

Lancaster Road Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	135309
Inspection date	12 September 2007
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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 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?

Lancaster Road Playgroup opened in 1969. It operates from two rooms with an interconnecting door in a church hall, with an accessible outdoor area covered with safety surface and bordered by flower beds. The premises are in walking distance to transport facilities, schools and shops. The playgroup serves the local area.

The playgroup is registered to provide care for 30 children aged from two to five years. There are currently 47 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 25 funded three and four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Two children have special needs and the group supports two children who are learning English as an additional language.

The playgroup opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.45 to 12:00 on Mondays and 09.15 am until 11.30 am Tuesday to Fridays, and 12.45 pm until 15.00 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

There are four full time and seven part time staff work with the children. Six staff members have early years qualifications. Staff are currently on training programmes. The staffing structure consists of two joint supervisors and six playgroup assistants. The setting receives support from

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning about healthy lifestyles. They are given all the tools they need in order to become independent. While younger children receive a higher proportion of support whilst learning toileting skills, older and more able children use the toilets and the sinks without help because staff have provided them with a variety of nursery equipment which helps them try new skills independently. Picture and written signs help them learn how to wash their hands. All children are encouraged to wash their hands after messy play and before sitting down to eat their snack. They see good hygiene practised around them. Staff ensure that the premises are clean and tidy before they arrive, Staff wash down tables before children sit down to eat, this is repeated once they have finished. They are learning about the seasons and the weather cycles and staff talk to them about appropriate clothing to wear for the weather. If they become wet while playing, they independently change into spare clothing, while some need support with fastenings, others can manage on their own. Children are learning good oral hygiene through project work, they learn about why it is important to wash their teeth.

Children are learning where food comes from, they have been growing their own tomatoes and strawberries in the garden, which they use at snack time. They receive a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables for snacks and they have been learning about which foods are good for them while playing with toy foods within the role play corner and through project work. Good labelling of areas, ensures that they know where to find fresh drinking water at all times. They are offered a drink of juice when they sit down for their snack.

Children enjoy a wide variety of physical activity, making use of both inside and outdoor areas. They are learning how to hold pencils, pens, paint brushes, small pieces of pasta and lentils and have access to scissors in order to improve hand eye coordination and fine manipulative movements. Children are engaged and challenged when playing with equipment that helps them to practise use of gross muscle groups. They have a wide variety of climbing and balancing equipment which they are using creatively. Some play with stilts, they enjoy roller skating or use the slide to go down on their tummies, walk down and go down sitting on their bottoms, they practise controlled movements while balancing and climbing. Children enjoy using peddle cars and trikes. As they become more able they are offered opportunities to practise riding two wheeled bikes both with and without stabilizers. They have opportunities to play with bats, balls and hoops, some children show advanced ball skills for their age. They are building a sense of their own space, learning to be careful of others while using vehicles and also learning to respect each others space during table top times and when sitting down for stories at quiet time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel welcomed because staff greet children upon arrival and are friendly and approachable. They are welcomed into a well organised play space. Toys and resources are stored around the edges of the room. The environment has been decorated in warm and welcoming colours, children's art work and posters are displayed on the walls. Play space has

been organised to ensure that children can access quiet areas, table top activities and floor space. They have access to natural light which floods in from overhead windows and picture windows along the walls. The temperature children play in is comfortable, heating can be regulated. Furniture and equipment are suitable and appropriate for use by young children. The setting is well resourced, children have access to a wider range of learning and play resources both natural such as sand, water, soil, shells, animals and living plants and manufactured equipment.

Children are learning about how to keep themselves safe, because they are supervised well and staff invest time in setting boundaries and reminding children of how to play safely. Project work includes setting up activities which teach children road craft skills. Invited visitors to the setting such as police and fire officers, help children to learn about people who keep them safe within their community. The setting has taken steps towards protecting children in the event of fire. Fire exits are clearly marked by Green running man signs, fire extinguishers are mounted around the walls of the play area. Negotiations with a local school ensure children have a safe meeting place. Staff demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of how to evacuate the building in an emergency and children practise the evacuation procedure which is completed on different days and at different times so that all children are included. Policies and procedures ensure that children have a secure environment to play in. Doors that lead on to the road are secured once children have arrived, visitors to the premises must ring the bell for admittance and sign in upon arrival. Staff ensure that children do not go home with unauthorised persons, a lost and uncollected children's policy is in place.

