

Grasshoppers Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY217596
Inspection date	20 June 2007
Inspector	Janet Skippins
Setting Address	The Old Nursery, off Dalton Green Lane, Dalton, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD5 9TS
Telephone number	01484 300971
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Registered person	Grasshoppers 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Grasshoppers Playgroup opened in 2001. It is managed by a voluntary committee which includes the centre manager and parents. It operates from a playroom with separate toilets and kitchen in a purpose built family centre adjacent to Dalton Junior, Infants and Nursery School, Huddersfield. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The playgroup offers a wrap around service, which extends the session, so that children are able to have lunch. An Out of School Club also operates in the same premises. The provision serves the local area.

A maximum of 26 children, aged two to four, may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 49 children on roll. This includes 11 funded three-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens each weekday except Tuesday during school term times. Sessions are from 09.00 to 11.30, 09.00 to 12.45 and 11.30 to 13.00 on Monday, the same on Wednesday with additional sessions from 11.30 to 15.00 and 12.30 to 15.00 and 09.30 to 11.30 on Thursday and Friday.

Five appropriately qualified staff work with the children.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because the playgroup has good procedures in place and there is an awareness of cleanliness. Effective policies and procedures are implemented to help stop the spread of infection between children. For example, during the inspection the tables were cleaned with antibacterial spray between activities. Children learn about the importance of good personal hygiene because they routinely wash their hands after going to the toilet, in preparation for their snack, before and during baking activities. The staff give them good explanations about why they must wash their hands. For example, while mixing the baking ingredients when a child put his hand in his mouth, a staff member calmly told him he should go and wash his hands because he had done this, and there were germs in his mouth. The child responded well, telling other children why he needed to wash his hands.

Staff work in partnership with parents to ensure that children's individual health and dietary needs are met. The children are nourished and thrive, as they are provided with nutritious snacks, such as fresh fruit, toast, with water or milk. However, the children are provided with their snack towards the end of the playgroup session. This results in there being a short period of time between snack and lunchtime. Children are able to stay for lunch when they eat food from the boxes they have brought from home. They are able to help themselves to drinks throughout the session. The children demonstrate their knowledge about healthy eating when they talk about the ingredients they are using during the regular baking sessions.

Children develop their physical skills very well as they take part in activities in the large, very well equipped outdoor area. They are able to access this area freely for most of each playgroup session regardless of weather. They take turns to use equipment, such as climbing frames with slides and wheeled toys. They also participate in planned activities, such as planting seeds and bulbs. Indoors they enjoy dancing to action songs. They learn to have an awareness of space as they negotiate their way around furniture and equipment, with control and coordination. They learn to use small tools, such as spades, trowels, scissors and glue spreaders with increasing confidence. A flexible routine is in place for the children, allowing them to be able to choose when to relax indoors in a quiet area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children have a good understanding of fire safety through regularly practising and discussing fire drills. They develop an understanding of road safety through visitors to the playgroup, such as the school crossing patrol person. Risk of accidental injury to children is minimised because the playgroup implements good policies and procedures. There are good procedures in place for arrival and departure, for example, a member of staff is always at the playgroup gate as children and parents enter and leave the playgroup. The outdoor area is fenced and gated. Children use suitable equipment that is purchased from reputable sources. This is checked regularly for safety and cleanliness. Toys and equipment can be safely and easily accessed, as they are set up in an organised manner at child height. Children are encouraged to tidy up after themselves and not leave toys on the floor where they may trip on them.

The children are well protected because all the staff are trained in first aid and they have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures, giving high priority to children's welfare. Management have a clear understanding of vetting procedures and employ staff who have relevant experience, knowledge and skills in caring for children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's independence is promoted through a variety of opportunities. They move around freely accessing toys and equipment, try to put aprons on and learn to be independent with their own hygiene. Children are fully involved in a wide range of enjoyable activities, which develop their mathematical thinking, imagination, language and creative development. They are happy and settled at playgroup and are keen to communicate with staff and each other. They benefit from staff who are interested in them, giving them praise and encouragement as they build warm relationships. Children play well together, talk to each other, learn to share and have respect for each other's feelings.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have good knowledge of the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage'. Detailed plans cover all areas of learning and good challenges are set for the children. Observations and assessments of the children's activities are recorded, clearly showing the next steps for children's learning. Children communicate confidently, responding well when staff question them during play activities. They eagerly learn new skills, for example, when they learn to spread low fat spread on their crackers and toast at snack time. They enjoy stories in small and large groups and respond well to open-ended questions when they are asked to identify pictures of animals. Children have easy access to the book area and, consequently, have opportunities to look at books independently for pleasure or reference. Some children can recognise their first names and are starting to practise writing the initial letter of their name. Some children confidently count up to five independently. They use and develop their knowledge and understanding of numbers, position, size and shape by participating in well planned and spontaneous activities. For example, they eagerly join in rhymes and songs, such as "Five little firemen" and respond well when a staff member asks them how many there are left.

