

Friars Centre Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119478
Inspection date	06 December 2007
Inspector	Anne Daly
Setting Address	Friars Community Centre, Constable Way, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9SW
Telephone number	01702 292516
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Registered person	Friars Centre 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 satisfactory. 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?

Friary Centre Playgroup is managed by a voluntary committee. It opened in 1974 operating from two rooms within Friars Community Centre adjacent to Shoeburyness Library. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Session times are: Mondays to Fridays from 09:00 to 11:30 and Mondays and Thursdays from 12:45 to 15:15.

There are currently 34 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these, 12 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local community and surrounding areas. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and can also support children who have English as a second language.

The setting employs eight staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications and four are working towards additional early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority and from the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children remain healthy because they are beginning to show good levels of understanding for simple health and hygiene practices such as blowing their noses and using individual hand towels to follow hand washing with liquid soap after using the toilet. Some children understand why poor hygiene may affect their health such as by knowing that their hands may carry germs. However, children are not being fully protected from cross-infection after creative activities as they are washing their hands in communal bowls.

Children benefit from staff following well-planned cleaning routines to maintain a hygienic environment such as cleaning tables with antibacterial liquids before children eat their food. Staff implement their food hygiene and health and safety training during their daily practices, for example, wearing disposable gloves and aprons when preparing and serving food for children to prevent cross-infection.

Children are being protected through staff members holding first aid qualifications always being available to effectively handle their minor injuries. However, children are not being fully protected in an emergency as staff have not requested parents' or carers' written agreements for them to seek any necessary emergency medical advice. Appropriate accident records are being maintained to ensure that parents and carers are kept fully informed.

Children's individual dietary needs are being well met through staff requesting information from their parents and carers about any dietary requirements and allergies. Children are beginning to understand the types of food linked to a healthy lifestyle through the provision of varied snacks such as fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese and ham. They are learning about healthy eating through staff talking to them about why milk is good for their bones. They are able to freely access drinking water at all times to ensure that they do not become thirsty or dehydrated.

Children are developing co-ordination and control over their bodies when throwing and catching balls and when doing action songs. They practise and refine the skill of balancing on bars. They have a good sense of space to enable them to confidently negotiate pathways when riding pedal bikes or ride-on toys. They occasionally enjoy the fresh air by going on outings to the local park and community.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into safe and secure premises, where staff set out equipment prior to their arrival. Their work is sometimes displayed to create a welcoming environment for them and to promote their self-esteem. Appropriate child-sized tables and chairs enable them to play in comfort. They can freely select from a varied range of toys and equipment to successfully promote their individual developmental needs.

Children are safe, secure and well cared for in a self-contained section of a Community Centre. Staff ensure that children's security is being enhanced by alarming the fire exit door to alert them if anyone opens the door. Children are learning about fire safety and fire evacuation drills are being regularly practised to ensure that all children and staff know what to do to keep themselves safe in an emergency. Appropriate fire equipment such as smoke detectors and extinguishers are provided and regularly checked to ensure that they remain in good order to

protect children. Staff undertake written risk assessments to minimise the risk of accidents to children, daily checking that equipment and resources remain safe, to prevent children playing with any damaged or broken equipment.

Children are being safeguarded as staff have a sound understanding of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and are aware of the appropriate procedures to be followed if they have concerns for a child's safety or well-being. However, some staff members and committee members are not fully aware of what action to take to fully safeguard children if allegations made against a staff member.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have a very busy time at the setting. They arrive happy and eager to participate, playing well together and developing warm and trusting relationships with the caring staff. They amicably play and learn alongside their peers through the provision of a varied range of stimulating and worthwhile activities to help their developmental progress. Staff use the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure that all children are being provided with age and stage appropriate play opportunities.

Children's confidence and self-esteem are being promoted through daily routines. They receive plenty of praise and encouragement from staff to promote their positive attitudes to future learning. They demonstrate their natural curiosity as learners, by sharing their ideas, for example, when 'filling up' their ride-on toys with petrol from 'the pump'. Younger children show interest in what they are doing, for example, when cooking pretend food in the role play area or when 'fixing things' with pretend saws, planes and hammers when playing 'Bob the Builder'.

