

Acton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251395
Inspection date	03 March 2008
Inspector	Deirdra Keating
Setting Address	Acton Primary School, Lambert Drive, Acton, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 0US
Telephone number	01787 377089
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Registered person	Acton Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Sessional care, Out of School 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acton Playgroup opened in 2000. It operates from one of the classrooms in Acton Primary School, Acton, Sudbury. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday during term time only. Sessions are from 09:00 to 11:30 Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 12:45 to 15:15 five afternoons each week. A lunch club session is offered from 11:30 to 12:45 every day and a breakfast club operates from 7:30 to 8:45 five days a week. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 51 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 26 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The playgroup employs seven members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is currently working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy at the playgroup as staff actively promote a clean healthy environment and teach children about good hygiene practice. Positive steps are taken to promote the children's good health and encourage them to manage their own personal needs. A bright and child-friendly bathroom with low sinks enables children to wash their hands and use the toilet independently. Pictorial prompts remind children about good hand washing routines and adults are on-hand to support and encourage them. Children receive appropriate care if they are ill or have an accident because the setting has correct and appropriate procedures in place. Detailed care plans are provided for each child to ensure that all written consents are sought regarding children's medication requirements. A well-stocked first aid kit is readily available and staff have attended first aid training. Staff do record all accidents in a book, however parents do not always sign them off on collection which could compromise children's safety.

Children have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet. Food is healthy, nutritious and prepared properly in the small kitchen area by staff who have attended food hygiene training. The staff take careful account of the wishes of parents and children's choices to provide nutritious snacks that appeal to the children and meet dietary needs. A relaxed and rolling snack time enables children to access food when they are hungry. The snacks feature small cartons of fresh milk or water, offered with fresh fruit and breadsticks. Snacks are presented attractively and look appealing and inviting. Staff sit with children and support the relaxed and social snack time where children develop their social skills and table manners extremely well. Children have independent and regular access to water stored in colourful bottles that are labelled with names and pictures, these are stored at a low-level and children use them regularly.

Children have the benefit of daily fresh air and exercise as the setting has an enclosed and appealing outdoor play area. The children enjoy an exciting range of activities outside, they have room to run around safely on an area that has all-weather safety surfacing. Children are protected well from the effects of the sun by an overhead canopy that covers children and enables them to play happily in all weathers. A climbing frame and slide encourages children to move in a range of ways and develop their physical abilities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into a safe environment that is attached to the school and very well maintained. The playgroup has one spacious room and adjoining secure outdoor area. The premises are clean, cosy, and child-friendly enabling children to feel welcomed and at home. Space has been very well-organised to give defined areas; innovative and creative use of resources has promoted an exciting and stimulating environment in which children have many choices. Colourful and appealing resources are stored at a low-level and are labelled with pictures and text which promotes children's independence and decision-making. Children have access to a wide range of resources that are regularly washed and checked to ensure they are safe and hygienic for children to play with.

Risks of accidental injuries to children are minimised because staff are vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. These are conducted daily and documented to

ensure that the room is suitable and ready for purpose. Children learn about safe practices as adults explain about group safety rules. The premises are extremely secure, an electronic monitoring system controls both external and internal doors of the provision. Staff vigilantly oversee all arrivals to the provision and visitors are required to sign in. A secure fence encloses the outside area where children are closely supervised at all times.

Children are protected well from potential harm, the child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up to date and that staff understand their responsibility. Relevant documentation is all readily available which ensures correct procedures can be put into place should a concern arise. Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding issues, this is underpinned by relevant training and ensures children's welfare is paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and a strong sense of self through positive interaction with adults. Children are comfortable in the setting because parents regularly share information about children's needs, interests and experiences outside the home. Children have developed close and trusting relationships with staff who warmly welcome children and are genuinely pleased to see them. Good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework has a positive impact on children's achievements. Records show how younger children progress and incorporate all aspects of the framework. Innovative and appealing activities are carefully planned providing sensory and exciting games which the children clearly enjoy. The session pace is relaxed and enables children to sustain and develop their play for long periods of time. Treasure baskets have been used to provide a range of sensory materials giving younger children opportunities to express their feelings using all of their senses. Older children who attend after school and in the holidays enjoy a well-organised range of activities that are carefully suited to their ages and stages of development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Plans provide an extremely broad range of practical activities that cover all areas of learning. These are developed by all the staff using close observations made of children during activities and play. Consequently, plans are very closely linked to children's current interests and meet the children's individual needs extremely well. Staff are exceptionally skilled at promoting inclusive activities which are adapted to the differing needs of the children in the group. Activities are linked to a loose-based theme which children have clearly comprehended and enjoyed. Children confidently join in with known stories repeating rhyming lines and phrases. Staff maximise on all learning opportunities, waiting for children's interest to develop and then extending their learning with sensitive and thoughtful interventions. Staff are deployed effectively throughout the session working directly in small groups of children who participate with extremely high levels of interest.