Written procedures to safe guard children are in place. However, staff knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures is limited. Staff were unclear of the different categories of abuse and had a limited understanding of signs and symptoms. They showed some understanding of how to proceed should they have child protection concerns. However, this means that vulnerable children are not sufficiently safe guarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are enjoying their time at the setting. While new children are learning to separate from parents and carers with support, established children enter enthusiastically and settle quickly into play. They are building positive relationships with staff and this helps them form friendships with each other. Children are conforming to the settings boundaries and responding to staff, learning right from wrong. The setting rotates play resources so that they can ensure that children have a wide variety of play opportunities so that learning is consolidated through different experiences and children have the opportunity to practise new skills.

Young children communicate their needs well because staff engage them in play and talk to them about the resources. They enjoy group activities such as story time and singing familiar repetitive songs and rhymes. Those who need additional language support are supported through picture labels. They are becoming competent learners, as they explore their environment and the resources set out for them. They are inquisitive and eager for experiences, self selecting play resources that interest them. Young children are enjoying a variety of learning experiences, they are using all their senses to explore and investigate. For example, they spend time in the role play area, dressing up and playing familiar roles, others enjoy the art and craft area where they engage in free painting, sticking and drawing enjoying expressing their creative side. They engage in sand play, scooping sand up, building castles and knocking them down again, or play with dough. Young children are enjoying physical activities such as climbing and riding trikes,

they are also enjoying small world equipment and some have good knowledge of dinosaur names and behaviours. Others build with the construction materials, fusing pieces together to form simple models. The staff engage well with the younger children, they are friendly and supportive of new children starting. However, planning does not include how activities have been adapted for younger children.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The setting works closely with parents to establish and assess a starting point which they use when planning for children's individual needs, they are familiar with the early learning goals and the six areas of learning which are incorporated into the planning managers put together. Staff observe children while they participate in focus activities, they observe how children manage and what children learn from each activity and plan the next step. However, although the manager has clear objectives on how planning works, staff are sometimes unclear how individual children fit into the planning and it is not clear how staff evaluate the next step and how this is used to influence future planning. Although staff are using the Foundation Stage to guide planning for individual children, they are not confident enough to use teaching techniques as a matter of course with all activities and this limits children's ability to extend their knowledge. Planning lacks flexibility. For example, although staff were aware that children were not accessing the second room where maths and computer activities were set out, they lacked the flexibility to move these activities into areas where children were feeling more confident making activities more accessible to children.

Children are enthusiastic learners, they are enjoying the wide variety of play resources which staff have provided. They maintain attention and show good levels of concentration as they become absorbed in activities and increasingly become self assured when trying new things. Children are building trusting relationships with the staff who they know well, they are confident in approaching and asking questions or initiating conversations. Children enjoy each others company and are building friendships which help them feel comfortable within their environment. They engage each other in play and learning. This helps them feel confident to learn through new and shared experiences but also influences how they behave towards each other and how they conduct their own behaviour. Children are independent learners, although some activities are initiated and focused, they have plenty of time to self select activities that interest them. They are managing their own hygiene well and are recognising and looking after their own personal needs such as pouring their own drinks when they become thirsty or changing their own clothes when they become wet.

Children have good listening skills, they enjoy listening to stories on a one to one basis and also when they are in a group situations. They all participate in singing time with rhymes and songs, this explores language used in a different way, using repetition helps them build on memory and vocabulary. They are using language to make themselves understood, they converse with each other during play as they enter into conversation, taking turns to speak and listen. They have little encouragement to use language for thinking for example, although on focused activities staff may use new vocabulary, adults do not use open ended questions as a matter of course for all children, this limits how they extend their understanding and experiences. Children are linking sounds and letters, they know important key sounds and letters to their names and some of them are attempting to write their own names while those who are more able do this confidently. They are building writing skills through practised use of tools such as drawing and painting materials. They have a comfortable book corner where they are enjoying looking at familiar books reading the stories from the pictures, they ask questions about the

characters. Children understand that writing has many uses. Areas and equipment are labelled with pictures and writing, to help them identify different tasks and learning areas. They enjoy activities such as writing letters and envelopes and understand what happens to letters once they are posted.

Children count confidently to nine and know that adding one more makes ten, associating object to number. They see number and shapes all around the room on posters and within equipment. They have opportunities to problem solve with puzzles and construction, learning how shapes and colours fit together. During imaginative and role play they enjoy playing with the till and scales, however they have few opportunities to practise mathematical language such as heavy, light, more, less, big and small as staff lack confidence and consistency in introducing mathematical language in every day situations. Mathematical activities are planned and set out for them, but are situated in the second room and they lack confidence in finding these activities and staff sometimes lack initiative in ensuring that children can engage in all activities.

