

# Athey Street Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	304964
<b>Inspection date</b>	02 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sue Anslow
<b>Setting Address</b>	Park Royal School, Lyon Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6QX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 422885
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Athey Street Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Athey Street Playgroup is organised and managed by a committee of parents and carers. It opened in 1981 and operates from a single storey building within the grounds of Park Royal Community School in Macclesfield, Cheshire. A maximum of 32 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 15.00 term time only. Children have access to a small, securely enclosed outdoor play area on two sides of their building, plus the shared use of other parts of the school grounds.

There are currently 80 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 51 children receive funding for early education. Children come mainly from the immediate vicinity around the school. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities, plus children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs nine staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The playgroup is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and have attained their 'Aiming for Quality' award. Staff work closely with

advisors from Sure Start, teachers within Park Royal School and many other local specialists. The playgroup have recently gained the Investors in People award.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, stimulating and hygienic environment. They thrive because staff follow effective procedures and practices which meet children's individual needs. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through daily routines, for example, they wash their hands independently after messy play, before eating and after using the toilet. Handy drawings and signs in the bathroom remind children about washing their hands appropriately. Good levels of adult support help children stay healthy and all staff hold first aid certificates. Effective procedures ensure children are cared for appropriately if they feel unwell or have an accident and records are kept as required. Children's health is promoted well through the provision of fresh, healthy snacks at every session. Fresh fruit is provided daily, along with some form of carbohydrate, for example, crumpets, toast, rice crackers or breadsticks. Milk or water is provided with the snack and children may choose fluoride milk if parents have requested it. A water cooler is available in the room for children to help themselves to drinks whenever they want during the day, ensuring no one goes thirsty. Individual dietary requirements are respected in consultation with parents and alternative snacks are provided if required.

Children explore, test and develop their physical control during stimulating daily indoor and outdoor activities. They are confident when using a range of climbing and balancing equipment and move safely and with control when using large and small tools and materials. Well planned and spontaneous activities enable children to explore and extend their physical capabilities. They walk confidently up and down the entrance steps, hop and jump on the musical mats, crawl through tunnels, throw balls and bean bags at desired targets and explore concepts, such as over and under during circle games. Children use a range of small tools with increasing control and dexterity, for example, glue spreaders, scissors and straws.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy ample play space in the lively, stimulating environment. Their art work, colourful posters and photographs are displayed around the room which, together with windows on both sides, gives a feeling of welcome in this bright, attractive setting. Although the outdoor play area around the playgroup building is quite small, staff optimise every inch of space by setting out a variety of games activities for children to enjoy. Children also use other areas of the school grounds, including the climbing equipment, when they are not being used by the school children. A wide variety of play equipment, organised tidily and safely on low shelving, allows for freedom of choice and independence. Effective cleaning and checking systems support the health and safety of all the children and they thoroughly enjoy helping to wash the toys in warm, soapy water. Children benefit tremendously from using a whole range of natural play materials, such as leaves, feathers, sand and wood, which enhance their creative skills and extends their experience of different textures.

Good safety procedures are in place to keep children safe and secure, and effective staff teaching develops the children's awareness of potential hazards. For example, reminders to walk 'smartly' instead of running and not to walk round with scissors in their hands. Effective systems are in

place to ensure children are collected by named persons and the outside gates are padlocked before children go outside to play. Written emergency evacuation procedures are displayed appropriately and occasionally practised by the children. However, they are not practised often enough to ensure that every child is familiar with the procedure. Children are very well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of the safeguarding children policies and procedures, and give top priority to children's welfare. Staff have attended relevant training courses and, although a written policy is available for parents to read, it needs amending slightly to bring it in line with current legislation.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the pre-school. They arrive happy and are eager to meet with their friends and tell staff about what they have been doing at home. Children are keen to try out all the games and activities prepared for them that day and excitedly choose which area to start with. Children achieve well because staff are highly skilled and use their knowledge and sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum to provide high quality care and education. Close and caring relationships increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. Younger children and new starters are warmly welcomed and lifted up to wave goodbye to their parents, through the window. Early communication skills are extremely well supported through high quality adult-child interactions and the day's programme is adapted to suit all ages and abilities. Children begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they join in a diverse range of exploratory and sensory experiences.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are excited and interested in the extensive range of stimulating activities, relevant to their needs. The well chosen toys and play materials, including those from the natural world, such as sand, water, leaves, food products and textiles, all support children's learning across the different areas of development. Children are eager to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen intently to stories and often join in with their favourite lines. Appropriate questions from staff help children think and predict what might happen next. For example, 'where do you think the paint will go if you blow on it from that side' and 'what will happen to all the beads if you turn the tube upside down'. Children practise their mark making skills in the craft area and have very good opportunities to write for different purposes in other areas, such as in the home corner or café. Letter and number displays help children recognise the correct shapes and they register themselves on arrival by selecting their name cards and putting them in the box. Children confidently count how many pieces of apple they can have and shout out the numbers on the squares as they jump from one to another. They count how many bricks they have built up in their tower and decide if it is taller or shorter than themselves.

