

The Reddings Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101891
Inspection date	03 October 2007
Inspector	Miriam Sheila Brown

Setting Address	The Reddings & District Association Centre, North Road West, The Reddings,, Cheltenham, GL51 6RF
Telephone number	01452 857607
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Registered person	The Reddings Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Reddings Playgroup opened in 1975 and is managed by a committee of parents. It is situated on the edge of the residential area on the outskirts of Cheltenham. The group operates from the Reddings and District Community Centre, which is sometimes used by other local organisations at the same time. The facilities include a large hall, small hall, kitchen, toilets (including one with disabled access) and an enclosed outside play area. The building is fitted with a "loop" facility for persons with hearing difficulties. A maximum of 26 children may attend the group at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday during term-time between 09.30 and 12.00 on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Lunchtime sessions operate on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 12.00 until 14.30. The Tuesday session is for pre-schooler children only.

There are currently 53 children on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come mainly from the local area. The playgroup currently supports children with special educational needs. The playgroup employs four members of staff all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at either National Vocational Qualification Level 2 or 3.

The playgroup receives support from a local authority Foundation Stage consultant and fieldworkers from the Gloucestershire Playgroup and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about healthy eating because staff use a wide range of opportunities to positively promote this aspect of children's care. For example, a healthy eating file is displayed for parents, leaflets containing ideas for packed lunches are given to them, and good liaison with the local school ensures a continuity of approach when children move to reception classes. Healthy eating is reinforced through topic work and wall displays of fruit and vegetables, some of which are tasted and explored. Snack and meal times are happy social occasions, when children sit with staff to enjoy their meals. Fresh drinking water is freely accessible to children throughout each session, assisting them in becoming aware of their own needs and developing their independence.

Simple health and hygiene is well supported by staff who use good routines to develop children's understanding of how to keep healthy. All children are supervised when washing their hands and gently reminded that this has to be done properly to ensure all the germs are washed away. All staff receive first aid training, helping to ensure that children are well taken care of if they have an accident or become unwell. Accident reports are shared with parents.

Children's physical development is well supported through a wide range of activities which assist in their small and large muscle development. They play outside each day using wheeled toys, a climbing frame and other outdoor equipment. Children move freely, confidently and with pleasure, demonstrating good spatial awareness when negotiating round each other. Inside they enjoy many activities which support their small muscle development, such as, small construction, painting, drawing, craft work and dough play. Children's all round physical development is further supported by weekly 'Stretch and Grow' sessions with a peripatetic teacher.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is very well maintained and proper precautions are taken to promote safety within the premises. For example, children are reminded not to run in the main hall and staff ensure the premises are secure at all times, vigilantly ensuring that main doors are secure when children are present. Fire drills are completed regularly, helping to maintain children's safety in an emergency. Outside areas are fenced and secure. Staff supervise all aspects of children's play, very well, including maintaining a detailed record of visitors to the premises.

Children and parents are greeted by staff each morning and the hall is made welcoming and ready for play prior to children's arrival. The premises are clean, warm and well maintained. Space is organised effectively to provide a wide variety of play opportunities which include table-top activities, carpeted areas, role-play and craft work.

Furniture, toys and equipment are in good repair and checked daily before use. There is a good range of resources to ensure children are comfortable and can play and eat together, assisting in developing their social skills. Children can reach their toys and equipment easily although

their choices are limited to resources put out by staff. However, staff rotate toys and activities according to their plans for the day, providing children with a good range of play experiences. Basic equipment for role-play, craft work and mark-making is available each day.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by good staff awareness of child protection procedures. The current policy clearly outlines the group's approach to any concerns and all staff receive child protection training, to familiarise themselves with the signs and symptoms of abuse and the procedures to use should concerns arise.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are involved in a broad range of activities throughout each day which help to support their development and learning. They are happy and settled and adults provide a calm and stimulating environment for them. Many of the youngest children have only recently started at the playgroup and are already taking an active part in group routines such as helping to tidy up. They greatly enjoy circle times when they choose and sing familiar nursery rhymes, and quiet times sharing a story with an adult. Children explore a good range of creative materials such as dough and paint, and act out familiar scenes in role play. This encourages them to express their experiences and feelings in a variety of ways. Children gain confidence and self-esteem because staff are attentive to their needs and encourage them to build good relationships with each other through sharing and turn-taking.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are generally well occupied, motivated and eager to learn. They explore the good range of age-appropriate opportunities provided by staff, who demonstrate a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, although activities cover all six areas of learning, observations and assessments are not completed with sufficient regularity to be used effectively to identify and plan for children's different stages of development. This means that over time, children are not always assisted to move on from what they already know and can do. Staff interact animatedly with children's play. They extend children's knowledge and understanding through effective questioning, for example, whilst reading a story, 'How do we know it is night time?' and 'What sound does the 'fridge make?' Staff regularly praise children and are attentive to their individual needs.