The session is paced extremely well, it is mainly free-play giving children lots of freedom of movement and choice which they clearly enjoy. The room has been set out to provide a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. Innovative and creative resources are displayed around the room to appeal to children and encourage them to develop their skills. A key-worker system enables staff to focus on individual children and carefully monitor and evaluate their progress. This is used to determine children's next steps of learning. Staff request an excellent range of information on admission. Consequently, children are challenged and make progress from

admission as staff know their starting points. Relevant and meaningful records of children's development are proactively shared with parents to fully involve them in their children's learning.

Children relish their time in the setting and have an excellent attitude to learning. They are happy, settled and purposefully engaged throughout the session. The children work extremely well as part of a group taking turns to speak and showing consideration for one another. They show care for the environment as they willingly tidy up resources and hang their coats up. This is supported extremely well by staff who take time to show them how to do these tasks and accomplish many new skills. An excellent range of cultural festivals and traditional days are planned for and children are encouraged to respect the views and beliefs of others. Children are making excellent progress in their early reading and writing skills. They have access to a quiet and well-resourced book corner and make extremely good use of this. Children self-register on arrival and hear initial sounds in words as they learn which letters represent sounds. Children's early writing skills are positively encouraged and displayed on the wall giving children a sense of achievement and pride.

Children are making extremely good progress in their mathematical development. They enjoy a broad range of colourful equipment and activities which enable them to learn about shape, space and weight. Interactive and fun games are provided for children to take home and play with their families. These reinforce and build on children's skills and are linked to well known stories that the children know and like consolidating and extending their learning. Children confidently and reliably count one another during a group time and use mathematical language as they add amounts together. Children in this setting are very well engaged in imaginary play, the relaxed session pace allows children to develop their play, sustaining it for long periods of time. A considerable range of instruments and resources hanging up outside enables children to explore sounds.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through an exciting range of hands-on experiences. The outside area is exceptionally well used; children spend long periods of time outside where their interest and curiosity is enhanced. This is extended further by staff who are attending specific 'Forrest School Training' in order to provide real outdoor experiences for children to maximise on nature and outdoor experiences. Children have many opportunities to develop in every area in this stimulating and vibrant environment that has been extremely well resourced and set up to provide a safe and exciting extension of the room. They grow vegetables in pots and observe mini-beasts in a small digging area. Children enjoy an excellent range of well-planned messy play; salt, water, sand and play dough all give children experiences to explore real materials using an exciting range of appealing tools. Children in this setting are learning about recycling as they use reclaimed materials to make and model. This is available for them to independently access using their own preferred style and method. Children thread large beads onto laces and cut up fresh vegetables with care and precision. Overall children's dexterity is promoted extremely well through many activities that require hand-to-eye coordination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed by staff and develop a good sense of belonging in the playgroup. Staff know children and their families well which promotes a sense of community and family. Records and 'all about me' booklets detail a good range of information, this helps staff build a picture of each child and helps them get to know their likes and dislikes. Children settle well and play harmoniously together, different sized groups encourage children to socialise and

build relationships with each other. A quiet corner that is furnished with a hanging muslin curtain and fairy lights encourages children to have more tranquil moments. Children are encouraged to discuss their home lives, they take home soft toys known as 'visiting friends' alongside a book which they can record activities in. This helps them feel accepted and part of the community. Resources are easily accessible which helps children make independent choices about their play, they use dressing-up clothes and imaginative play to develop their awareness of different cultures. The role play area is set out as a home and has several posters promoting positive images of families from other cultures and countries. This helps children understand about the wider world. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The playgroup has a positive approach to supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff follow clear policies that are in line with the required code of practice. An experienced member of staff oversees this area and has attended specific modular training. Staff work well with other professionals and utilise ongoing support from the local authority well. There are good procedures in place for the close observation of children who require additional support. Staff work closely in partnership with parents and carers to provide a consistent approach and support children's development. This complies fully with the required code of practice and is underpinned by clear and concise policies. Consequently, support is carefully planned for each child meeting their individual needs and promoting equality of opportunity and inclusive activities for all children.

