

Eaton Elephants Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | EY254180 |
| Inspection date | 13 July 2007 |
| Inspector | Rosalie Mary Turner |
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| 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 outstanding. 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?

Eaton Elephants Playgroup is privately owned. It opened many years ago but was re-registered in 1997 following a change of ownership. It operates from a mobile classroom within the grounds of Fairway First School in Eaton, on the outskirts of Norwich, Norfolk. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open from 09.00 to 15.00 on Fridays, according to demand, and from 09.00 to 12.00 on the remaining weekdays during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 45 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local community. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is exceptionally well maintained because the staff understand and implement highly effective hygiene routines. They check, clean and disinfect the toilets at regular intervals, flushing the sinks with hot water to ensure children are robustly protected from the spread of infection. Staff give the younger children commendable support to use the toilets independently and manage their own personal hygiene. For example, they display colourful pictures that the older children have produced as a prompt to remind them to wash their hands afterwards. Furthermore, staff seize opportunities to talk to all children about the importance of keeping their hands clean. They carefully explain that the 'Germs will get into your tummies and make you poorly' if they eat their fruit with dirty hands. As a result, children gain an excellent understanding of how to look after their bodies and keep themselves healthy.

Children thrive because they are provided with a well balanced range of nutritious, freshly prepared snacks that contribute significantly to their understanding of a healthy diet. The excellent use of the 'Healthy Eating' theme also encourages parents and carers to understand how some foods are not so good for their children's health. The staff respect parents' wishes and take account of children's allergies, likes and dislikes when providing snacks. Therefore, children are always offered appetising options such as fresh fruit and chopped vegetables that appeal to them and meet their individual dietary needs. Children have superb opportunities to develop their taste buds by sampling a range of ethnic foods. They particularly enjoy the samosas and tasting the delicious strawberries or organic vegetables that they have planted, tended and harvested in the playgroup garden. Therefore, children have an impressive understanding of what they should eat to promote their growth and development.

Children are developing a very positive attitude to being active. They look forward to playing outside and, during the summer months, they enjoy water play and other routine activities in the fresh air. The staff provide a superb range of physical activities to help children learn the effect that exercise has upon their health. For instance, children begin each session by taking part in bend and stretch exercises to keep themselves supple. They particularly enjoy running around the playground with gymnastic ribbons flowing out behind them or kicking footballs to show off their stamina. Children quickly become aware of their own health needs because the staff remind them to help themselves to fresh drinking water if they become hot and thirsty after being energetic.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are warmly welcomed into a safe, child-centred environment where they are able to gain a sense of belonging. The staff work exceptionally hard to make the mobile classroom a rich and stimulating play environment where children feel secure. For example, they decorate the walls with a multitude of attractive posters, photographs and displays of children's work and set out an excellent range of safe, high quality resources to encourage younger children to settle quickly.

Children's safety is given the utmost priority and they are closely monitored by all staff who are extremely vigilant to protect them from danger. As well as the comprehensive annual risk assessment, the staff complete a thorough daily check of the play environment and take

worthwhile precautions to minimise any hazards observed. For instance, they ensure that the outside door remains secured with a high hook to protect children from possible 'stranger danger' and place a safety gate across the entrance to the kitchen. Children greatly benefit from the regular visits from their community police support officer because they understand how to keep themselves safe from a very early age. Their learning is reinforced because staff also warn them about possible dangers and all children know 'We must tell Mummy or Daddy' if they find any matches. Children take extra care when working with the 'Tap Tap' tools and they remind each other to 'Be careful because the needles are sharp'. They spontaneously pick up toys that are left on the floor and demonstrate a superb awareness of their responsibility to keep others safe.

Children are extremely well protected from the risk of possible harm. For instance, they are never left alone with persons who have not been vetted or released to adults unless the playgroup has a written consent from their parents in the 'collections' book. All staff are guided by a robust child protection policy which they reread each year to ensure they are secure in their knowledge of the playgroup procedures. They demonstrate an excellent ability to recognise the signs and symptoms of child abuse and keep up to date guidance to hand so that they can respond quickly to their concerns. Consequently, children's welfare is exceptionally well safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at playgroup and have built strong bonds with the staff who are consistently kind and attentive in their approach to them. They sit at the tables ready to engage children in play and those who are younger relish this close, personal attention, and they develop confidence from a very early age. The staff develop extremely effective plans that are carefully linked to the aspects and components of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. For example, children are learning to be skilful communicators because staff provide opportunities within the daily routine for them to share their news with others. They quickly become competent learners because they are given time to complete challenges for themselves without staff interrupting their play. For instance, children concentrate for long periods to build and design a castle using a manufactured construction set. Staff sensitively do not destroy this when it is time to tidy the toys but enable children to return to their creation to carry out more work and proudly show it to their carers.

