

Lawns Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY267880
Inspection date	12 July 2007
Inspector	Marilyn Peacock
Setting Address	Havering Road, Moray Way, Romford, Essex, RM1 4YD
Telephone number	01708 732 496
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Registered person	Mrs Linda Hayter and Mrs Jacqueline West
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Lawns Playgroup is a privately owned pre-school playgroup owned and managed by Linda Hayter and Jackie West. It opened in 2003 and operates from the premises of Havering Road Methodist Church situated in a residential area of Rise Park, Collier Row. A maximum of 30 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09:15 to 11:45 and Wednesday and Thursday 12:15 to 14:45. Children attend for a variety of sessions. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 62 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 32 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup serves the local area. The group has experience of supporting children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs 10 staff; seven, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications to National Vocational Level 2 or 3. One is currently attending training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are learning about following good hygiene procedures, they wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Children are able to access drinking water independently and wash their own hands at the sink after using the toilet with the aid of a step. Children are given fresh fruit and water or milk at snack time each day and older children can help themselves to a drink of water when they want one. However, children do not take an active part in the preparation and serving of snacks and drinks; this limits their ability to learn about healthy eating through practical experiences and meaningful discussion.

A high number of staff hold current first aid qualifications to enable them to deal with any accidents the children have effectively and most staff are trained to use an epi pen in an emergency. An appropriately stocked first aid box is readily available and clear procedures are in place should a child become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the pre-school; up to date records are in place to make sure that appropriate care is given.

Sufficient opportunities are provided for children to get fresh air and experience of being outdoors. Older children skilfully manoeuvre wheeled toys around, pedalling back and forth, avoiding obstacles and stopping safely. Children are developing confidence in using tools such as scissors, pencils, and glue spreaders.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are adequately protected because the staff understand their roles and responsibilities should they have concerns in regard to child protection. They keep up to date with training and information from the London Child Protection Committee guidelines.

Children are cared for in a secure environment where risks of accidental injury are minimised because staff are vigilant. Regular risk assessments are conducted and any risks identified minimised promptly. Children's safety is further safeguarded as secure systems are in place to ensure access to play areas is monitored. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised regularly. This helps children become familiar with the routine in the event of an emergency and promotes children's ongoing safety and well-being.

Children are cared for in a warm, welcoming environment; children are happy to attend and confident to leave their carers. A good range of toys and resources are available, suitable for the ages of children attending, and in sufficient quantities to ensure children can enjoy a wide range of activities, to promote all areas of development. However, children have insufficient opportunities to self select toys and materials that interest them. Activities are pre-selected before children arrive and are not changed frequently enough to sustain children's interest.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and confident in pre-school and know the routine on arrival. They excitedly collect their name cards, greet their peers and wave goodbye to their parents. Younger children benefit from mixing with older ones and are starting to form good relationships. They cuddle

into practitioners to share a story and seek reassurance from practitioners confidently when they need help or support.

Children that attend have few opportunities to experiment with paints, sand and water to develop early writing skills and explore a range of materials. Insufficient resources are set out by adults at the start of the session and children are not encouraged to select additional resources or initiate their own activities. Art and craft activities are highly influenced by adults who are over-concerned with the end result. In addition, resources to enable children to extend their ideas and tell their own stories are limited. This compromises children's imagination and creativity.

Staff plan a sufficient range of activities for children. Written plans are basic and demonstrate the range of experiences children have at pre-school. However, staff do not always fully explore what they want children to learn from an activity, consider how they present them or take into account the different ways young children learn and develop. This results in opportunities being missed for younger children to explore their environment make their own choices, which supports them in becoming curious learners.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are still developing their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and further training will enhance this further. They plan a varied curriculum to support children's learning across most aspects of the Foundation Stage. The plans incorporate the areas of learning and stepping-stones, although there are still weaknesses. Staff are beginning to review the effectiveness of individual activities through the use of evaluations and intend using this information to inform planning. However, plans do not establish clear aims and objectives for activities. The staff role in activities and how they will fully promote children's development is not identified on plans. Assessment records and observations are still in their infancy, staff are beginning to monitor children's progress and are enthusiastic about developing their understanding of assessments and using them to progress children's learning.

Children form good trusting relationships with adults and other children. They are developing awareness of their own needs, helping themselves to water and tissues, but more independence could be fostered by staff, for instance at snack time.

Staff mostly use effective strategies to manage children's behaviour. They use plenty of praise to encourage children's efforts and achievements and offer clear explanations when children display unacceptable behaviour. As a result, children respond to staff appropriately and generally behave well. However, the way children are grouped together and the deployment of staff at certain times during the day, does not always ensure that all children are fully involved and interested. This is reflected in their behaviour as they become disruptive and noisy when they lose interest or are bored due to lack of challenge.

