

Hartwell Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220223
Inspection date	04 December 2007
Inspector	Margaret Coyne
Setting Address	Hartwell Community Centre, School Lane, Hartwell, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN7 2HL
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Registered person	The Trustees of Hartwell 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Hartwell Pre-School Playgroup opened in 1991 and operates from the community centre in a village close to Northampton in Northamptonshire. The group have access to the main hall, a kitchen, and toilets. All children use the adjacent park and playing field for outdoor activities. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open on Monday, Thursday and Friday from 09.15 to 15.15 and on Tuesday and Wednesday from 09.15 to 11.45. Children can attend for various sessions. The group is open for 38 weeks of the year.

There are currently 31 children aged from two years three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 20 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The pre-school employs six staff. Of these, three staff, including the playleader hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from a qualified teacher and the local authority. They are a committee run group and have been accredited under the Pre-School Learning Alliance scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene through well-organised routines. They wash their hands after using the toilet and know to wash them again after messy activities and before snacks. Low steps help children reach toilets and low bowls of water are placed so children can reach them easily, such as at messy play and in the snack area. This increases children's independence skills. Younger children develop their understanding through watching the older children and through the positive role modelling of the adults. The children are protected from infection through the well-managed hygiene routines which are practised by the group. There is a high standard of cleanliness for the premises and equipment and by the exclusion of children who are unwell. Staff are well informed about the children's health and effective documentation is in place to support this. Suitable consent has been gained to administer medication and seek emergency treatment or advice. Accidents are documented to ensure a full record is kept and shared with parents and separate head injury forms are used to ensure parents can take appropriate action if required. Three members of staff hold a current first aid certificate and they are confident they can administer this to protect the children in their care.

Children take part in a café snack bar system that promotes healthy eating and helps children gain a secure understanding of food that is good for us. Children enjoy the fresh fruit such as bananas, pears and satsumas. Colourful posters in this area give clear information about what food is good for children and contributes to good health. Staff join in discussions with the children while introducing them to new tastes and experiences. For example, they have taken part in a fruit and vegetable printing activity and try food from different cultures. Children have opportunity to prepare food and take part in some cooking experiences. For example, they have made a Zimbabwean meal with support from a parent. Drinks are readily available for children to access. Staff take account of parents' wishes and any dietary needs of the children. Extra care is taken if any child has an allergy or dietary requirement and full information is gained from parents so staff can act in the children's best interests. Parents are involved in a rota to provide snacks for the children and information is given to help them make healthy choices. Children also attend for a lunch club session where they bring in a packed lunch from home. Snack and lunch times are a lovely social occasion. Staff sit with the children encouraging them to develop good manners and social skills.

Children enjoy a range of physical activities which contributes to a healthy lifestyle. They confidently use their physical skills to access a range of equipment. Staff ensure children experience a variety of ways to move their bodies as they ride bikes, balance on beams, use climbing frames and obstacle courses. Children have access to a large playing field where they can run around, gain fresh air and explore nature first hand. They thoroughly enjoy running and jumping in the large puddle that has formed. Children's experiences are not hindered by weather conditions as staff set up equipment indoors for children to enjoy. They take part in group activities such as music and movement, ribbon and scarf dancing and manage a parachute. Children's dexterity and hand and eye coordination is developing as they manipulate playdough, use one-handed tools, build with construction equipment and do up fastenings on their own clothes and dressing up clothes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the group. Staff recognise hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. A thorough risk assessment is carried out on the premises, toys and equipment and all necessary safety measures are in place to protect the children and safeguard their welfare. This is complimented with a daily check list. The activities are well planned with lots of space for children to move freely and safely around them and the layout of the room ensures children can be supervised while playing. Thorough safety and security precautions are in place to promote and safeguard the children's welfare. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in pre-school as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation, the boundaries and limits to help keep themselves safe and safety when using the outdoor area. Where some children have difficulties responding to the boundaries, staff manage this effectively explaining to the children in a simple but positive manner aimed at their level of understanding. This enables them to operate safely within their environment. Other professionals such as the police and fire officers have come to talk to the children about keeping safe. Road safety is practised as children go for walks in their local area and is reinforced within the pre-school. They have a roadway marked out with chalk with a zebra crossing and learn a one-way system to follow as they pedal bikes around the 'road' stopping at the crossing.