Children come into the playgroup eagerly because they cannot wait to explore the extensive range of bright, colourful toys that they are able to independently access from the low-level storage units. Staff skilfully plan each session so that children have superb choices within free play balanced with focused activities. Plans are flexible and staff respond to children's interests by choosing 'The Jungle' as a theme. Consequently, children are captivated by the exciting experiences and they remain fully engaged in meaningful play. They rapidly build on their existing skills because the staff make very effective use of questioning as they play with them. For example, they ask 'What colour is this?' but then continue to find out what children know by prompting 'How many others are red?'

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are motivated to learn, therefore, they make very rapid progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of their learning. The staff have a strong knowledge of the Foundation Stage and very high expectations for

children's achievement. They know the children very well and use their comprehensive understanding of how they learn to plan challenging activities that are extremely well matched to their needs. Furthermore, all staff display an exceptional enthusiasm and commitment to their work and, as a result, they maintain a vibrant learning environment. They meet before the start of each session to discuss, evaluate and reflect on the previous day's activities. The staff carefully monitor children's play, keep extensive photographic records of their achievements and record significant moments in their 'learning stories'. Staff use their assessments skilfully to guide future planning and provide appropriate resources to address any identified gaps in learning. Consequently, children achieve exceedingly well as the educational programme is highly effective in supporting them to move on to their next stage in learning.

Children work together co-operatively and chat amongst themselves as they pretend to drive their cars. They capably negotiate taking turns to be the driver and happily share the resources, showing that they are becoming aware of each other's needs. Older children show excellent concentration skills as they persevere to solve their own problems and work out how to retrieve a ball that has fallen between the storage units. Outdoor play is exceptionally well planned to ensure that children's progress towards the early learning goals for physical development is outstanding. For example, staff carefully challenge children to develop their hand to eye co-ordination by extending the distance that they have to throw balls through a hoop. Children also show impressive skills as they climb, slide or balance on the large apparatus that is used indoors.

Children are very articulate and they are able to make their needs known within their play. They choose from a superb range of fiction and reference books to help them to develop early reading skills and learn that they can access information for themselves. Staff make stories very interesting, for example, by asking children to act out the tale of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. Older children begin to retell familiar stories and they quickly notice if staff deliberately mix up the sequence of events or make mistakes. Children's listening skills are impressive and they all sit quietly when they are in large groups at registration and story times. Staff provide a splendid range of tools and materials so that children can practise their emergent writing in a variety of situations. Consequently, they speedily progress from using the chunky chinks to forming recognisable letters and writing their names using fine pencils or crayons.

Children's mathematical development is exceptionally well promoted. They are confident in their use of numbers and count reliably to 20 and beyond because the staff encourage them to count within routine play. Children thoroughly enjoy number rhymes and calculate competently as they work out 'How many have we got left?'. They are fascinated by the early science resources that tempt them to question how things work such as locks and keys or magnets. However, children particularly like investigating their local community and being taken for walks to look at the many different types of buildings in their neighbourhood or to watch the local church roof being re-thatched. They are fascinated by the wildlife that they discover when they explore the playground or are taken for nature walks.

Children show wonderful imagination as they pretend to be hairdressers. They enthusiastically wash and dry the staff's hair, placing rollers and clips into it so that 'She will be ready to go out'. The staff make superb use of the role play area to encourage children to keep house, hunt wild beasts in the jungle or sell fruit and vegetables from the market stall. They also express their ideas and feelings creatively within music and art or craft work. For instance, children access an exciting range of multi-cultural musical instruments such as bongos, maracas, castanets and chime bars that tempt them to make music or explore rhythms for themselves. They use a multitude of textured materials including shiny sequins, glitter, card and tissue to design collages

and children are given a sense of pride in their work because it is displayed to decorate the room.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children from all cultures and of all abilities play a full part in the playgroup because they are highly respected by the staff who value each child's individuality and family context. Children learn to appreciate a wide variety of cultures and beliefs through the superb range of multi-cultural resources and planned topics that are available to them. They wear authentic national costumes when they celebrate the Chinese New Year and to represent different countries for the 'Around the World' display. Children for whom English is an additional language receive exceptional support to ensure they develop trusting relationships with staff and their peers. For example, staff provide books in their home language and teach others simple words so that all children are able to communicate. The staff call children by their names and change their facial expressions to show them that they are interested in what they say and do. Consequently, children feel good about themselves.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They make friends easily and have many opportunities to learn about the faiths and beliefs of others through the vibrant posters and positive images in books. Children have outstanding support to help them to manage their own behaviour. For example, the staff recognise if they are becoming restless and quickly intervene to divert children to another activity. They are pleased to work alongside parents to set boundaries that are consistent with home so that children understand what is expected of them. All adults have high expectations of the children and continually praise their positive actions to help them manage their own behaviour. They are superb role models to the children and give clear explanations if they ask them to change their behaviour. As a result, children quickly learn right from wrong and their behaviour is exemplary.