Children have some opportunities to develop their mark making skills, being able to access materials such as pencils and pens in the office area, but at times this area becomes tired and worn looking as resources are not changed regularly enough. Children's art and craft activities are too often adult led and lack challenge, for instance; painting pre-cut clay figures. Children recognise their own names from the name cards used at registration but staff do not use this time to introduce children to sounds letters in their names make and miss opportunities to introduce children to the purpose of writing during regular pre-school routines.

Children are beginning to understand simple mathematical problems using number rhymes and familiar stories. They confidently build and construct using a variety of blocks and interlocking tubes. Some children use mathematical language spontaneously saying that one tower is 'longer than the other'. But too often children use resources to make guns and re-enact violent television shows. This is not always acted on promptly enough by staff and they fail to explain why this is unacceptable. Children have few opportunities for solving mathematical problems using natural materials like sand or water play. Children demonstrate an understanding of numbers, counting and calculation. However, this is not consistently supported in the daily routine to help children develop and practise this skill.

Children use plastic screw drivers and drills to mend and fix pre-school equipment. They use the tape recorder skilfully, turning on and off at the appropriate times during a game of musical statues. They explore and investigate the changes that happen when snow is brought into the warm play room.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children that attend share celebrations and festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. This helps children to develop their understanding of others and their beliefs and allows their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be fostered. However, this could be further supported by giving children more access to resources and displays that promote a positive view of the wider world.

All children are welcomed and are encouraged to play a full part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality. Children behave well and are polite. They respond well to reminders from staff about the rules of the pre-school. Children mostly play happily together interacting confidently with adults and each other. Generally, their behaviour is good and older children demonstrate an understanding of the rules for acceptable behaviour; they share, take turns and show concern for others. However, at times children become bored and restless. This is often due to the limited resources that are set out, poor organisation of daily routines or the length of time some group activities, such as sitting for snack, or whole group activities take.

There are sound systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Close liaison with parents and outside agencies ensures all children's needs are well planned for and met effectively.

Relationships with parents are friendly and supportive. Parents feel welcome and staff encourage them to become involved with their child's learning and development. An effective parent's rota is in place where parents spend a day supporting the children in the group and helping with daily routines. Staff ensure parents know how their children are progressing through regular chats when they pick their children up at the end of the session. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. There are no formal systems in place for parents of children that receive funded nursery education to share what they know about their child's development on entry to the nursery or to be involved in the ongoing assessment of their child in any way. Few opportunities are available for parents to be informed about their child's ongoing progress towards the early learning goals or to discuss their child's next steps for development, which affects their ability to fully contribute to their child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The well established staff team work well together and the pre-school is a happy place to spend time. Generally, staff are clear of their roles and responsibilities and are deployed well to ensure children's safety. Staff ratios are good and most staff hold suitable childcare qualifications. However, staff do not always use their time effectively to support children's learning, they lack sufficient confidence to adapt and change activities and stick rigidly to daily routines limiting children's choices and stifling their independence. Some children lose interest and concentration as younger children distract their attention, as a result children's learning is hindered.

All legally required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place and regularly reviewed. Although the staff in the pre-school are well supported by the managers, who work alongside them with the children to share knowledge and skills, there is no formal system in place to monitor the practices. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The staff have attended some training regarding the Foundation Stage, enabling them to begin to develop an appropriate curriculum programme. Staff appraisals identify staff development and enable management to identify appropriate training programmes and offer support where needed. Staff meetings, training and informal discussions contribute to the group, beginning to evaluate and monitor the provision. These systems are not rigorous enough, consequently they do not fully identify the strengths and weaknesses of the setting, which results in missed opportunities in children's learning. Staff are eager and enthusiastic to make improvements, they welcome support and advice and readily introduce ideas they have gained through training.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was required to ensure that activities are fully resourced and organised to provide sufficient challenge for older and more able children and greater opportunity for self selection. This remains an issue to be addressed and a recommendation has been made following this inspection.

Since the last inspection the setting has reviewed the complaints procedure and included a section on how to contact the regulator Ofsted. This change ensures that parents can contact the regulator if any breach in the National Standards is not satisfactorily addressed by the provider.

Also at the last inspection the providers were required to ensure that the accident book contained clear details of the nature of any injury sustained. This has now been completed ensuring children receive appropriate care in an emergency.

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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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):

- Provide children with more opportunities to select from a wider range of activities, materials and resources, (including those which reflect different cultures) to make decisions about what they do and take an active part in everyday tasks and routines so that they can pursue their own interests and become more independent.
- Extend staff's knowledge and understanding of how younger children learn and develop to enable them to improve activities and experiences for them.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Further develop staff understanding of the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage to develop staff understanding of their role so that they can support children's individual learning needs effectively.
- Develop the system of planning so that all aspects of the areas of learning are included, activities build on what children know and can do, and offer appropriate and meaningful challenges to all children
- Develop the system used for gathering information about children's existing knowledge and skills from parents when new children enter the nursery, linking achievements to the appropriate framework for children's age, so that the details can be used to effectively identify progress and help staff to plan activities that build on what children already know and can do. (This also applies to care)

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