Children are using all of their senses to explore and investigate. They are making use of outside play space to learn about how plants grow. The setting keeps a variety of different pets which include tadpoles and they have been learning about life cycles. They are learning about how to take care of their pets by helping to feed them and learning to be gentle. This gives them a sense of responsibility and how they fit into the natural world. Children are using design and making skills enjoying resources such as construction, using cards to help them create but also using materials to create their own models such as helicopters. The use of play dough enables them to explore different materials to model with, they enjoy manipulating the dough with different tools and equipment. Children are building a sense of time, they are familiar with the routine understanding what comes next. They talk about past events such as home life and holidays. They are beginning to understand the order of seasons, months and days of the week. Children have access to information and communication technology, they enjoy playing with old telephones and they explore toy cooking equipment. They have access to several computers where they develop mouse skills.

Children have opportunities to express themselves creatively, they are enjoying using their imaginations, making good use of the home corner, role playing familiar situations and drama's such as playing shops and home life. A variety of dressing up clothes is available and the role play corner is very well stocked to help them create characters. They enjoy small world activities such as playing with farm animals or vehicles at floor level.

Children are enjoying free painting, some art and craft activities are adult directed while others allow them to be creative on their own. Although children enjoy singing times. There was little evidence of them enjoying music in different ways such as with musical instruments or by listening to different types of music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children see value in their own contributions, they are helping each other at tidy up time, and are learning to be polite to one another when asking to share equipment and taking turns. They are forming friendships both while attending the setting and outside. This helps them feel part of the group. Children are learning about the natural world, they have opportunities to observe the changes of seasons through weather changes and behaviour of plants, they watch and notice

characteristics of mini beasts, showing wonder. Opportunities to learn about different cultures and parts of the world are offered frequently, children can access resources such as story and information books, they have maps and some of the children talk about recent holidays abroad. They talk about different forms of transport in order to get to their destination and what it was like, sharing their experiences with other children. During the last year children have celebrated several important festivals from around the world and also festivals and customs of the country they live in. For example, children learned about how the Chinese celebrate their New Year, as part of this they learned about Chinese culture and tasted Chinese food. Children also learned about Diwali, they made lamps which they decorated, at Easter they made Easter eggs and Christmas they celebrated by inviting parents in for carols and they made gifts for parents and carers. Children have opportunities to explore and investigate different cultures, religions, disabilities and gender issues through play. The setting is well resourced and children are able to help themselves to story books, role play equipment and small world play, which offer positive images of others and enables them to express their feelings and the feeling of those who are different from themselves but also helps them to recognise similarities.

The setting supports children with additional needs. All children where ever possible are visited at home, this allows children and parents to begin the process for forming trusting relationships and fostering communication between both parties but also allows staff to assess the needs of individual children. Individual planning and regular review meetings with parents and other professional bodies such as the inclusion project or speech therapists help children to move forward in their learning and development. The setting makes all reasonable adjustments to care and learning arrangements to ensure that children meet their full potential.

Children are learning to manage their own behaviour well. They are learning to share and take turns because staff help them to understand that everyone gets a turn of using popular pieces of equipment such as play vehicles in the outside area. Children are showing care and concern for each other, they ask politely if they can use equipment and wait patiently for a response. Children know how to play nicely by themselves or with each other. They play with co operation. Staff support children's behaviour well, they use consistent and age appropriate strategies and know to look for triggers in behaviour. Children hear praise and encouragement all around them, and achievements such as new toileting skills are acknowledge and rewarded with stickers. Clear policies and procedures underpin how staff work with children and positive relationships with parents ensure that they are informed and their views are valued. As a result children were very well behaved.

Children benefit when parents and staff at the setting work closely together. On initial contact, staff visit children at home to begin the settling in process. Parents receive basic information about the setting in the form of a leaflet. This information is limited and does not inform parents about policies and procedures, although these are displayed on the notice board, parents spend little time in the hall and this limits their access. Parents are invited into the setting to visit prior to children starting and to help children to settle. All parents who made comment are happy with the service they receive from the setting. They have access to a suggestion box where they can share any concerns or make suggestions. The setting has a comprehensive complaints procedure, however this does not inform parents of their rights in line with changes in regulations since October 2005. The setting keeps a record of complaints.