Children make good use of the outdoor area to learn about nature where they plant seeds and bulbs and hunt for insects. They develop their knowledge of the wider world generally well through planned activities based on festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Their technology skills are developed well, as they independently access the computer which is available at all times. They learn about the concepts of building and joining materials together as they fit large foam blocks together. Children benefit from musical activities and respond enthusiastically to favourite songs. They show that they know the songs as they sing them spontaneously while playing independently. They enjoy collage and painting for specific topics and have continuous opportunities to explore and express their own individuality in art and design. Children enjoy role play activities in the well equipped home corner which is varied so that children can act out different scenarios.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children are made to feel very welcome to the playgroup where they are very happy and secure and make a positive contribution. Children's individual needs are very well met. Children are starting to develop a positive attitude to others, the wider world and community through celebrating festivals and using resources, such as dressing up clothes. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to positive praise and encouragement. They demonstrate they are able to share and take turns, for example, when using wheeled toys in the outdoor area. They are aware of the boundaries set within the playgroup and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Trusting relationships are established between staff, parents and carers ensuring that children are settled and make good progress. Parents are welcomed at the playgroup and discussions during the inspection indicate that most parents are highly satisfied with the care and education of their children. Parents also complete regular evaluation sheets which the management group used to evaluate practice and make changes to improve the playgroup. Most of them take an active part in the running of the playgroup by taking regular turns being volunteers to work in the playgroup. Some parents are involved in the management group. They access clear information on the notice boards and in regular newsletters. For example, the notice board informs them when fire practises will take place so that they can talk to their children about them. Activity plans are also displayed so that parents are aware of what their children will be doing in playgroup. However, they are not provided with specific ideas of how to support children at home to enhance their learning. Through the newsletter parents are invited to contribute to the running of the playgroup by bringing in fresh fruit to increase the variety and snacks available to the children. They have the opportunity to meet their child's key worker to look at their observation and assessment records together when they are on duty at the playgroup. The records very clearly show their child's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. As a result, partnership with parents and carers with regard to nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by good organisation. The playgroup staff are well supported by the management committee to attend many relevant courses, which demonstrates their strong commitment to training and development. Children benefit because the playgroup works closely with their parents, involving them in the management of the playgroup and the daily running, when they take turns to support the staff. The playgroup has responded to parent's requests to admit children from two years old and to run wrap around sessions. This means that children who attend playgroup can bring a packed lunch and have an extended session. Also, some children who attend the school nursery, which is adjacent to the playgroup, attend the wrap around sessions. This contributes to the good working partnership between playgroup and school. The playgroup makes good use of the large purpose built environment, both indoors and out. Children benefit from knowledgeable, well qualified staff who understand and follow the setting's comprehensive policies and procedures to protect children, promote their well-being and support all children to develop their potential. There is a high ratio of staff to children which enables staff to constantly interact with children, giving effective support and encouragement. This helps the children to feel secure and confident in the well organised environment. Leadership and management is good. Good systems are in place to monitor the process of teaching and learning, ensuring that children progress through the stepping stones,

towards the early learning goals. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection four recommendations were made. Cleaning procedures needed improvement, particularly with regard to the carpeted area in the playroom. Following the inspection new carpet was fitted and this is now cleaned regularly. The playgroup was asked to ensure that parents were aware of what their children were eating. They are now able to see this information at each session as it is written on a whiteboard. Staff surnames were not always included on accident records and this has been given attention. By addressing these issues the playgroup has enhanced the health and safety of the children. The playgroup did not have a written procedure for the recruitment and induction of staff and this is now in place. This, together with the playgroup's other policies and procedures contributes towards the efficient and safe management of the provision, improving outcomes for children.

Nursery Education

The playgroup was asked to review the children's use of books and consider the positioning of these. The book area has been moved to another part of the playgroup where children now access them freely and more frequently. Opportunities for children to practise writing their own name needed increasing. All three-year-olds now have their own exercise book which they use, with staff support, to practise writing their initial letter of their name. These improvements enable children to develop their communication language and literacy skills. Children needed more opportunities to observe patterns of change. One of the ways the playgroup achieves this is by ensuring that children now participate in regular baking sessions. For example, during the inspection they made biscuits and the staff encouraged them to notice how the mixture had changed when it had been in the oven. This contributes to children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The playgroup was also asked to extend the range of resources to include items, such as staplers, so that children could develop their joining techniques. However, at the time of the inspection the playgroup was providing early education for older children and as this is no longer the case, it is not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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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):

- review the arrangements for the children's snack, particularly the timing.

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):

- provide information for parents about how they can support their children's learning at home.

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