Children use a broad range of safe, well-maintained and developmentally appropriate resources. All items are regularly checked for safety and high levels of staff supervision ensure children access the activities safely. For example, when pedalling the bikes indoors, playing with the dinosaurs in the gravel and while being creative using glue and paint. Equipment and activities are attractively presented with a variety of items to encourage children to take part and evolve their play themselves. For example, a large selection of dressing up clothes, baby dolls and buggies in the home corner help children extend their own play and use their imaginations. Children are gaining a secure respect for their toys and equipment, picking items up from the floor, sweeping up sand and helping to tidy away. This helps children gain an awareness of safety and take some responsibility for keeping themselves safe.

Children are well protected. Practitioners are knowledgeable about child protection and have attended additional training to support them as they care for the children. All policies and procedures are up to date and in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. This supporting documentation ensures all staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of any concerns and a designated child protection officer is in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, settled and secure. They have a sense of belonging as they come into the pre-school and know the routine. They change into indoor shoes, find their name cards on the chairs and use these for their coats and bags. Children relate well to each other and socialise together seeking out friends to share activities together. Most children spend their time in a purposeful manner as they move freely around the activities throughout the session. They enjoy exploring new and familiar concepts such as the home corner, dressing up, creativity table and playing with the dinosaurs in the gravel tray. Most children are able to concentrate and persist at self-chosen activities. Staff are on hand to support and engage those children whose concentration is limited to help them gain control of their feelings and show an interest

in an activity. For example, children are guided to the creative table to sit and make a picture of a car using two and three dimensional objects to stick down to represent features of a car.

Children enjoy singing, action rhymes and using musical instruments. They are practising their Christmas songs to sing to parents and accompany themselves with a variety of musical instruments. This results in children gaining control and distinguishing sounds and practising rhythm. They enjoy music and movement sessions and dancing with ribbons and scarves. Children use paint, playdough, printing and sticking to express themselves and explore their own creativity. They take part in some group displays and are able to select resources for themselves to be creative using their own imaginations and skills.

Children's independence is developing as they move freely around the room selecting activities and becoming increasingly more self-sufficient. Low-level storage units at some areas of play provide opportunities for the children to make their own choices about the toys or resources they want to select to extend their play. Their independence is also extended as they use the toilets, wash their hands, put on coats, shoes and Wellington boots. The café snack system also increases children's skills as they are able to pour their own drinks, help themselves to food, cut fruit and prepare some snacks for themselves.

The 'Birth to three matters' framework is incorporated into the plans. This has a positive effect on the children as staff have gained an insight into focusing their attention when adapting activities. This promotes the development of younger children. Staff know the children very well and can adapt activities to suit all ages and abilities. Children's development is recorded for the 'Birth to three matters' framework and follows children through until they reach the Foundation Stage.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress due to the staff team's sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn effectively. Plans are comprehensive and show interesting activities which challenge and stimulate the children. These provide extended information about working with children who are more or less able and ensures staff can fully support all children to learn through their play. As a result children are motivated and make positive links in their learning. Children are confident speakers and most will listen well to others during play and at group times. They have opportunity to visit the mobile library and choose books for the group to read. They enjoy storytimes listening attentively to the story and will seek out adults to share books with. Many children are able to write their own name on their work and use writing for meaning as they make shopping lists and bus tickets in the role play area. They write letters in sand and shaving foam and gain a phonic understanding of letters using magnetic letters in their play. However, staff do not provide sufficient opportunity to aid children's emergent reading and word recognition skills due to the lack of labels on everyday objects around the room.

