

Waterbeach Toddlers Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Unique Reference Number | 221775 |
| Inspection date | 10 September 2007 |
| Inspector | Caroline Wright |
| Setting Address | Waterbeach Toddler Playgroup, 37 Burgess Road, Waterbeach, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB25 9ND |
| Telephone number | 0780 8357729 |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Waterbeach Toddlers Playgroup |
| 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Waterbeach Toddlers Playgroup is run by a group of trustees and a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the playgroup and members of the local community. It opened in 1985 and operates from two rooms in a mobile building in the grounds of an old peoples home in the village of Waterbeach, near Cambridge. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 09:00 to 11:30 and 12:00 to 15:00; Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 09:00 to 12:00 with an optional lunch club until 13:00 during term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 28 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 15 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The playgroup employs four members of staff: three of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications; two members of staff are working towards further early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating. The staff engage in discussions with children about the need to wash their hands after using the toilet and as a result, children talk with understanding about the importance of washing their hands to 'stop germs' and know that 'germs are invisible'. Staff act as good role models, wiping down surfaces before serving snack and after children have eaten to help children to stay healthy. Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. They are able to develop new muscles and spatial awareness when they play on the obstacle course or ride bikes in the outdoor area. This also helps them to learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. Children are aware of changes that occur in their bodies due to physical exertion and comment 'I'm hot' or 'I'm tired' when they have been running around outside on warm days. They handle small pieces of construction toys competently and expertly use scissors, pencils and glue sticks with manipulative dexterity. However, opportunities for children to develop new physical skills, both indoors and out are missed. For example, staff do not encourage children to access the outdoor play area freely and some adult led activities, such as snack time do not always promote physical challenge for older or more able children.

Children learn about healthy eating during discussion with staff at snack time. The healthy eating policy ensures that children are provided with fresh fruit or other healthy options to eat at snack time. Children are able to help themselves to a drink of water when they want one so that they remain well hydrated and healthy. First-hand activities, such as cutting and sticking pictures of 'our favourite food' to make 'pyramid graphs' helps children to learn about the importance of eating healthily in the future.

The needs of children under three years are well met by adults who have a sound understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, which they use to monitor progress.

If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the playgroup, up to date records are in place to make sure that good care is given. Staff are all qualified in first aid and attend training to help them provide specialist care for children with existing medical conditions if they need to.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move around safely under the constant supervision of the playgroup staff. Children learn how to keep themselves safe when using scissors or sitting on chairs, helped by the gentle reminders from their key workers. Children's ongoing safety is very well promoted by staff who continue to review the risk assessment procedure and make changes to the provision where necessary to improve children's safety. For example, a new safety surface and shaded area have recently been added to the outdoor area to improve children's safety when playing outdoors. Children show their knowledge and understanding of personal safety when they remind each other how to play safely in the sand: 'you mustn't throw or it will go in your eyes.' Adults further support children's learning about safety when they invite members of the community, such as police and road safety officers, into the setting. The 'Lollypop Lady' comes into the playgroup

and plays road safety games with the children in the outdoor area. This helps children to extend their knowledge of personal safety in play situations.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a sound understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Training in child protection is provided for all staff when they start to work at the playgroup and a designated person ensures that any concerns are dealt with effectively so that children's best interests are maintained.

A wide range of written policies and appropriate procedures are in place, including regular fire drills to help children know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation of the premises. A record of visitors is maintained and the daily register of attendance is very clear and up to date. Children use suitable resources, which are appropriate for their age and stage of development, and these are checked daily by the playgroup staff as they set up each session, to ensure they are in good condition and are safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, confident and enjoy their time at the setting.

All children join in eagerly with the freely-accessible acts, such as digging for 'mini beasts' in compost or writing lists in the 'office'. They have opportunities to explore creativity through painting and sticking acts provided by their key workers each day.

They enjoy using construction toys to build houses and train tracks to use with small world characters to develop their story telling and imagination. Staff are accomplished in planning acts that help children to become confident communicators and competent learners. They have attended 'Birth to three matters' training and understand it well.

For example, key workers count the number of 'spoonfuls' of dough with children as they play. Staff skilfully extend young children's thinking with interesting questions that help them to develop their communication skills. Children are given plenty of time to think before they respond and as a result they learn from their interactions.

However, key workers do not gather information from parents about children's starting points to help them to monitor children's progress. As a result, it is difficult to identify where children are and some large group acts, such as snack time, do not offer sufficient challenge or interest to younger children and this affects their behaviour.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children use their imagination in a range of situations such as building with recycled household packaging or playing in the role play house. They explore their creativity in art and craft, cutting and sticking or painting with their fingers. Children use number names in their play and count groups of items reliably at lunch time or when they count the number of items they collect on their 'journey stick'.