The settings partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are involved in children's learning, they receive news letters regularly to inform them about topic's and projects and are asked to participate by helping children find and bring in objects. Staff complete profile books with children which contain samples of children's work and photographic evidence of children

learning through play. Parents can access these at anytime and particularly through holidays. They receive a written report at the end of the third term containing information on how children are progressing through the stepping stones and the six areas of learning. The parents notice board contains information about the six areas of learning. However, they have limited access to this area and this limits their access.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children feel secure when they are cared for by staff who are qualified in childcare. The setting has a verbal recruitment procedure. However, it is not sufficiently robust to safe guard children appropriately. The staff team have established themselves over the last year and work well together, their duties well defined. The setting generally organises space and resources to meet children's needs appropriately, they encourage children to be healthy because they organise routines which help children understand and practise personal hygiene, eat well and exercise. Children are learning about how to keep safe, they do this because staff remind them while they play and the deployment of staff generally ensures that children are safe. Children enjoy their time at the setting, they are motivated and challenged, achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. They are contributing to their own community and learning about the wider world.

Children's care is underpinned by clear documentation. The setting ensures that all records are stored securely and practitioners understand issues of privacy and confidentiality. They ensure that children's records are maintained once children have left care arrangements.

Leadership and Management of the setting is satisfactory. Children benefit when staff and their managers have time to plan and share information appropriate to individual children's learning programmes. The setting sets time aside each week to meet and share ideas, look at training needs and plan activities for children. Although the managers have worked towards improving planning, staff knowledge and understanding of planning is sometimes inconsistent. Although managers plan how activities will be presented to children, this does not always take account of how to engage children in more challenging tasks. For example, activities such as maths and information, communication and technology are less accessible to children because these activities are less visible and staff sometimes lack the initiative to be flexible in how they present these experiences.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting agreed several actions. To devise a written procedure for lost or uncollected children. The setting has provided a procedure which is available for both staff and parents to see. Appropriate measures are now in place to safe guard children and prevent them becoming lost or in the case of uncollected children the procedure informs both staff and parents what happens next.

The setting agreed to meet any recommendations made by the Fire Safety Officer. The setting keeps a fire evacuation log which records appropriate information. This ensures that children have a safe place to evacuate too and children are safe guarded in the event of a fire.

The setting agreed to conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying action(s) to be taken to minimize identified risks. The setting now completes risk assessments of the premises, furniture and equipment used in every day nursery life to ensure that it is safe. Action plans inform how identified risks will be resolved. This ensures that children are able to play and take risks in a safe environment because steps have been taken to safe guard children.

At the last inspection, the setting agreed several recommendations. To devise and implement a policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious and make sure parents are made aware of it. The setting has included a section within their agreements informing parents of their sickness policy. This ensures that parents are aware of what happens if their children are unwell, they are protected from the spread of infection and their health and wellbeing is safe guarded.

The setting agreed to provide more opportunities for parents to receive regular information on their children's progress. Parents receive information through news letters, notice boards and verbal feedback when required. They also have access to children's profile books which contain their work and a photographic record of their progress. A supportive partnership with parents ensure that children's individual needs are met and help them to make progress.

The setting agree to review and update the equal opportunities policy so that it is consistent with current legislation and guidance, to ensure that this is understood and implemented by all staff and shared with parents.

The reviewed policy is displayed for both staff and parents to see and staff demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding. This ensures that children receive equal opportunities within the setting and parent views and suggestions are given value.

The setting agreed to review and update the written statement on special needs so that it is consistent with current legislation and guidance. Ensure that this is understood and implemented by all staff. The reviewed statement is displayed for both staff and parents to see and staff demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding. This ensures that children receive equal opportunities within the setting and parent views and suggestions are given value.

Nursery Education:

At the last Nursery Education inspection the setting agreed the following recommendation. Continue to develop assessments and written records ensuring that the early learning goals are comprehensively covered, and that children's progress are clearly shown. For example, by including dates and entries and any samples of work kept and sharing assessments with parents on a regular basis. The setting continues to work towards improving planning issues, whilst planning now covers the early learning goals, it is still unclear how children's progress is shown. Although profile books are kept and observations are taken of children, it is not clear how children move on from the 'next step' and when this will be reviewed. Children are continuing to make steady progress towards the early learning goals. This continues to be an area for improvement.

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 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 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):

- develop knowledge and understanding of child protection issues
- review the complaints procedure to ensure it is in line with changes in regulation October 2005, 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.
- ensure that the recruitment procedure for new members of staff is robust

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 planning identifying clear learning intentions, ensuring that activities can be adopted for individuals or groups of children. Planning is shared and understood by all practitioners in the setting (also applies to care)

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