

Parkhall Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221856
Inspection date	25 September 2007
Inspector	Veronica Sharpe

Setting Address	Somersham Primary School, Parkhall Road, Somersham, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 3EU
Telephone number	07980 179526
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Registered person	Parkhall 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?

Parkhall Playgroup opened in 1977 and is managed by a voluntary committee. It is located in a single storey unit within the grounds of the village primary school in Somersham, Cambridgeshire. There is an enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 18 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 31 children aged from two to under five years of age on roll, of these 24 receive funding for early years education. The playgroup supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The playgroup is open from 9:00 to 11:30 and 12:35 to 15:10 each weekday during term time. An optional lunch club is available each day. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The playgroup employs 10 staff who all work on a part-time basis. Six of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Four members of staff are working towards a qualification. The playgroup is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Sufficient staff have first aid training to ensure children receive appropriate treatment in the event of an accident. Records of accidents are kept and shared with parents and carers. Children who have special medical needs have their welfare taken into account as staff have attended additional training, for example, how to administer treatment to diabetic children. Rooms used by the children, including toilet areas are kept clean and hygienic so children play safely. Careful cleaning of food surfaces and tables before meals helps protect children from cross-infection.

Children have opportunities for outdoor exercise in a well-equipped play area although the structured routine means they do not always do this every session. When outside they run about in the fresh air and benefit from good quality equipment. A range of wheeled toys means children have fun learning to push, pull and pedal. Climbing frames and slides are sufficiently challenging to hold the interest of older and more able children. Activities, such as 'Sticky kids' give them a chance to be active indoors. Children's small muscle control is developed well as they use scissors to cut or make models from small and large construction toys.

Children eat mainly nutritious meals and snacks which are provided by their parents, who are advised to offer children fresh fruit and healthy drinks. Children sit together at meals times to socialise and chat about their ideas and interests. Although children are encouraged to drink at snack times, they do not have independent access to drinking water at other times, which affects their health. Staff collect information from parents and carers about allergies or special dietary needs so children eat suitable foods.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Recently resources have been reorganised so they are stored in new, low-level accessible shelving. Children are beginning to help themselves and develop their independence. Toys and equipment are checked to make sure they are sound and in good condition so children play safely. Resources are plentiful and ensure children enjoy varied play experiences.

Children benefit from an enclosed outdoor play area, which has a safety surface to protect them from harm. The premises is safe and secure with a bell for entry. Staff are mindful of their responsibilities to protect children and ensure visitors are supervised and logged. The room used by the children is bright and cheerful with pictures and posters that reflect the interests of the children who attend. The room is well organised so children have space to move around freely and safely.

Children's safety in a fire is ensured as they practise the fire drill frequently. Staff keep a log of the drills to make sure any hazards are identified. Some staff have attended child protection training and share that knowledge with other practitioners to safeguard children and promote their welfare. Children are safeguarded as staff know how to deal with any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the setting with confidence and greet staff with pleasure. They settle to their activities and look forward to their day. They benefit from warm and affectionate relationships with staff and happily seek out a lap to sit on or chatter about their home and family. Younger children receive good support from staff, they settle in according to their individual needs and have suitable activities. Although there are no facilities for sleeping, staff ensure children have periods of quiet, such as a story in the book corner so they can relax and rest. Children have good opportunities for independent learning as they choose accessible resources and materials. However, the structure of the sessions sometimes means they are not always able to follow their interests and extend their ideas.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff support children well in their activities and demonstrate a sound knowledge of how children learn. Staff work as a team to plan a good range of activities that cover all the areas of learning. Daily evidence of children's achievements is collected, although this information is not used promptly to inform the assessments or future planning to help staff decide on children's next steps.

Activities are accessible and interesting and children have some opportunities for free flow play so they can explore and learn independently. Staff question the children and enable them to think and extend their ideas, for example as they paint using conkers and leaves. Children enjoy their learning and progress well because staff effectively take advantage of spontaneous opportunities to extend their understanding, such as building a tall tower from large blocks and finding out what happens when it falls over. Some of the activities do not hold the interest of the older and more active children, which inhibits their ability to concentrate and sustain their play.

Children have a good sense of space; they manoeuvre wheeled toys with confidence and make room for each other at circle time. They enjoy a good range of practical activities, such as using play dough, cooking or picking fruit and vegetables in the garden. This enables them to develop their knowledge of the world around them and have fun. Children look forward to story time and use books appropriately. They handle them with care and know that stories have an ending. They point at pictures and delight in anticipating what happens next. They spontaneously choose books for pleasure and seek out a member of staff to share the story.