They communicate effectively and use a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas and talk about what they know. They talk to adults about their thoughts and anticipate what might happen next. For example, 'If I put these two pieces (of pizza) together it will make a circle'. Children discuss what they do at home and talk about their families with understanding. They

learn about the natural world, monitoring the seasons through topics and artwork. For example, children go on nature walks around the village to find mini-beasts or to collect items of interests for the nature table. Children enjoy looking at books alone and with adults; they turn pages from front to back carefully and listen with interest to stories at circle time.

Children enjoy musical activities and sing their favourite songs to each other. They experiment with sounds, play with rhythms using their voices and staff help them to learn about initial sounds in words through a planned phonics programme.

Staff working with the children have a strong knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage 'areas of learning' and of how the acts they provide contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. The written plans for activities are detailed and clearly linked to the stepping stones to ensure that children access a balanced range of learning opportunities over time. Key workers regularly observe children so that they can record their achievements. However, they do not identify what children enjoy and can do well to plan future activities that will build on children's existing skills. As a result some activities, such as those to help children to learn about writing using work book sessions, are not developmentally appropriate and lack appropriate challenges. They miss opportunities to help children to learn about calculations and to write for a purpose in everyday routines and through role play acts. This impacts upon children's motivation and affects learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children confidently greet key workers and each other upon arrival and leave their parents and carers easily. They share experiences at circle time and talk with enthusiasm about what they do at home. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Adults encourage children to work together co-operatively during group activities with a sand timer to help them to learn about taking turns and sharing. Adults provide careful explanations, which young children can understand, to help them to know what is expected of them and to respect each other's needs. For example, adults gently remind children with comments such as, 'perhaps we can work together?' Children have opportunities to learn about the world they live in through activities, such as making a Chinese dragon to celebrate Chinese New Year. They play with small world figures, look at books and take part in a wide range of cultural and religious celebrations.

However, children have limited opportunities to pursue their own interests. For example, when they want to explore the outdoor area they are unable to except at specific times. This impacts upon the ability of younger children to settle into the playgroup and also limits older children's ability to make discoveries in an environment that suits their individual learning needs. In addition, children become bored during some large group activities and this affects their behaviour and hinders learning.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. It contributes effectively to the progress of children who receive funded early education. Parents receive good information about playgroup activities in regular newsletters and on the notice board in the entrance hall, so that they can support their child's learning at home. Key workers share information informally with parents on a daily basis so that children's individual needs are met. Key workers work closely with the parents and carers of children with English as an additional language and those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. However, parents' observations about what their children can do when they first start at the playgroup are not recorded. Although key workers gather

useful information about children's achievements when they begin the Foundation Stage, these are not used to inform progress records or to move children forward in their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the playgroup promotes positive outcomes for children. All areas of the environment are attractive and provide enough of space for children to move around safely. The management committee implements effective recruitment procedures, which ensure that each member of staff has suitable experience and qualifications to work with children. The induction programme for new staff ensures that everyone is aware of procedures for child protection and knows about the daily risk assessment of the premises to keep children safe. Staff engage in a wide range of ongoing training, which enables them to develop their knowledge and skills further. All legally required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place and regularly reviewed. However, large group activities do not promote positive behaviour in children and they are unable to pursue their own interests in their preferred learning environment.

Leadership and management of nursery education are good. The manager and staff work well together as a team. They are effective in ensuring that children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff are fully encouraged to take an active role in planning, delivering and monitoring the Foundation Stage curriculum. They have regular opportunities to meet as a team and share good practice. In addition, the pre-school team act on suggestions from the advisory teacher in the local authority to further enhance the provision. However, key worker and parent observations of what children enjoy are not yet used to inform planning. As a result, some activities lack appropriate challenge for children and opportunities for children to learn through everyday routines and in play situations are missed. This affects children's learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure written risk assessments are carried out and records kept of regular checks on electrical appliances and to ensure hand-drying practices minimize the risk of cross-infection, this refers to using shared towels. The provider also agreed to improve the assessment records for three and four-year-old children to show progress towards the early learning goals and to help them to learn about staying healthy through planned activities and routines in order to improve the provision for funded early education.

A daily risk assessment of the premises is now carried out, including regular checks on electrical appliances by qualified personnel. Children now use paper towels to dry their hands which reduces the risk of cross-infection. The team has improved the way they help children to learn about the way their bodies work and staying healthy through meaningful activities, such as making graphs about 'my favourite food'. However, although they have improved the way they monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals they do not use observations of what children can do and enjoy to move them forward in their learning. This will be carried forward for further improvement following this inspection.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 children's ability to make decisions and pursue their own interests, both indoors and out: enable them to extend their learning independently in their preferred learning environment (this also applies to nursery education)
- make sure that large group activities, such as snack and 'work book' sessions, meet children's developmental needs and promote positive behaviour

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):

- improve the provision for communication, language and literacy and mathematics: provide children with increased opportunities to learn about writing, recognising numbers and using calculations in role play situations, self chosen activities and daily routines
- continue to improve the system of planning activities: use observations by key workers and parents to identify what children enjoy and do well to plan activities indoors and out; make sure all activities offer appropriate challenge and interest to all children; use information from parents about children's starting points to move them on in their learning (this 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