Children are growing in confidence in their learning and relationships with each other. For example, they find their name labels first thing in the morning and at snack times, and help tidy away resources after use. They talk animatedly to staff, unfamiliar adults and each other, about their experiences, for example, 'I like it here, I used to go to toddlers, now I'm big'. They are beginning to take responsibility for themselves by making decisions about their play activities, helping themselves to drinks and managing their personal care.

A delightful book reading area and lots of examples of written words around the hall help children to develop an awareness of print having meaning. They make marks in role-play and some children write their names with most letters correctly formed. Children have a good range of vocabulary which they use confidently to organise their play. For example, in the role-play area one child was organising another two, saying 'come on we're going to a pirate show today so you must be very quick and get your coats on'. Children develop their knowledge of number, shape and size as they match, compare, sort and count in daily activities. They are starting to recognise numerals and confidently find correct number labels for strings of cotton reels.

Children's knowledge and understanding of their immediate and wider world is very good. They play with resources which reflect positive images of different cultures and identities, and celebrate a number of festivals throughout the year. Outings to a local garden centre and other places of interest develop their awareness of the local community. They use a range of everyday technology in their play and planned activities, for example, playing with calculators, electronic toys and cooking activities. Children have a good awareness of time and confidently discuss past, present and future events in their lives.

Children enjoy a wide and varied range of creative activities which stimulate their interest and increase their awareness of texture, and use of different resources. For example, children regularly play with dough, collage materials and paint. They are absorbed as they make three-dimensional creations to their own design using a variety of construction sets, bricks or recycled resources. This provides them with good opportunities to initiate and develop their own ideas. Staff provide well equipped role-play areas where children greatly enjoy acting out familiar scenes and those which they will experience shortly, such as going to school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children and parents are welcomed to the playgroup each morning. Children demonstrate their confidence by settling quickly to group routines finding a place for their lunch boxes. They are well known by staff who efficiently record individual details and highlight specific needs to ensure these are met effectively. Toys and resources set out by staff are easily and equally accessible to all children. Children celebrate a variety of different festivals throughout the year, increasing their awareness of the wider world and different lifestyles. This awareness is further supported by displays and resources around the hall. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of children's additional needs, such as disability or learning difficulties, enabling them to effectively support those who attend the group. They work closely with outside agencies and parents to ensure continuity of care and learning

Children are generally well behaved, and have good opportunities to learn about sharing and taking turns in their play and activities. This encourages them to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff provide positive role models for children. They offer frequent, meaningful praise, helping to develop children's self esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff are available each day to talk with parents, and basic information about weekly activities and how the Foundation Stage curriculum is delivered, is readily available to them. However, parents do not have detailed information about how the curriculum is tailored to children's individual developmental needs through use of the stepping stones. Parents often attend group sessions to talk with children about their own particular areas of expertise. For example, parents who work for the police or fire service, and one who keeps tarantula spiders. Termly newsletters provide information about topic work, although they do not include ideas of how to extend these topics at home. Discussion with parents demonstrated very strong support for all aspects of playgroup care and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the playgroup is satisfactory. Children's care is well supported by the calm atmosphere generated by organised and caring staff. The premises and resources

are effectively arranged to meet children's needs. All legally required documentation is in place, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being. Good regard is given to keeping children's records and personal information confidential. All staff hold appropriate clearance to work with children and ratios are met at all times. However, some aspects of time organisation, during parts of the session, is not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of the varying ages of children present. For example, during snack and circle times.

The playgroup committee and staff meet regularly to discuss management issues and playgroup staff meet each week to develop the following weeks' activities. This helps to ensure a good balance of experiences are offered to children. Staff are well supported in their ongoing professional development and have attended many childcare related courses since the last inspection. Recommendations from the last inspection have been met. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed to ensure that parents sign accident reports. Staff now ensure that all accidents are recorded, signed by parents and a copy of the report given to them. This helps to meet children's needs because parents are kept fully informed and able to monitor children following an accident.

At the last nursery education inspection the group agreed to assess their routines to enable children to enjoy a wider variety of self-chosen activities and to encourage them to listen to stories in small groups. They also agreed to provide a wider range of activities to develop hand-eye coordination.

The playgroup staff have made good progress with each of these recommendations. A varied selection of activities are set out each day from which children choose freely. These are rotated according to a plan to ensure that a good balance is provided during the week. Children may select books from two separate reading areas, one of which has comfy seating. Throughout the inspection this area was used extremely well by children either on their own or with a staff member. Daily activities include those which support children's hand-eye coordination, for example, threading, jigsaws and a range of construction activities. These specific improvements effectively assist in developing children's play and learning opportunities.

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.

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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 that daily routines such as circle and snack times and hand washing, are organised to meet the needs of all children (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):

- develop the observation, planning and assessment cycle to ensure that challenges are appropriate to individual children and help them to move on from what they already know and can do.
- develop the partnership with parents to ensure they understand how their children learn through the Foundation Stage curriculum and stepping stones, and how they may take an active part in that learning process

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