

Stanwix Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	317608
Inspection date	20 November 2007
Inspector	Karen Ling
Setting Address	Playgroup and Out of School Hut, Church Road, Stanwix, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 9DJ
Telephone number	01228 512 630
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Registered person	The Trustees of Stanwix 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?

Stanwix Playgroup was first established in 1985 and moved to its present site approximately 10 years ago. It operates from one play room within a port cabin opposite Stanwix Primary School approximately one mile north of Carlisle city centre. A maximum of 20 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 until 11.30 and 12.30 until 15.00 during term time. Between sessions children may remain for lunch and these children are escorted by playgroup staff across the road to Stanwix Primary School. Playgroup staff supervise children's lunches on the school site before escorting them back to playgroup.

Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 45 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 28 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local community and wider area. The playgroup supports children who speak English as an additional language. There are currently no children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The playgroup is managed by a committee which currently employs seven members of staff. Of the six who hold appropriate early years qualifications, five hold a level three qualification. One is working towards a level three and the two managers are working towards a level five qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well. All staff hold a current paediatric first aid certificate and ensure accidents are dealt with effectively and recorded. Children learn that regular exercise and a balanced and nutritious diet is good for them. On most days children play out of doors for part of the session. They use a range of equipment which encourage balancing skills, spatial awareness and hand to eye coordination. When weather does not permit out door play, staff are quick to think of alternatives indoors. The lack of alternative planning in advance sometimes leads to games which do not run smoothly or ensure that all children are involved as well as they might be. After an active first half of the session, children are ready for a snack and eagerly tuck into the chopped fruit prepared for them. They manage to share very well and everyone gets an equal share. Although hands are washed before eating, children handle and take fruit from the same plate, which presents a hygiene risk. They are offered a choice of drinks, water or milk, and carefully pour it independently. Those children who receive a school lunch manage the process very well. They are offered a choice of hot foods which comprise fresh vegetables and processed foods such as reconstituted fish cakes. Playgroup staff give appropriate support to children and inform parents what they have eaten each day.

Children's knowledge and awareness about being healthy is raised through thoughtfully planned topics. They learn about healthy and unhealthy foods for example. They enjoy learning about people who help them if they are ill. Visitors from professionals such as the nurse and optician gives children a better grasp of what is done to help them stay healthy or get better. Re-enacting these roles in their games has given children much fun.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are helped to learn how to keep themselves safe. Their imagination has been captured by a recent visit from a police officer. The role play police station has been very popular. On other occasions they have received visits from fire officers with their fire fighting equipment. This helps to reinforce the importance of knowing the emergency escape plan which they regularly practise with staff. Fire safety equipment is in place inside the building, checked regularly and highlighted on escape plans which are clearly displayed for all to see. Children and staff wear fluorescent jackets to walk across to school for lunch and when on outings. Children understand that this is so that cars will see them when they cross the road. They walk very sensibly, making sure they keep hold of an adult's hand at all times. Staff have a good understanding of how to protect children and know the appropriate child protection procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child.

The environment is generally well set out to provide a wide range of activities and resources which meet the ages of the children who attend. Boxes of resources are labelled and accessible to children who confidently help themselves if they wish. Equipment is sufficient, in good

condition and regularly checked. Risk assessments are carried out regularly by staff and due attention given to minimizing risks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the playgroup. Every child is welcomed by a member of staff as they arrive and quickly settle into the routine of the session because staff are friendly and set a good role model. Consequently, the personal, social and emotional development of all children is very good. Children behave well as they sit together for the register to be completed and eagerly move off to their chosen activity. The role play area is particularly popular at the moment, following the theme of 'People who help us'. Boys and girls have lots of fun playing imaginatively in their role of doctor, patient or police officer. Staff know what children like and provide resources which specifically build on the interests of children relatively new to the setting, such as the train set. This helps them to feel secure and happy before they are gently coaxed into other activities and group times. Staff plan in detail to ensure that they provide a wealth of familiar and new activities that will stimulate interest and hold children's attention. This works particularly well for the younger children. The most successful learning occurs when activities are differentiated for the ages and abilities and the focus of learning is made clear to children and staff. However, this does not happen often enough. At times the content of an activity or routine, such as circle time, does not closely match the different levels of young children's needs and learning is less effective.

