

Sandbach Heath (St John's) Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305284
Inspection date	13 June 2007
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	School Lane, Sandbach Heath, Sandbach, CW11 2LS
Telephone number	01270 761505
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Registered person	Sandbach Heath (St John's) 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 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?

Sandbach Heath (St John's) Playgroup is managed by a committee who have appointed a qualified and experienced manager to run the pre-school. It opened in 1987 and operates from a small purpose-built hall adjoining St. John's School in Sandbach. A maximum of 15 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open term time only, Monday to Friday, from 09.00 to 11.45. There are currently additional sessions on Monday and Wednesday from 13.00 to 15.30 and a 'talk time' session on Tuesdays from 13.15 to 15.15. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area.

There are currently 34 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 26 receive funding for early education. Children mostly come from the local catchment area where they live. The setting currently supports children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay very healthy because practitioners employ a thorough knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene guidelines and procedures. They keep toilet areas very clean and equipped and use disposable gloves and aprons for food preparation and nappy changing. Staff talk to children about hygiene and health throughout the routines and activities of the day, so that children know, for example, why sun lotion is needed when the sun is hot. Three and four-year-olds are competent to manage their own toilet and hand washing arrangements with minimal support and also have a good understanding about what to wear according to the weather and temperature. Likewise they put on their own aprons for painting and messy play.

All staff are trained in first aid. They follow clear written cleaning, food preparation and sickness procedures. They also keep parents well informed about childhood illnesses and diseases. Medication is only administered with written instructions and consent from parents and the record is signed by parents to acknowledge every entry. Accidents are properly recorded using an endorsed record book for public premises. However, parent signatures of acknowledgement are not obtained every time because the book does not have a place where this detail is prompted. This means that it is possible to omit to inform a parent that their child has suffered an accident, although this is not known to have occurred.

Children enjoy good levels of physical activity indoors if the weather is poor, taking part in music and movement sessions or climbing and balancing activities. All activities take place outside when the weather is fine, so that children have as much fresh air and space as possible. The large trees and position of the playground provide shade when the summer sun is hot so that children enjoy extended time to play on ride-on toys and use the water and sand trays. They also climb, slide and move under and over the castle climbing frame and sit at the activity table to participate in a craft activity to practise their small hand movements, using scissors, tape and pencils. These activities develop children's large and small movements and support their physical health.

Children are well nourished and enjoy a healthy diet through sugar-free snacks, such as crackers, fruit and bread sticks. Water or milk is offered to drink and children are involved in pouring their own drinks and serving their own banana, apple and orange pieces. Staff do not all sit with children but they encourage good manners and discussion during the meal and children know that this is a quiet, social time when they are sensible. Sometimes they listen to and discuss music during this time. In addition, fresh drinking water is readily available from a small water dispenser with cups beside it, where children can easily reach it.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, bright, secure and safe environment with a stimulating atmosphere. The activity room is well set out to use the available space, with the cloakroom entrance area also used as a messy area and parent information post. Children have individual coat pegs and 'name apples' to hang up as they arrive and most resources are boxed, labelled and accessible around the room, so that children can find what they want to do with ease. Displays show children's work and remind them of stories and discoveries they have made and there are pictures portraying positive images of other cultures. These features strengthen

children's identity and sense of belonging here. However, there are few photographs of children on display for them to see themselves.

Children use an impressive range of innovative and stimulating resources which contribute significantly to children's enjoyment and achievement and are mostly set out for children to access easily. For example, children enjoy a good range of investigative toys to use in water and sand, construction materials, table top games, craft materials, books, domestic role play equipment, information technology and small world resources, with varied ride-on, climbing and push-along equipment for physical play. Children are learning about how to keep themselves safe as they play because staff remind them not to run indoors, to line up sensibly and watch the step as they move indoors or outdoors. They also sit properly on chairs and put them back under the tables as they leave. They visit the toilet and wash hands in small numbers to promote safety and minimise time wasting.

There is good security to the only public entrance door and staff man it vigilantly whenever children are arriving and departing to minimise the possibility of a child being lost or taken by the wrong adult. Careful arrangements are made to ensure that staff know exactly who is collecting a child if this is not a parent or designated carer. Children's safety is also supported through good documentation. For example, regular fire drills are held and records kept of these. Electrical appliances, wiring and fire equipment are checked and documentation about what to do in the event of any emergency is posted. There is a comprehensive risk assessment and daily checks contribute to safety and resolution of identified hazards. However, although registers are usually taken promptly, on the afternoon of the inspection the register was not taken until the session was well underway. This compromises children's safety in the event of an emergency because it is not logged exactly who is on the premises.

