

# Saxon Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	220201
<b>Inspection date</b>	02 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Kelly Eyre
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<b>Registered person</b>	Saxon 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 good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Saxon Playgroup is run by a voluntary management committee. It was re-registered in 2000 and operates from three main rooms in the Church Hall in Earls Barton, Northamptonshire. A maximum of 30 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open Monday to Thursday during term-time only and sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45. There is no outdoor play area attached to the setting and outdoor play is accommodated through the use of local parks and walks.

There are currently 59 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 48 children receive funding for early education. The setting serves the local and surrounding communities. It currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and is able to support children who have disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs seven members of staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is consistently promoted because staff have a good understanding of this area. There are good daily hygiene procedures in place which minimise the spread of infection, for example, the bathroom is checked every half-hour throughout the session and children wash their hands before snack time. They are building up their understanding of the relevance of good personal hygiene because staff discuss these issues with them. Children's health in an emergency situation is promoted because three members of staff hold appropriate first aid qualifications. There is clear guidance regarding action to be taken should a child become ill whilst at the setting and also covering the exclusion of children who are unwell, further minimising the spread of infection.

Children's health and development is further promoted as they are offered a range of healthy snacks which include fresh fruit, cheese and biscuits and dried fruit. Their understanding of the relevance of a healthy diet and lifestyle is developed as they participate in topic work and discussions covering this. For example, children participate in an activity looking at foods which are healthy and ones which aren't, discussing the different types of sugar and the importance of a balanced diet. Snack times provide additional learning opportunities, where children are able to learn valuable social skills. They sit in small groups and help serve their snacks and clear away after themselves. However, their health is affected because they are not easily able to access the drinking water provided at each session. Allergies and special diets are clearly recorded and staff ensure that children are only offered the correct food and drinks.

Children's physical development is well promoted and they are offered a wide range of physical activities. They are able to develop control of their bodies and improve physical skills such as co-ordination and balance as they use the climbing frame, participate in action rhymes and complete obstacle courses. Good use is made of space within the setting to provide physical activities during the session. For example, a small group of children jump from one 'stepping stone' to another and throw three soft balls into a box at the end. This activity is varied for each child as the staff member moves the box closer or further away according to the child's ability. Children are able to develop finer skills and physical movements through their involvement in activities such as crafts and construction, where they manipulate small pieces.

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

The provision is good.

The good forward planning and daily attention paid by staff to the setting up of the play areas mean that children are cared for in a welcoming environment where there are colourful displays of their work. Their daily safety is prioritised because staff have a good understanding of this area. They carry out daily safety checks of all areas, ensuring that children are able to move around safely, freely and independently. The daily implementation of practical policies and procedures ensures that staff are aware of safety practices and are able to promote children's safety in all areas, for example, there are rigorous and practical procedures covering the arrival and collection of children, ensuring that their safety is promoted at all times and they are not able to leave the building unsupervised.

Children are gaining a good understanding about keeping themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by staff to help them appreciate the relevance of this. They also participate in

topic work where they are able to practice procedures such as crossing the road safely. Children use toys and resources that are appropriate for their size and developmental stages. Many of these are stored in accessible containers so that children are able to make choices about their play. Staff regularly check the play resources and equipment to ensure that they are clean and safe. Children's welfare is well promoted because staff have attended recent child protection training and have a thorough knowledge of current procedures. All relevant records and contact details are in place, ensuring that staff are able to act promptly to identify, report and follow up any concerns.

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

The provision is good.

Children are secure, confident and settled. They come in happily at the start of the sessions, separating well from their parents and carers and eagerly exploring the play resources and activities. They have good relationships with staff and with each other. Staff's genuine enjoyment of children's company and their natural skill in joining in with their play means that children's play and learning is extended and their daily experiences at the setting are enhanced. For example, a member of staff joins children playing with the construction straws, calling out different types of weather while the children make umbrellas, sun and cloud shapes to match the weather conditions. This prompts lots of laughter and discussions about different types of weather.