Children are beginning to count and match numbers. For example, children could match the number on their tricycle when parking them in marked numbered bays on the chalk road. They count each other and other objects in their everyday routines and play. They use scales to weigh objects and a spontaneous activity takes place as children weigh some jigsaw pieces deciding which are heavier or lighter. Staff are adept at introducing positional and size language to the children. They go on to use this in the outdoor area as they compare the sizes of the mole hills and the puddle. They describe how tall, flat, tiny or big these are. This is extended as they use the 'Bee' directional finder programming it to go forward, backwards, right and left. Children

have many opportunities to explore their local environment with trips around the area to visit the local football stadium and pizza hut. They attend events at the local school to see the circus and new pond. A pilot took time to visit the children to explain about his job and they went on to use this in their role play making aeroplanes from chairs as they fly to Nice. Children have some opportunity to use the computer and have various programmes to support their learning in other areas.

Creative activities give children a sense of achievement as they are able to create spontaneously using their own imaginations and skills. They can freely access a range of different textures and techniques to create. For example, using a variety of different fruits and vegetables to print with including oranges, apples and onions. Staff are adept at allowing children opportunity to create spontaneously through child-initiated art and craft. Children use their imaginations well as they take part in role play and seek friends out to join in as they become Mummies and Daddies caring for their sick baby doll, taking blood and making her well with an antibiotic. They clearly imitate familiar situations and adults, extending their own play accordingly. Staff ensure children can extend their imaginations through many other familiar situations such as a shop, library, hospital, garage and beauty parlour.

Staff have a sound awareness of each child's individual needs and their starting points in order to move them forward. They continually monitor children's progress and use the stepping stones, written observations and photographs to record this. These observational records clearly identify children's achievements and ensure staff can plan for the next steps in their learning. The comprehensive evaluation of the activities means staff are able to recognise and record where they have been successful in promoting learning and which aspects need improvement. The staff team know the children very well and are able to motivate them, capture their interest and arouse their curiosity through the well-planned programme of activities and events. However, some areas such as the mark-making and mathematics tables are too high for the children to access successfully so they can explore these concepts fully using their own abilities. Staff are skilled at asking children open-ended questions which enables them to think things through for themselves. They acknowledge children's efforts and use lots of positive language and praise. This raises children's confidence to participate and their self-esteem. Children make good progress through the stepping stones with equal emphasis placed on all six areas of learning. Staff have high expectations for all children and create a happy learning environment for them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children gain a positive view of the wider world because they have access to a meaningful range of resources and activities. This promotes and increases their understanding of diversity. They take part in activities to increase their awareness and enjoyment of both familiar and unfamiliar festivals and celebrations, for example, Christmas, Easter, Diwali and Chinese New Year. Parents are asked to share their skills or knowledge with the children and have been in to share cooking activities from different cultures, and job roles. Children are able to learn to respect their environment and new books have been purchased to share with the children about recycling and saving the planet. A child was able to discuss that a bottle left on the field should be recycled. Staff have positive attitudes and present themselves as sensitive role models. This helps children relate to others and gain a positive understanding of the needs of others. Children are learning to share and take turns and respond well to direction from adults and other children, for example, children discuss how the play house is for everyone to share. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Effective systems are implemented to support

children with any special needs. Activities can be adapted to include all children and extra adult support is in place for any child who requires this.