Children are protected from abuse because all staff have sufficient understanding of their role in child protection. Staff know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. Up to date reference information about child protection and the Local Safeguarding Children Board is available. The child protection policy is comprehensive and printed in the parent brochure so that all the required information about what to do is readily available to parents and staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are developing high levels of confidence and self-esteem because purposeful staff talk and listen to them constantly and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Most separate easily from their carers, going straight to play or circle time. Circle times are led exceedingly well, successfully using techniques which help children to listen and take turns to speak. This means that children behave well, are enthusiastic to join in and are responding, learning and communicating. Children enjoy a wealth of songs, role plays, constructions, interactive stories and dramas, creative crafts and media to explore. For example, they compose a song and sing each day about today's weather. Later they invent a story about the dragon living in their play castle or investigate in the water, sand or play dough. They are all captivated by the story used interactively to help them learn about things that start with the letter 's'. They enjoy coming to the front of the group to count the number of sweets on the pretend cookie and to recognise the number on the back of the cookie. Children discuss and review their activities and talk about their home lives, the weather outside and significant events. This all helps to enhance their social skills and consolidate their learning.

Children are happy, settled, and interested in what they are doing because staff are committed, enthusiastic and work well together as a team. Key workers know all children very well and use individual, small and large group activity to provide inspiring learning experiences. For example, small groups make different mini beasts with the coloured play dough while a staff member works one-to-one with children at the end of the table to make paper snails, concentrating upon their scissor, pencil and manipulative skills as they roll up the snail's shell and attach it with a staple and tape. As they play here, children are also learning and remembering what they know about mini beasts. Staff create a busy, purposeful atmosphere where, for example, every child busily helps to pack away and complete the task before the tidying-up music ends.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are highly committed to providing a caring, welcoming atmosphere, a varied programme of activities covering all the areas of learning and an approach which fosters caring relationships, self-confidence and good social behaviour. Children enjoy a fine range of activities because role play, reading, writing, creative, construction, small world, physical and experimental activities are professionally delivered by the experienced staff. These are broadly based on themes, but learning is sensitively adapted to utilise ideas that children come with or events that occur. For example, children stop what they are doing to see the road sweeper come round and discuss what it does. They paint pictures of the gladioli which a child has brought from home. Likewise, activities are adapted for forthcoming community activities, so that children are confident and well prepared to sing their mini beast action song at a forthcoming school open day. As a result, children's confidence and social skills are well developed, as is their sense of place and community.

Children behave well and are making good progress in all areas of learning. This is because staff are very successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. Staff know each child well and encourage friendships between them, so that they can take turns and consider one another. Each child feels special from the moment they are greeted in the morning to the time when they share their name and take their part in the goodbye song. Children also enjoy good opportunities for physical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are confident with hand tools, such as brushes, pencils, pens and scissors and this is promoting their early writing skills. Communication skills and knowledge of number, shape, space and measure are also good because staff challenge and question children as they play and use resources, such as water, sand, puzzles and variously-sized threading frogs. Music, rhymes and songs are used to good effect throughout sessions as devices to help children to listen, to know what is happening next and to join in as a group. However, there is currently an under use of the computer because staff have found it difficult to manage the large numbers wishing to use it.