Children of all abilities are helped to reach their full potential because the staff promptly recognise any developmental delay. The staff pre-consider all needs and, as a result, the playgroup is able to accommodate children regardless of their ability. There are robust procedures in place to support those having learning difficulties or disabilities and to guide staff if children do not appear to be reaching milestones in their development. The proprietor is acting special needs co-ordinator while other staff are being trained. She has considerable experience of working closely with parents and children who have varying needs and demonstrates great sensitivity in this area. She guides staff competently to help them to work alongside other agencies and make sure that children of all abilities make progress.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. There are excellent procedures in place to ensure that they are fully involved in their children's care and learning. For example, parents are informed of themed activities in newsletters that are sent home and the weekly plans are displayed on the notice board. Parents contribute many items to help with themes and send in photographs that demonstrate special events or milestones reached at home. There are many highly informative displays containing a wealth of information about the Foundation Stage and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Furthermore, parents know about their child's achievements because they attend open sessions and discuss their children's 'learning stories' with their key worker. They also come into the playgroup and mount examples of children's work into a scrapbook that demonstrates their rapidly developing skills. Consequently, all parents speak extremely positively about the playgroup. They specifically like 'The friendly and relaxed atmosphere' in which the children play and learn. Parents feel the staff are 'Very good

at keeping parents informed' and show their appreciation of the high standards of care and education by giving them small gifts when their children leave the group. This excellent relationship between staff and parents significantly contributes to the impressive progress that children make towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is greatly enhanced by the exceptional quality of the organisation of the premises and resources together with the outstanding leadership of the playgroup. All staff have a secure understanding of the National Standards and the Foundation Stage as well as their responsibilities to the children and their carers. The experienced staff teams clearly enjoy working with the children and individuals show remarkable support for each other. The high staffing ratios enable children to be grouped and staff to be deployed effectively to promote learning. All staff are committed to continuous improvement and development. They are proactive to access further training so that their knowledge and skills remain up to date. The staff meet regularly to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of their care and, as a result, children's well-being is superbly promoted.

Children are safeguarded because all legally required documentation is meticulously maintained. In addition, the robust recruitment and staff vetting procedures ensure that all adults are suitable to work with the children. The records of attendance are marked as soon as adults and children arrive or depart to ensure they are kept particularly safe in an emergency. The playgroup is guided by a commendable range of policies and procedures that are consistently applied by the staff. They are regularly updated and staff sign to acknowledge that they have reread the guidance to help them to provide high quality care for children. In particular, the positive aims and objectives 'To provide a happy, secure environment' and 'To provide each child a varied programme of activities which will encourage them to develop through play', enable staff to provide a safe, caring and supportive environment in which children thoroughly enjoy themselves.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The roles and responsibilities of the staff are clearly defined. The proprietor works alongside the staff as playgroup manager and she gives exceptional support and guidance to the experienced staff teams. They work together on a daily basis to review the provision to ensure that children's welfare and learning is effectively supported. For instance, a questionnaire is issued each term to a random sample of parents and their responses enable the manager to assess how well the playgroup is running. She has excellent leadership qualities and is proactive to draw up an action plan, and address any perceived weakness, for example, to help children to stay healthy and to use the outside areas more effectively. The manager ensures that the already high standards are maintained and improved by appraising the staff and encouraging them to continue to train. Consequently, children are able to develop their personalities within a rich play environment and they make outstanding progress in all areas of their learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the playgroup was asked to continue with the staff training programme and to review the operational plan to ensure that policies contain relevant information.

The standard of care that children receive has significantly improved because all staff members have been successful in accessing short courses and some have completed appropriate early years qualifications to ensure that they meet the National Standards. Children are more effectively protected from the risk of harm because staff recruitment procedures have been developed and the complaints and child protection policies are regularly reviewed to incorporate revisions to legislation or practices.

The last early education inspection recommended the playgroup to ensure children's assessment records consistently identify the next steps in learning and to ensure planning shows differentiation. The playgroup also agreed to extend the educational programme for physical and mathematical development.

All staff record children's progress in their 'learning stories', assess their findings and clearly identify the next steps of learning. They talk informally before each session to highlight gaps in children's learning so that they can interact appropriately to help them to make progress. Furthermore, the focus sheet that is updated every six weeks shows how staff can best support individual children to enable them to develop their skills. Staff have introduced short term focus sheets that identify differentiation to help all children to make progress regardless of their individual stage of development. The curriculum for physical development has greatly improved. For instance, children make wider use of the outdoor area and staff talk to them about the changes that happen to their bodies when they are involved in energetic play. They help them to understand that they must protect their skin through topic work that ensures children are 'Sun Smart', therefore, they make rapid progress in their physical development. Children have superb opportunities to extend their number solving activities within planned activities and the staff are proactive to stretch children's mathematical thinking. They challenge two children to calculate 'If we need four pieces of pasta, how many do you each have to put in?'. As a result, children make outstanding progress towards the early learning goals for mathematical development.

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 outstanding. 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 MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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