Children have opportunities to develop their language skills with each other through staff talking with them, giving them time to think through their ideas, which and develops their thinking and listening skills. All children enjoy singing rhymes, while some enjoy listening to stories to further promote their language development. They have good levels of concentration and use initiative and imagination when playing with a rail track and trains.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how young children learn through play. Key workers support children's progress towards the early learning goals by monitoring such progress through the use of the Stepping Stones. Staff use long and short term planning for the benefit of children. The short term planning includes the learning goals, but is not being consistently linked to the other areas of learning. Staff include outings to local facilities within their planning to further enhance children's knowledge such as monthly library visits to change their books and visiting the local park to feed the ducks. There are systems for recording children's progress and good, regular written observations to enable staff to identify children's next steps. The views of parents and carers are regularly sought regarding their children's educational needs to ensure that individual requirements are being met. Staff work together as a team to discuss what individual children can do, but their short term planning does not always direct staff, volunteers or students to ask key questions and to reinforce key words and does not include how activities may be adapted to suit children's differing levels of ability. Therefore, there is the potential of children not being effectively challenged to make progress in their learning.

Children have access to a varied range of chosen resources to support their learning and play. The majority understand the rules and boundaries, for example, knowing that they have to wait their turn until all sand has passed through an egg timer. Staff ask open-ended questions to encourage children's language development, such as 'what is happening to the ball of gloop?'. Staff have developed good relationships with children to encourage them to become involved in large group activities such as practising for Christmas concerts.

Children are able to become increasingly independent when dealing with their physical needs, for example, confidently helping themselves to water from the dispenser. Children persist for extended periods of time at their chosen activity such as when playing with construction toys. They are able to manage developmentally appropriate tasks when being 'the helper' during whole group times.

Children are developing their skills across all aspects of communication, language and literacy, including, beginning to recognise their names at snack time. They have many opportunities to mark-make with chalks, shaving foam, crayons, paint and in sand, but some opportunities are being missed through not all children being encouraged to 'name' their work. Children confidently handle books when looking at them with interest and listen and respond with enjoyment when staff read Christmas stories.

Children are developing a sound understanding of mathematical ideas and concepts. They enjoy singing number rhymes and are showing interest in number problems, for example, how many Christmas puddings in the bakers shop. They show curiosity when sorting shapes and colours, of which some children are able to name. They are able to solve problems across practical activities, for example, when completing puzzles. They show an interest in space when playing with trains by assessing whether the train will go under a bridge. They are beginning to understand weight by staff introducing them to language such as heavier or lighter, when weighing ingredients for baking.

Children are learning about the world they live in through staff planning a varied range of practical experiences such as a local vet visiting the setting during 'pet week' and children being encouraged to bandage a dog, while also listening to his heart beat. Children and staff talk about significant events in their lives, for example, on a staff member's birthday they all enthusiastically watched her opening her present before singing 'happy birthday' and giving her many birthday claps. Children are being encouraged to use everyday technology such as programmable toys and sometimes a laptop computer.

Children are able to move in a variety of ways such as jumping into hoops and crawling under a bridge. They are being encouraged to engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination and manipulative skills when playing musical instruments or threading beads.

Children are given good opportunities to develop their creativity and to explore a wide range of mediums and materials. They have plenty of time to explore their ideas, for example, creating Christmas trees with different coloured textures and shapes. Staff are introducing new language to children by talking about their Christmas trees at home. Children make models from a variety of different materials, for example, a train from many large cardboard boxes and dinosaurs from play dough.

Children are making sound progress towards their learning goals through staff using effective systems to observe, assess and record their achievements.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are being cared for by staff working with parents and carers to meet their individual needs and to ensure that they are fully included in the life of the setting. Children and their parents or carers can visit to familiarise themselves with staff and the environment before starting at the setting. Children are able to attend age-appropriate sessions, for example, the under threes attend afternoon sessions, where they are being encouraged to develop their confidence to try new things through staff's effective support and the provision of suitable and challenging experiences. During the majority of a session, children are able to make choices and decisions, for example, deciding with what they will play and when they will have their snacks. This freedom of choice is enabling children to complete their chosen activities.

Children are valued and respected as individuals by a qualified staff team to ensure that they develop high self-esteem. All children are welcomed, treated with respect and made to feel part of the setting. There is a system to support any child with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including, the appointed co-ordinator liaising with parents, seeking advice from professionals and attending any necessary training to maximise each child's developmental progress.