Behaviour is of a consistently high standard as children are thoroughly engrossed in a wide range of purposeful and developmentally-appropriate activities. Staff are calm, consistent and provide extremely good role models. A clear behavioural policy underpins practice and is proactively shared with parents. Parents are warmly welcomed into the playgroup by friendly approachable staff. An informative prospectus provides parents with a good range of information about the playgroup. Staff willingly reassure parents who phone in to check if their children are settled. Parental views are sought through questionnaires which are evaluated and used to inform practice.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents and carers are invited in regularly to discuss children's progress with key-worker staff. They are kept extremely well informed about new activities and playgroup initiatives. Staff invite parents in for informative meetings to keep them well informed and up to date regarding their children's learning and development. Parents' views about their children's learning are sought on admission in comprehensive and user-friendly booklets, to determine children's initial capabilities. Parents are invited in for 'fun days' where activities are provided to enable parents and carers to share written records with key-worker staff. Children's next steps in learning are proactively shared with parents; this builds extremely good links with home, sharing and celebrating children's achievements and progress. Home-school books are provided and sent home with play based activities. This prepares children for school and ensures that parents and carers do not miss out on any aspects of their children's development. Children strongly benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and staff to enhance their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for well by suitable adults who are well qualified and have had all necessary checks to ensure children's safety. The children feel at home and at ease with a well-organised environment. This means they are confident to initiate and extend their own play and learning. The play leader has a good understanding of the National Standards and her responsibility to

comply with these and the conditions of her registration. Children's care, learning and play are supported well by the policies and procedures within the operational plan. Concise and clear documentation supports the smooth running of the playgroup and these are regularly reviewed and stored securely. A daily register is maintained for both staff and children, however this does not record hours of attendance which could compromise children's safety.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The group is led by an extremely motivated and dynamic play leader who is overseen by a voluntary management committee. The strong team of staff have worked extremely hard to improve outcomes for children in all areas of the group's practice, embracing new ideas and concepts and striving to continuously improve. Staff are comprehensively aware of roles and responsibilities and work extremely well to form a dynamic and cohesive team. The team have proactively sourced sustainability grants to further improve the outside area with an all-weather canopy. Staff work closely with an early years advisory teacher to monitor the nursery education and adapt it to the needs of the children that attend. Consequently, children are making extremely good progress in the stimulating and rich learning environment. The playgroup team have highly developed links with the school that truly benefit the children. They take children to the school dining-room for lunch and work very closely to ensure children have a smooth and well-planned transition into school. All required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and is regularly reviewed.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure the child protection statement includes procedures to contact Ofsted in the event of allegations being made against a member of staff or volunteer and develop the lost child policy. These policies have been reviewed and updated in line with current guidelines. They were also asked to further develop the complaints procedures to meet current standards as issued in the addendum to the National Standards October 2005 and ensure the complaints procedure includes the address and telephone number of the regulator. These have both been addressed and meet all requirements as set out in the National Standards.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action to meet the National Standards. The complaint related to National Standard 6: Safety, National Standard 1: Suitable person and National Standard 2: Organisation. Concerns were raised regarding children's access into the school. Ofsted made an unannounced visit on the 10 May 2006 to investigate the concerns. As a result of the investigation carried out relating to National Standard 6: Safety, the provider was given three actions as follows; conduct a risk assessment of the premises to identify hazards following a change to the layout of the room and develop an action plan with timescales to identify action to be taken to minimise these; ensure that the premises are secure and children are not able to leave them unsupervised, ensure children can play safely outside and are protected from hazards such as water-filled containers and a broken gate. As a result of the investigation carried out relating to National Standard 14: Documentation the provider was given two actions; Ensure records are always available for inspection by the childcare inspector and ensure that Ofsted is informed at the earliest opportunity of any changes in the registered person.

A satisfactory response to the actions was received on the 31 May 2006 and Ofsted was satisfied that by taking these steps the provider remained 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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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):

- ensure that the accident record is consistently signed off by parents
- provide an accurate record showing children's and staff's hours of attendance.

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