have different properties. However, at present activities and resources are not always organised to best effect to fully build on children's curiosity and encourage their independent observation, problem solving and thinking skills.

Adult-led activities include a range of different art and craft materials and techniques, such as marble painting or paper collage, so introducing children to aspects of colour, texture, form and shape. However, they are not consistently encouraged to explore and develop their own imaginative ideas. Children enjoy singing nursery rhymes and sometimes make use of simple musical instruments. They frequently enjoy simple pretend play, such as dressing up in animal costumes or tabards reflecting different occupations. However, resources are not always well presented to create a stimulating environment encouraging children to purposefully extend their independent role play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children usually settle readily in the playgroup. They are sufficiently confident to participate in the range of activities available, for example when several children sit on the floor together playing with a garage, road layout and cars, or when an individual child independently selects books from the book rack. Children are able to make choices within a selection of activities throughout large parts of the session. They begin to show recognition of behaviour expected in particular situations, for example, taking turns to sit down together in a small group for their morning snack. They handle books and toys appropriately, and begin to take some responsibility for their surroundings, for example as they help put toys away in response to staff requests.

Staff pay careful regard to advice from parents and other relevant professionals about children's specific health, care and dietary requirements, so helping to ensure that children's individual needs are met. For example, they ensure that children with specific conditions are offered food of a suitable type and consistency, or that additional risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety of children who may be particularly susceptible to accident or injury. Some staff have relevant training on issues such as sign language or lifting and handling, helping them to support children with a range of individual learning needs or disabilities. Children undertake some planned activities helping them learn about cultural and religious diversity, for example craft or food-tasting activities linked to festivals such as Diwali or Chinese New Year. They use a selection of resources reflecting different lifestyles, such as dolls with different skin tones and styles of clothing, or play people with mobility aids. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Parents speak favourably of the friendly environment which helps them feel confidence in the care provided to their children. Prospective parents receive some initial written information about the playgroup, and are able to visit it in session to gain an understanding of daily routines and activities. Opportunities for informal discussion at the start and end of the session enable staff and parents to share some relevant information on children's experiences and activities. The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving funded nursery education is satisfactory. Information about current topics and activities is provided through termly newsletters and through the display of current plans on a notice board in the foyer. Parents and staff share initial information about children's abilities and stage of development, and systematic arrangements are currently being introduced by the new proprietor to share progress

information with parents at regular intervals. However, at present parents receive limited information about the areas and aspects of learning within the Foundation Stage, and about the value of varied teaching and learning methods, such as role play or independent creative activities, in supporting children's development across all areas.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are settled and relaxed in this welcoming setting. The new proprietor ensures good adult:child ratios are maintained, enabling staff to spend time with small groups of children. Consequently, children are well-supervised throughout the session and adults know individual children well. A good proportion of the staff hold relevant childcare qualifications and several are currently undertaking or booked onto early years degree courses. In this way, they demonstrate a commitment to further advancing their existing understanding of good childcare practice. Staff also make ongoing use of locally-available short courses, for example on disability awareness or equal opportunities. Consequently they are extending their underpinning knowledge and skills to further develop practice in specific areas of the provision. Clear recruitment and induction procedures are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and are familiar with the comprehensive policies and procedures underpinning children's care. Under the current proprietor, these procedures are kept under regular review to help ensure they are effective in supporting children's welfare. For example, procedures for provision of staff refreshments have been recently changed to ensure hot drinks cannot pose a safety hazard to children. Methodical and comprehensive records are kept of children's personal and contact details, so enabling staff to have careful regard to children's individual health and care needs.

The leadership and management of the nursery education programme is satisfactory. Under the new proprietor, staff appraisal systems are in use to help evaluate the existing skills and continuing development priorities of the established staff group. The new proprietor is actively working with local authority advisory staff in identifying priorities for ongoing development of the nursery education programme, such as further ways to support children's communication skills. Staff are developing confidence in evaluating the effectiveness of specific planned activities in supporting children's learning and development. In addition to ongoing informal discussion, staff meet regularly with the proprietor to ensure there is a shared understanding of the playgroup's aims and of their individual roles and responsibilities. These systems therefore provide a sound basis for the playgroup to further develop its nursery education programme to provide greater levels of challenge and progression for all children. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action 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.

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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 safety with particular regard to ensuring that children cannot gain unsupervised access to other areas of premises and that there are effective arrangements to manage access to the cloakroom area when other users of the building are present
- improve the selection and presentation of resources and activities to actively encourage children to build on their natural curiosity, and to extend their language, thinking, creativity and physical skills (also applies to nursery education)

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):

- continue to develop use of assessments of children's current stage of development in short term planning so that planned activities better reflect children's individual learning needs and offer good levels of challenge and progression
- develop provision of information for parents regarding the areas and aspects of learning within the foundation stage, and about effective methods of supporting children's development across all areas.

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