Children learn about nature and how to take care of living things through planned, practical activities, for example, planting and tending seeds and bulbs, gently stroking the new puppies that come to visit and collecting leaves for their interest table. They marvel at how caterpillars turn into butterflies and watch the wind move the ribbons and the wind chimes. Children particularly enjoy going on 'listening walks' around the school grounds where they stop every now and then to listen quietly to the sounds of birds, aeroplanes, cars and people. Children thoroughly enjoy the role play activities, using their imaginations to create every day life in a home, a café, a doctor's surgery or an airport. Music and singing are an integral part of all play sessions and children often accompany themselves with a variety of instruments. They love

guessing whether the instrument in the bag is making a banging, rattling or ringing sound and join in the songs with great enthusiasm. Children enjoy the many and varied activities available to use their creative ideas and imaginations. They use different containers for pouring water and whisking the soapy bubbles in the water trough and they make patterns in the wet paint with brushes, straws and fingers. They love melting the chocolate in the microwave oven to make cakes, watching jelly cubes dissolve slowly in hot water and playing with rolled oats and raw couscous. All these experiences excite children's curiosity, involve all their senses and enhance their eagerness to learn more.

Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs, and build on this information effectively to help them achieve as much as they can. A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's interests and needs and use effective systems to observe, monitor and record their achievements, and to plan experiences that help them take the next step in their learning. Children thrive in this excellent environment because of the consistent, dedicated staff team, who have sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Staff work closely with parents to ensure children make good progress in all areas of learning, whilst having lots of fun and enjoyment.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the playgroup because staff value and respect their individuality and the family context for each child. They have many opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through planned activities and resources reflecting diversity. Children really enjoy celebrating the different festivals throughout the year, from painting pumpkin pictures for Halloween to making dragons out of cardboard boxes for Chinese New Year. Children learn about their local community through visits from the police and the fire brigade and they watch the changing seasons through walks to the park or round the school grounds. Children thoroughly enjoy the hands on experience of watching plants develop from the seeds and bulbs they planted and comparing photographs of themselves as babies to how they look now. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities receive excellent care and education from staff who liaise closely with parents and other professionals in order to cater for each child's specific needs. This ensures all children make good progress with their development and maximises opportunities for their learning. Children behave extremely well and are learning to share and take turns as they help each other at the snack table and pass the musical instrument on to the person opposite. They eagerly help to tidy up when asked and are learning ways of negotiating with others through guidance from staff. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff which boosts their self-esteem and confidence. They are polite, kind and helpful, showing respect and consideration for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive a range of good quality information about the provision, its policies and curriculum. Close partnerships between home and the playgroup are encouraged through supportive key workers who meet and greet each parent at the beginning and end of every session. Parents have ready access to the setting's policies and procedures and regular newsletters keep them informed of current activities and forthcoming events. Parents are warmly invited to participate in the play sessions, serve on the committee, help with fund raising or share their skills. For example, children benefit tremendously from a number of different 'story sacks' the parents have put together. New children are given ample time to settle into the group and staff keep a written and photographic record of the

child's first few weeks attendance, in order to show parents what they have been doing and reassure them their children are truly enjoying themselves. Parents record their children's particular characters, family background and preferences when they first start in the playgroup, in order for staff to use this as a 'starting point' for each child's individual care, teaching and learning programme. Children's progress and development is monitored closely throughout their time at playgroup and written records are available for parents to see during the annual parents evening, through the twice yearly reports or whenever they wish in between. Notice boards in the entrance hall provide parents with up to date information on playgroup activities, any new certificates gained and information about the regulator, Ofsted. The complaints policy sets out the procedure to follow if anyone has a concern about the provision, although the wording needs amending slightly in line with current legislation.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The qualified and experienced staff team work well together to provide good quality care and excellent nursery education for the children. Staff meet together regularly, outside playgroup hours, to plan and discuss the programme of activities and they keep their knowledge and skills updated by attending relevant courses and workshops. The staff team, together with the committee, are dedicated to providing an exciting and interesting programme of activities for the children, to enhance their development and promote all areas of learning.

Children thrive in this interesting and stimulating environment. The well organised daily play sessions, both indoors and outside, provide a balanced range of learning, fun and enjoyment for all. The freedom of movement and easy access to the play equipment provides plenty of choice and appropriate levels of independence for all the children. Children's health, safety and well-being is well supported by written policies and procedures and parents are kept very well informed of their children's progress throughout their time in the playgroup. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The provider was asked to ensure staff and visitors were entered in to the daily register and obtain appropriate clearances for committee members. Both these recommendations have been completed satisfactorily, thus enhancing good management of the children's safety.

## **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 complaint 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### 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):

- practise emergency evacuation procedures more regularly to ensure every child is familiar with the process
- amend the child protection and complaints policies in line with current legislation.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)