The needs of younger children are clearly recognised and their overall development is promoted because activity plans are cross-referenced to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff have attended additional training and use this framework with growing confidence to ensure that children are offered a balanced range of activities and play opportunities. Staff are vigilant and make good decisions about when to intervene in children's play to extend this. For example, a member of staff watches a group of children playing with play dough, then joins in to discuss the 'cakes' the children have made. The staff member then fetches a cash register and additional plates and the children enjoy organising their 'cake shop', naming the colours of the plates and discussing the different sizes and types of cake they are making.

Children happily choose their activities and organise their play throughout the sessions. They are confident and have a high self-esteem because staff support them well and offer appropriate praise. Their transition from the setting to lower school is aided by the good liaison between the two settings. Staff arrange for children to visit the school playground and also for the reception teacher to visit the playgroup.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have attended additional training and have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This enables them to plan and adapt activities to ensure that children are consistently offered an appropriate range which promotes their development in all areas. The planning of activities is clear and practical, enabling staff to implement the plans on a daily basis. This area is further supported by weekly evaluations of activities and by additional paperwork to check that all areas of learning have been covered. Staff know children well and adapt the activities to suit individual needs. However, children's daily learning is not fully optimised because activity plans do not always include sufficient detail, which means that learning intentions are not always clear and children's individual needs and strengths may be missed.

Children's progress is well balanced because staff use clear methods to assess them. Keyworkers keep records of children's progress, using the information from these to help determine future work and activity planning. Staff are also skilled in adapting the plans to suit children's varying needs on a daily basis. For example, they noted that children did not have sufficient physical activities and added additional ones for the following day.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in the wide range of activities and play opportunities. They are offered familiar play resources and activities which help build their confidence within the setting. These include regular opportunities such as reading, painting, imaginative play, construction activities and water play. Children's knowledge is extended and they are offered further challenges as they participate in a variety of topic work. This enables them to look more closely at subjects such as 'Shapes', 'My Village', 'Nature and Spring' and 'Routines'.

The environment within the setting encourages the development of the attitudes and dispositions which enable children to achieve in their later learning. For example, they are secure and demonstrate a sense of trust as they confidently initiate conversations with staff and turn to them for help in sorting out any problems. They demonstrate a sense of pride in their own achievements, proudly showing staff and other children their completed work. Children interact well with others, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversations. They are confident in using language to organise and explain their thoughts, feelings and activities. For example, a child using a magnetic construction set clearly explains the different shapes used and the concept of magnets to join the pieces. Children are beginning to use written words purposefully, often labelling their own drawings and paintings. They show a keen interest in books and enjoy group and individual stories, joining in with these to predict endings and add further information.

Children confidently use mathematical language in their daily play and understand the meaning of this vocabulary. For example, a group of children measure their heights, put themselves in order of height, compare sizes and discuss who is tallest and shortest. Children are beginning to use numbers in a meaningful context and understand that numbers represent sets of objects. An example of this is children sorting animal figures according to size and colour, and then counting the number in each group. They are beginning to use mathematics to solve everyday problems, for example, a child counts how many cakes he has made with play dough and then states "five cakes, so that means I need five plates now".

Children have daily opportunities to observe, explore and question through participating in a range of activities that form the foundation of their later learning in subjects such as history, science and technology. For example, children using computers are encouraged to explore the programmes and find out what they are able to do. A child is excited when he finds he can choose different colours and fill in the picture he has created. Children confidently use a wide range of tools and are able to select the correct tools, for example, selecting a spanner to turn a bolt in the work bench. They enjoy discussing their local community and environment. Their understanding of this area is promoted through activities such as 'Our Village', where they have noted the different facilities and landmarks and made a map to illustrate these. However, their understanding of the wider diversities of society is not fully promoted as they are not consistently offered a sufficiently wide range of opportunities to explore these.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills, for example, they climb and balance on the climbing frame, balance on ride-on toys and improve their co-ordination as they throw balls into containers. They are developing a