Nursery education

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Older and more able children show interest in activities and engage in what is provided. However, often they are not challenged well enough. Most children confidently talk to adults and peers, enjoy singing and join in with familiar stories. They are beginning to show an interest in sounding out and forming letters. However, because these activities are done as a whole group activity with the full age range, progress is hindered. Children are learning how to count purposefully and use every day routines to practise. They have been learning about shapes, size and measure, for example during baking activities. The purpose of other mathematical activities is not consistently made clear to staff and adults working with children. So although children experiment, and play with objects, they do not make as much progress as they could. Children explore a wealth of media such as sand, water and dough. Some show very good concentration and dexterity, for example, as they pour from one container to another using a funnel. They are helped to develop a sense of time as they name the day, yesterday and tomorrow. Staff know children well and chat with them about significant events in their lives. Children show an interest in musical instruments, and use them to accompany singing. However, staff do not always maximise these times to develop children's knowledge and vocabulary by using correct terminology for instruments. Although the curriculum is well thought through by staff and written plans cover all areas of learning well, the intended learning has yet to be embedded into everyday practise so that children progress well as possible.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The welcoming and friendly atmosphere ensures that children feel settled and secure at playgroup. The key person system works well because staff watch out for the children they have particular responsibility for and equal regard is given to every child. Staff praise and

encourage children regularly and reward stickers for special efforts. Children's self-esteem is boosted and reinforced when staff make a point of informing parents of their achievements. Children's behaviour is good because staff set clear boundaries which children understand. Children who present challenging behaviour and do not conform to adult requests are managed well by staff. A range of activities positively encourage children to gain a better understanding of their community. As well as the wealth of visitors to the group, children also go out into the community. For example, they are soon to prepare cakes for a coffee morning in support of Age Concern. Children are helped to consider diversity, for example, by learning about aspects of each other's cultures and religions. Staff are considerate of the views of different families and ensure activities are planned in a way that include all children. Although staff do not take on board key words in the mother tongue of children with English as an additional language, they do foster positive links with parents so that they know how to help settle children into the life of the playgroup. Staff have established a very good rapport with parents and carers. The parent notice board displays relevant information, including what topic children are covering. Daily verbal exchange keeps them informed about what their child has been doing each session. The diary is proving to be effective in engaging parents in contributing their own observations of how their child is developing.

In respect of nursery education, the partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff talk regularly with parents about what their child has been doing, particularly noting their achievements. However, parents are not sufficiently aware of information which informs them about the Foundation Stage. Neither are they made aware of how well their child is progressing over time in relation to the stepping stones and early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Since the last inspection two managers have taken over the running of the playgroup and have shared responsibility. The immense amount of work that has been done to date by them has ensured that the playgroup has made good progress in addressing the weaknesses raised at the last inspection. Their clear vision for the playgroup impacts positively on the quality of care and nursery education which are continually improving. Policies and procedures have been reviewed and improved to better meet the requirements of the playgroup. Planning, observations and assessments have regard for the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. Staff work very well as a team and have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The introduction of the staff appraisal system is ensuring that all staff are kept up to date with the knowledge and understanding required to do the job well. Staff are dedicated and committed to ongoing professional development. The majority of staff are well qualified and some are currently working towards higher levels of qualifications related to childcare and education. The provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

Commitment to improving provision in the Foundation Stage, where leadership and management is satisfactory, is continuous. Long and medium term plans are detailed and cover all areas of learning. The assessment system is being developed to record what children can do. The delivery of the curriculum is not yet structured well enough. As yet staff do not obtain a good grasp of children's attainment when they start the Foundation Stage so that individual progress can be monitored over time to highlight strengths and weaknesses. As a result, activities do not always match the different levels of young children's needs and build on what they already know by making best use of resources and staff. However, managers have begun to evaluate planning more frequently and involve children in decision making. As such, plans are amended to follow

children's interests. The recent development of the role play area into a police station is a good example. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Overall good progress and improvements have been achieved since the last inspection. This is down to the determination and hard work of the new managers and dedicated staff. The necessary documentation required for the safe running of the playgroup has been reviewed and parental permission has been obtained where necessary before a placement begins. Planning is comprehensive and has regard for the 'Birth to three matters' framework and all areas of learning within the foundation stage. An assessment system is in place and is used to record children's achievements and highlight areas which need more practise. Staff give attention to linking sounds and letters and exploring numeracy with children. A range of resources have been purchased to enhance these aspects of learning. However, further consideration needs to be given to defining the learning intention of these activities and effective deployment of staff in order to maximise learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted. A concern was raised on 2 February 2005 against National Standard 1 - Suitable person. Information was referred to another agency. No action was taken by the other agency and the concern was passed back to Ofsted. Ofsted asked the provider to investigate concerning Standard 11 - Behaviour. Ofsted was satisfied that the provider took appropriate action. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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):

- improve the organisation of how snacks are provided to minimise any risk of contamination

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):

- ensure that activities are differentiated and have clear learning intentions which are known to children and staff so that all children are challenged sufficiently
- make better use of staff, resources and time during group activities so that children are well supported and have good opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills
- ensure parents and carers are better informed about the foundation stage and about the progress their child makes in relation to the early learning goals.

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