

Spring Lodge Playgroup & Out of School Clubs

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	402132
Inspection date	22 October 2007
Inspector	Julie Ann Birkett
Setting Address	Spring Lodge, Powers Hall End, Witham, Essex, CM8 2HE
Telephone number	01376 511042
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Registered person	Spring Lodge Community Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

Spring Lodge Pre-School and Out of School scheme is run by Witham Community Association. It opened in 1990 and operates from one room within Spring Lodge Community Centre in Witham. A maximum of 26 children may attend the scheme at any one time. The pre-school is open from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:15 to 14:45 during term times. The out of school clubs are open from 15:30 until 18:00 during term time and from 08:45 until 17:15 during school holidays.

There are currently 48 children aged from two to under eight years on roll. Of these 17 receive funding for early education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The scheme employs eight staff. Six of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is promoted well because staff follow appropriate hygiene procedures to prevent the risk of infection. For example, anti-bacterial spray is used to clean the snack table and staff wear disposable gloves when preparing snack and changing nappies. Children's health and dietary needs are met because staff are aware of children's allergies and medical conditions. Permission to administer any prescribed medication is obtained from parents and carers and a record is kept to ensure this is monitored effectively and the children's well-being is promoted. There are several members of staff who have current first aid training to ensure minor accidents are dealt with appropriately. However, there are some items in the first aid box which are out of date and this compromises the children's health.

The pre-school children learn about their own self-care and hygiene as they hang up their coats on pegs and wash their hands after using the toilets. The pre-school children also learn about caring for their environment and keeping it clean as they help to wash the tables for snack. The school-aged children are made aware that their waste food should not go onto the floor but into the bin.

All children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the sessions to ensure they remain hydrated. The pre-school children enjoy a range of healthy snacks including fresh fruit each day. Even the very youngest children talk about where their food comes from, such as apples growing on trees. They also know that fruit has to be washed before they eat it. The staff encourage children to think about where milk comes from and suggests that it also comes from goats as well as cows. The older pre-school children who attend the afternoon sessions bring a packed lunch and are encouraged to manage this themselves in readiness for 'big' school. The school-aged children bring a packed lunch if staying all day and are offered varied morning and afternoon snacks to ensure they are well-nourished throughout the day.

Currently the outdoor area is being landscaped as part of the centre's refurbishment so children cannot go outside to play. However, the play room provides sufficient space for children to enjoy physical activity inside. The pre-school children enjoy hopping around like kangaroos and dancing along to music and movement tapes using all parts of their bodies. They notice the effects exercise has on their bodies as they become hot. The school-aged children also enjoy dancing along to music tapes as part of their daily exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are newly refurbished and provide a light and attractive environment for the children. All children and parents and carers are given an individual welcome by the friendly staff. Most children come in eagerly and settle quickly to their play and learning. The few less confident children are given lots of support to help them separate from their parents and carers happily. The school-aged children are very 'at home' in their environment and with the staff and their peers.

Staff are currently developing the range of displays for children, parents and carers to further enhance the welcoming environment and provide information for parents and carers through notice boards.

Children are able to play freely in a safe environment because staff carry out daily checks on the premises and equipment. The premises are secure so that children cannot leave them unsupervised and unauthorised persons do not have access to the children. Documentation such as a visitors book, consent for children to be collected and emergency contact numbers also promote the children's safety.

The pre-school children learn about keeping themselves safe during daily routines and gentle reminders from staff. For example, they learn not to run inside as they may bump into each other and hurt themselves. They also work on projects to raise their awareness of safety when out of the setting such as fire and road safety.

There is a wide range of toys and equipment to provide the children with a range of activities to promote their development. Due to the recent move into a new room within the premises much of the equipment is still in storage until the setting's own storage cupboards have been organised.

There is a comprehensive child protection policy in place and staff demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibility to safeguard the children in their care. Several members of staff have attended child protection awareness training and there are appropriate written systems in place such as recording non-accidental injuries. All these measures protect children from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-school children are secure and settled in the environment and are developing good relationships with the staff. The more established school-aged children are very relaxed in the setting and with the staff. This enables the children to be confident in their play and learning and encourages them to take an active part in the activities and experiences on offer.

The children show an interest in what they do overall. The youngest children are provided with activities and experiences planned by staff using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. The pre-school children are busy throughout the sessions and particularly enjoy imaginative play such as games in the home area and with small world equipment. The school-aged children are happy to devise their own games and play from the range of equipment available to them. For example, they build dens from large floor squares and make signs to stick on the sides making it clear to all who the club belongs to. All children are provided with time for free play to enable them to develop their confidence, decision making and social skills. The children also have opportunities to take part in adult supported activities such as craft work and organised games.

The children access some equipment for themselves from the low-level storage which enables them to use their initiative and develop their own games and ideas. For example, the school-aged children make models from construction toys to support their imaginative games. However, the range of equipment currently readily accessible to all children is limited and impacts on the choices they have and the decision they make.