Children have a good awareness of the boundaries within the pre-school and respond to direction from adults. They respond well to the consistent approach followed by all adults and this impacts clearly on their security and confidence because they know what is expected of them. Children develop self-esteem as they are able to resolve differences and gain an understanding between right and wrong. Suitable strategies are employed to help children learn to manage and control their own behaviour and good behaviour is rewarded with praise and the opportunity to take home 'Gerald the Giraffe' to document his adventures in a diary to share with the rest of the group.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents play an active role in the pre-school and this in turn helps them support their child's care, learning and play. A range of information is available to parents about the group, the activities and the curriculum. This is supported with displayed weekly planning to help parents extend activities and discussions with their child at home. Children benefit from a two-way sharing of information between staff and parents. Staff are friendly and approachable so parents are comfortable asking them for additional information and sharing any events that relate to their child at arrival and collection times. This is further supported for children moving on to school with a consultation evening to share information about their progress and achievements. A comprehensive parents' pack is in place which is continually developed to show a recent picture of the pre-school's practice and to help foster a good working relationship between home and pre-school. This contains information about the Foundation Stage and National Curriculum. Parents have access to useful daily information on their notice board and are encouraged to help out as parent helpers and sitting on the committee. They have adequate information if any parent wishes to raise a concern or complaint. However, the complaints policy requires updating with the regulator's address and information about the access to the complaints record.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management is good. The management team has a clear and positive vision for the future and has developed a dedicated staff team who present themselves as positive role models for the children to relate to. A robust recruitment and induction programme ensures children are cared for by suitable adults. All policies and procedures are well implemented to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. The children are cared for by staff who either hold a suitable qualification or have experience working with young children. Staff are keen to attend additional training and workshops to enhance their knowledge and understanding and this has a positive impact on the children's welfare, play and learning.

Children feel secure and confident within this organised environment. This enables them to interact with others and initiate and extend most of their own play and learning. The range and quality of activities for children enables them to be challenged and staff have a secure knowledge of the early learning goals to help children move forward. Children can move safely and freely around activities and enjoy uninhibited, well-organised space to spread out and play. The daily routines are well planned to ensure children can maximise the play and learning opportunities each day.

Most records and documents are up to date and these are securely kept and available for inspection. An operational plan ensures the daily organisation of the group is well implemented.

Staff work well together to develop planning which impacts on the children's play and learning and the good partnerships with parents. Systems are in place to evaluate and assess their practice and all staff work well as a team to monitor and implement successful ways to improve their practice. Staff promote an inclusive environment which clearly shows that each child is important and valued. They organise time, staff, activities, resources and space to ensure all children benefit from their time spent within the group. Some children attend for the morning session and some for the afternoon session. Other children benefit from staying for a full day and the lunch club is open to all children. These varied sessions are well organised to ensure that adult to child ratios can be met at all times. The committee has been recently reformed with some new members who are working well with the manager and staff to develop and extend the care, play and learning for the children. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to create an accessible and stimulating environment for the children; to review the equal opportunities policy and share this with parents; to increase children experiences of rhymes, alliteration and phonic knowledge; to develop the opportunities for spontaneous counting and simple problem solving within the activities, and use of language comparing shapes, weight and size and to provide more regular opportunities for children to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world in relation to information and communication technology and finding out about how machines work.

The room is well planned with barriers to separate different areas of play and low-level storage units to ensure children can select activities and resources for themselves. Each area is attractively presented to encourage children to participate. The policy for equality of opportunity has been reviewed and updated. An equal opportunity officer is now in place and the policy is available to parents. Children have ample opportunity to develop their knowledge of rhymes, alliteration and phonic skills. Children take part in spontaneous counting and simple problem solving skills in everyday activities and events that occur, both planned and unplanned. They share in discussions about weight, size, shape, and positional language is continually used. Children's understanding of information technology is extended through the opportunities provided for them to use the computer and other programmable toys. For example, the Compact Disc player, the Bee directional finders, walkie talkies, battery operated toys and simple observations about how the wheels move round on the tricycles.

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.
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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.
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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):

- update the complaints procedure to ensure complainants are aware that they will be notified of the outcome within 28 days and that a record of all complaints is maintained and appropriate information from that record is shared with parents on request. Also ensure the regulator's details are correct.

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):

- extend the use of labels around the room to increase children's awareness of word recognition with familiar objects
- consider ways to encourage children to use the writing and mark-making and mathematical tables to extend their abilities and understanding in these areas.

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