Children use mathematical language confidently in their play, they know that the tower of bricks is higher than them, and use a tape measure to find out how long the brick wall is. Children play imaginatively as they dress up as ballet dancers, or sell ice cream in the garden. They have independent access to musical instruments and listen to songs on a CD player. They have some opportunities to be creative, for example, they paint, draw and use play dough freely.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have opportunities for independent learning and they benefit from a good range of interesting resources. They learn about other members of their local community as they go for walks or visit a local residential home for retired people. They look at other cultures and lifestyles

from the wider world and play with resources that show positive images of diversity, such as books and puzzles. Staff take time to learn how to offer effective support for families from ethnic minority backgrounds, which means they offer an inclusive environment for all members of their local community. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from one-to-one support where necessary and show much affection for their key workers. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Generally children behave well and they show caring attitudes, such as spontaneously offering to share resources with others. Children are polite and show appropriate good manners, such as using please and thank you when required. Rules are beginning to be established to ensure children understand their boundaries, such as knowing that running indoors could be hazardous. Children help to tidy away and respond well when staff ask them to help with tasks, for example, sweeping spilled sand. Because some activities do not always provide older and more active children with sufficient challenge they occasionally become distracted.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents meet with staff and their children's key worker's to discuss progress, for example, before a child leaves to enter school. Parents and carers have some opportunities to offer comments about their children's overall progress and well-being but have few opportunities to contribute usefully to staff knowledge of what their children can do. This affects how staff decide on children's next steps as they do not gain insights into what children do at home. Relationships between staff and parents are friendly and positive, parents and carers enter the setting with confidence and greet staff by name. They say their child is settled and happy and looks forward to their time in the setting. A well-organised notice board ensures parents receive a range of information about the setting. The prospectus includes statements about the setting's policies and procedures, although some of these need updating and do not reflect current legislation.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Most policies and procedures are in place, but some of them have not yet been updated to reflect current legislation and therefore do not fully promote positive outcomes for children. Important documents, such as the prospectus for parents needs updating so parents have relevant information about the setting. The operational plan is still being developed with help from the local authority advisors. Children's individual records are kept appropriately and shared with parents.

Children's welfare is promoted by satisfactory systems to ensure staff are safe and suitable to work with them. Induction procedures mean staff know about the daily routines and health and safety requirements, which ensures children are kept safe. Appraisals are being introduced so staff skills are recognised and further training needs supported. Overall children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of the early years education is good. Although there are still areas for development, the committee and staff have worked hard to promote children's progress and development. Children progress well and have sufficient opportunities to develop their potential. Staff are encouraged to attend training to enhance their knowledge and understanding of how children learn with several working towards higher qualifications. Teamwork is good, with staff working independently and taking individual responsibility for the presentation of activities. This means children benefit from confident and enthusiastic staff who support them effectively in their activities.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the committee was asked to improve the systems for vetting staff and to keep Ofsted informed of relevant changes. There is now a robust procedure in place that ensures staff are safe and suitable to care for the children. Any changes have been notified to Ofsted according to the regulations. There is an informal procedure in place for staff induction, which ensures any new staff are informed about routines and procedures. The current committee are developing more formal systems which are still to be implemented.

The committee was also asked to review the organisation of routines and space to ensure children's individual needs are met, to ensure the premises is safe and to review documentation so it is in line with the National Standards. Since the last inspection new storage units have been installed to give children better opportunities to self-select and therefore follow their own interests. This has also created increased space so children move around easily and in safety. Children are able to make some choices, however, the routines of the day still sometimes limits children's abilities to sustain their play. The premises is secure in all areas so children play safely. Most documentation is up-to-date, however a few need further updating as there have been subsequent changes to legislation, these include the child protection procedure, the lost child policy and the setting prospectus. To promote children's welfare this continues as a recommendation at this inspection.

At the last nursery education inspection the committee was asked to continue to develop planning, develop the use of the assessments and improve the evaluation of the provision of nursery education. Staff and committee have worked hard to improve and develop the provision of nursery education. They have implemented a wide range of positive improvements, such as including staff in meetings and encouraging qualification training. An action plan is in place which will help to improve the outcomes for children and ensure the quality of teaching is maintained. This ensures children progress well in all the areas of learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

A concern was raised with Ofsted regarding staff-to-child ratios and procedures for vetting staff. An Ofsted inspector made an unannounced visit to the setting on 02/07/2007 to investigate the concerns. As a result of the investigation the provider was found to not be meeting National Standard 1: Suitability and 2: Organisation. The provider was asked to take action to ensure these Standards were met. A response to the actions has been received and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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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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 fresh drinking water
- improve children's opportunities to make independent decisions about their play, for example, enabling them to experience indoor-outdoor play according to their individual preferences
- continue to update the policies and procedures to ensure they comply with current legislation, this refers particularly to the child protection policy, what to do if a child is lost and the prospectus.

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):

- continue to develop the assessments of what children can do in order to plan effectively for their next steps
- improve parents' and carers' opportunities to share in children's learning and development
- continue to improve the range of activities to recognise children's diverse interests and abilities.

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