positive attitude towards healthy lifestyles through regular discussions and involvement in topic work. Good use of the role play area means that children's imagination is encouraged. This area has been transformed into a post office, a library, a flower shop, newsagents and a hospital. Children enjoy joining in with favourite songs and action rhymes, often singing to themselves whilst playing, for example, a child sings 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' whilst painting.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel welcome and valued because they are respected as individuals. Staff praise their efforts and achievements, promoting their self-esteem. They are encouraged to express their views and to listen to others. For example, during a group discussion about starting school, children are encouraged to listen to each other and to wait for their turn. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their individual requirements recognised and consistently met. There is a policy supporting this and staff ensure that this is consistently implemented. They have attended additional training and are able to work appropriately to meet individual children's needs, for example, using sign language to communicate. Children have individual plans which are realistic and are reviewed on a regular basis, ensuring the balanced promotion of their development. The good levels of support ensure that children are able to participate in all activities and daily routines.

Children are gaining an effective awareness of other cultures and ways of life through discussions and activities such as tasting food from around the world. However, these activities do not offer them the opportunity to explore and understand the wider diversities of society. Their understanding of their closer community is promoted through activities such as visits to local facilities and topic work where they identify local facilities and landmarks and make a map to illustrate these. Children's behaviour is generally good throughout the sessions and they are learning about sharing and turn-taking. They are gaining a good understanding about taking responsibility for their own actions because staff give them clear explanations, enabling them to understand the implications of their behaviour and make decisions about this. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are given practical information about the setting's policies and procedures, ensuring that they are aware of daily practice and expectations. The use of newsletters and notice boards ensures that they receive information about activity plans, topics and themes. They are kept informed of their children's progress and activities through daily discussions with staff. Parents' views are actively sought through the use of questionnaires.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their daily experiences of the setting are positive and they are consistently offered a balanced range of activities because all areas of the setting are well organised. An example of this is the good organisation of the main hall, which is changed weekly in order to accommodate a wide variety of activities and play opportunities. These are well laid out, with space between each, ensuring that children are able to concentrate on their activities and move safely and freely between each. The good organisation of paperwork and records means that they are easily accessible and staff are able to check that children's needs are met. Records are stored confidentially and this area is further supported by a 'Confidentiality Policy'

which helps to ensure that children are protected and parents are aware of their right to access their child's records.

Children's daily safety and welfare are promoted because there are robust procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. There is also a clear staff induction process and daily monitoring to ensure that the setting's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied. This is further supported by additional guidance regarding students, ensuring that all are aware of roles and responsibilities and are able to provide consistent and appropriate care for all children.

Leadership and management is good. Children's learning, development and welfare are promoted by the good understanding that the manager has of her roles and responsibilities. The setting is well managed and continuously monitored to ensure that appropriate care is provided and staff are supported in their daily work and training. The manager works in partnership with staff to review work and make changes which improve children's opportunities. An example of this is the recent review of planning methods to increase the daily activities and ensure that children are offered a balanced range of opportunities throughout their time at the setting. The manager acts as a good role model to staff and children, attending additional training and demonstrating her genuine enthusiasm for her work. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting, in which children can learn, develop and express their ideas.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At their last inspection, the group was asked to further develop their planning. This has now been extended to include a wider range of activities and first-hand experiences which promote children's overall development and encourage their natural curiosity.

With regard to the provision of funded early education, the group was asked to improve the level of challenge for older children, plan a wider range of daily activities, develop children's opportunities for independent play and provide choices to use a range of tools and information and communication technology. The planning has now been extended to ensure that a wider range of activities and play opportunities are provided at each session and children are offered challenge. Resources have also been increased, for example, additional computers have been provided so that children can use these on a regular basis and increase their understanding of this area. Staff are also available to support children in their choices and to make suggestions to extend children's play and learning. These improvements mean that children are offered additional opportunities and their development in all areas is promoted

### **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.

## 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 access to drinking water
- provide further opportunities for children to access a wider range of activities and resources which promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice (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):

- further develop the planning methods so that these include sufficient detail to show the learning intentions, resources needed, grouping of children and the adaptation of the activities to meet the varying needs of individual children.

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)