The teaching highly motivates children and inspires their play, especially in circle and story times. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Observation notes are taken following small group games and activities and used as evidence for children's progress in the six areas of learning. Their developmental profiles are completed at the end of the year using evidence gathered from the record book, evaluation notes, children's work and some photos. Furthermore, evidence examples are now being inserted beside the stepping stone in the profile itself to show how it is known that a child can do a particular thing. Staff are able to identify and provide for all children to take the next steps in their learning, although the written process for this is not clear. For example, staff have identified that some children need more opportunities to practise their scissor skills, while some need more opportunities to work on their language for communication.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children join in very well, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting because the warm environment and friendly, purposeful staff help children feel at home from the outset. Parents are welcomed into the setting at the beginning of sessions and are able to stay and assist. Children each have their own diary books which the supervisor writes in regularly so that adults can see how each individual child is doing. Children are also helped to consider and value diversity because there are good books, dressing-up costumes, dolls, play figures, puzzles, posters and games which show positive images of culture and disability. There are also some activities undertaken to bring cultural aspects, such as Maasai tribes and Indian dancing, alive for children. In addition, the pre-school and the local community participate in various sponsored community activities, such as sports days and singing, and regularly welcome travelling families into the group. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's individual needs are met well because the small staff group use their time constructively to encourage children with disabilities, concentration, behaviour, language or other particular needs to join in with group activities. Staff provide one-to-one assistance where necessary and model appropriate play skills, using short and simple language. They make it easier for children to conform by praising wanted cooperation and promptly dealing with disruption. They are good role models for polite manners, such as 'please' and 'thank you'. If children are distracting others, they are asked to stop and, if necessary, to move and sit by a staff member. Proper use of the incident record also supports the successful management of behaviour within the setting.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive consistency of care between home and nursery because staff communicate well with parents and obtain details of children's social and intellectual skills through a detailed pre-attendance questionnaire. Parents receive an informative prospectus about the pre-school, including details of the Foundation Stage and useful articles about how to help their child to settle into pre-school and become increasingly independent. Thereafter, parents receive information verbally when they request it and receive their child's developmental records and reports at the end of year. They do not regularly see their child's diary book or evidence of their child's progress and do not receive clear advice about how to continue their child's learning at home. Nevertheless, parents know how to contact Ofsted and their levels of satisfaction are high. Parents seen on the day of inspection say that they are very happy with the end of year reports, child's progress, the approachability of staff and the things their child brings home from pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Recruitment and vetting procedures work satisfactorily to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by suitable staff, backed up by a suitable committee. Most staff are mature and qualified in childcare which ensures an experienced, consistent and skilled team to work with children. The serial numbers of Criminal Record Bureau checks are retained and all staff receive a comprehensive pack of enrolment information about their job roles, responsibilities and rights. However, staff records are not kept in separate staff files and annual appraisals and training plans are not organised on time. Nevertheless, contact information for staff is kept accessible to use in case of an emergency.

Staff deployment contributes satisfactorily to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff ratios are high and staff know what their roles are throughout each session, but adapt and cover for one another when children need one-to-one time to separate from their parent or for personal care needs. The manager is directive at times, but also plays a full part in daily routine duties and mostly ensures that all staff spend as much time as possible in direct contact with children.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager provides good support to all staff and leads very clearly, although the role of the committee is very much behind the scenes. The staff group is well informed, prepared, motivated and up to date because they have opportunities to attend training. For example, staff who have an interest in speech development and inclusion are running a specific session to promote this at present. However, the named person responsible for most specialisms in child protection, behaviour and health and safety remains the manager, supported by her staff. The manager acts as a strong role model and has built a committed staff team who have a good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage. However, the appraisal and evaluation systems in place are not always prioritised above day-to-day demands to identify where strengths and areas for improvement lie.

Policies and procedures work adequately in practice to promote good outcomes for children. Some documents are organised to provide evidence for a quality assurance scheme, while others are in record books, files and operational plans. This appears to make it difficult to know where everything is, although the manager is able to locate all required documents. Child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and the medicine and incident recording systems work well. In addition, the policies are clear and appropriate, detailing the principles and practices of the setting. However, previous injuries that children have upon arrival at the setting and concerns are not always recorded. In addition, there is no complaints recording to view because there have been no complaints to date and the system for this has not yet been started. These omissions compromise the safeguarding of children and partnership with parents if significant issues are not discussed and noted. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made at the inspection of care in 2004 and two points for consideration made at the inspection of nursery education, in 2005.

The provider was asked to ensure that committee members are checked, to review the planning of directed activities and to amend the child protection statement to cover allegations against members of staff. These recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed so that relevant committee members are checked, the child protection policy is updated to include the necessary information, and the directed activities are adapted to ensure that they are suitable for all children participating. However, the recorded Criminal Record Bureau disclosure details do not contain dates to assist the manager and committee in seeing how old the disclosure notices are. In addition, the absence of the name of the person responsible for child protection procedures means that the child protection policy is still incomplete.

The provider was asked to devise a programme for the development of children's climbing skills. This has been satisfactorily addressed through the provision of a climbing castle and two 'A' frames, all of which can be used indoors or outdoors, where there is a soft surface. Children are enjoying using these resources and are increasing in confidence in their climbing skills. The

provision was also asked to provide parents with more regular details about children's progress through the Foundation Stage. Parents are still only seeing written information about their child's progress at the end of the year. The diary notes, observations and workbooks are not regularly shown to them.

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):

- ensure that parents sign the accident record to acknowledge each entry
- ensure that children are registered in and out of the setting at every session in case of emergency
- ensure that any previous injuries and concerns are recorded
- establish a complaint record ready for use, from which appropriate information may be shared with parents upon request.

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 information technology to enhance children's understanding of modern media and how it works
- ensure that parents are regularly able to see their child's profile record, diary book and evidence notes and are given ways of being meaningfully involved in their child's learning.

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