The majority of children are rapidly displaying a good understanding of what is considered to be acceptable behaviour and why restrictions are imposed on them. They know that they have to stay within a specific area when using the ride on toys to ensure the safety of all children and staff. Their desirable behaviour and achievements are frequently being acknowledged by staff through praise, stickers and certificates to further enhance children's good behaviour, self-esteem and confidence.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children can confidently speak and relate to staff, visitors and other children. They have many opportunities to learn about the wider society through staff ensuring the celebration of cultural festivals within planning. Topics and projects about other cultures provide opportunities for children to develop respect for each other. They are beginning to know about their own and other people's cultures, for example, by staff inviting parents to show children Indian cookery. They are learning about Chinese culture during their imaginary play at a 'Chinese restaurant'. They have many first hand experiences to learn about their wider environment, for example, through special outings to a farm, where they see a pig with her piglets, watch cows being milked and sheep being sheared.

Children's welfare and care are well promoted through staff working in partnership with parents and carers to meet their individual needs. Parents and carers receive information about the setting and also have relevant information displayed such as how to contact the regulator if unhappy with the outcome of any concerns expressed to staff or committee members.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. They receive clear information about the educational provision through a prospectus and newsletters. They work very closely with their children's key worker, who knows their children well, to ensure that they are all being treated as individuals. They receive a written report, to which they can respond, and have formal termly open days to agree their children's next steps in learning. This information contributes significantly to their children's well-being, development and progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are protected and their welfare promoted through appropriate systems ensuring that all adults working with them are suitable for the purpose. There are sound procedures to ensure that children do not have unsupervised access to persons such as students and volunteers who have not been vetted. The committee has a strong commitment to furthering their staff's professional development through training and regular appraisals.

Children are cared for in two different age groups during the seven sessions when the setting is in operation. Older children attend morning sessions, while the two afternoons are designated for children of under three years of age. The high staff to child ratio and the organisation of the room and resources successfully ensure both adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children benefit from being cared for by staff who are motivated to develop their skills by attending regular training and to keep up to date with current childcare issues and trends to meet individual children's needs.

Staff demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the policies and procedures. The majority of the required documentation is in place for the safe day-to-day management and to promote children's welfare and safety.

The leadership and management is good. The Committee offer very positive support to the manager and her staff team by ensuring that one of them is on the premises while the setting is in operation. The Manager and Committee are positive and are working hard to consistently make improvements for the benefit of children. Staff are working extremely well as a team and are all actively involved in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. However, the short term planning does not inform students and volunteers how they can help children to gain the most from an activity. The Manager regularly reviews working practices through staff appraisals and constant evaluations of activities for the benefit of children.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the registered provider was given two recommendations; to continue to work towards half the staff holding a relevant qualification, including the person in charge; and to make policies and procedures more readily available to parents (this particularly related to the complaints procedure).

Children are now benefiting from the majority of staff holding recognised child care and education qualifications to Level Two and above. The Committee now fully supports and encourages staff to further their professional development, with four staff currently working towards additional recognised qualifications for the benefit of children's care and learning. Policies and procedures are now freely available in the operational plan and some are displayed on the entrance windows to ensure that parents and carers are kept informed about the setting and to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between all parties for children's well-being, development and progress.

At the last nursery educational inspection, there were two key issues; to provide opportunities for children to experiment and use their creative skills in craft activities and to review the equipment and learning opportunities provided for ICT, including, incorporation into the planning.

Children now have access to creative activities every day, including, both adult and child-led activities. They have more materials to choose from when creating collage pictures and more opportunities to use a variety of construction type toys, while pencils and paper are available for all activities. Children now have more opportunities to develop their skills with everyday technology, for example, by sometimes using the laptop computer, the keyboard, the digital camera, the CD player and the photocopier under the supervision of staff.

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.

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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):

- develop the understanding of committee and staff members of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures if an allegation made against a staff member or volunteer
- request written permission from all parents or carers for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment
- ensure that hand washing procedures prevent cross-infection (this refers to the communal hand washing bowls).

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):

- develop short term planning as to how activities can be adapted to suit children of differing abilities to ensure that they maximize their learning.

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