Over a period of time all children are provided with a range of experiences to promote their learning and to enable them to develop new skills and knowledge. For example, the school-aged children learn how to join limbs of a paper skeleton together with split pins.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals in relation to their starting points. Staff have an adequate understanding of the Foundation Stage and how the children learn through their play. The staff make regular observations of the children which they use to update the children's assessment records and to help them understand what the children can already do. They make some written comments on what children need to do next to help them support the children's further progress. Written curriculum planning systems are in place and cover the six areas of learning. However, most children are working within their limits. This is because overall the learning environment is not well-planned to ensure children are provided with varied and stimulating activities which challenge and motivate them to continue to make progress in all six areas of their learning both indoors and out. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but the lack of detail in the written plans does not provide staff with clear direction to what children are intended to achieve from the planned activities.

Children are able to maintain interest in activities which motivate them. For example, they devise detailed imaginative role play games in the home corner and enjoy putting on their own dressing up clothes. The children are able to concentrate on tasks such as painting or making a construction model.

Children are learning the importance of listening as they attentively take part in group activities such as register, story and singing time. The children are beginning to understand that the written word has meaning as they share books with staff and see some written words in the environment. At the writing table children develop their emergent writing skills as they draw and learn how to form letters.

Children are given opportunities to practise their number skills as they count each other. The children are beginning to use their number knowledge to solve number problems such as addition and subtraction. For example, they sing number rhymes and work out how many more bricks they need to finish the roadway they are making. Children begin to learn about measurement as they compare big and small balls of playdough and make tall and short towers with construction toys.

Children design and build with a good range of construction materials. The children concentrate well as they carefully build towers and roadways. Children have access to simple technology toys to develop their understanding of programmable equipment. The children learn about growing and changes as they work on a project about themselves; drawing around parts of their bodies and discussing the changes in their bodies since they were babies. The children learn about the passage of time as they sing the 'days of the week' song and talk about the seasons and the changing weather.

Children use their imaginations freely as they pretend to be 'mummies and daddies', taking their babies for walks in the buggy. The children also show their imaginations as they take part in creative activities such as painting, drawing and collage. The children's imaginative ideas and literacy skills are encouraged as they are helped to devise and write their first poems to enter into a young writer's competition.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-school children are encouraged to join in small group discussion to share their news and ideas to help them feel part of the group. The school-aged children talk confidently about how they enjoy coming to the club rather than 'just being at home watching telly'.

The pre-school children learn to share and take turns and negotiate with each other through language rather than actions. Staff help the children learn about boundaries of acceptable behaviour through consistent strategies. The school-aged children have good social skills and play well together with little intervention from adults. All children are polite and helpful. The younger children are developing strong relationships with the staff and their peers. The school-aged children are already very confident in the company of their friends and staff. For example, during a 'freaky face' statues games the children and staff share silly jokes.

All children are given lots of praise and encouragement for the things they do. The pre-school children enjoy receiving 'Geoffrey Bear' awards for good and helpful behaviour. For example, helping to tidy up or being kind to their friends. The older children contribute to house rules about kindness which helps them put into words what they consider to be kind behaviour. All these measures foster the children's feeling of self-esteem and confidence and encourages them to keep on being considerate and to respect others.

The youngest children are encouraged to vocalise their own needs as staff ask them questions such as 'would you like me to help you with that?' As the children develop they become increasingly confident in asking for help. They also begin to become aware of the needs of their friends and staff and show care and concern for them.

There is appropriate support in place for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A nominated member of staff co-ordinates the sharing of information between staff, parents and carers and outside agencies to ensure children's individual needs are met.

The pre-school children become aware of their local community as they go for walks to local amenities such as open spaces and the library. Visitors also come into the setting to link with topics the children are working on. For example, the local police visit the children in their cars during a 'people who help us' topic. The pre-school children are learning some sign language while the older children read and copy the display on the wall. However, there are very limited resources available on a daily basis to foster the children's awareness of diversity and to foster their understanding of our similarities and differences. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents and carers are provided with good information about the pre-school and how the 'Birth to three matters' and Foundation Stage frameworks are used to support children's development. The pre-school prospectus outlines how the setting is organised and run and provides useful information for parents and carers. The setting actively seeks out parents and carers opinions on the services they provide through questionnaires and a comments book for both the pre-school and out of school schemes.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded education is satisfactory. Parents and carers receive good information about the Foundation Stage. There is an open-door policy with regard to parents and carers access to their children's development records. The staff talk to parents and carers regularly about their children's development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The children are protected because there are appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures in place. The required level of qualified staff is met and staff attend additional training courses and workshops when possible.

The small group sizes and the high level of staff promotes the children's good health, safety, enjoyment and their ability to take an active part in the setting. For example, there are sufficient staff to supervise some children in wrapping up their friends in toilet paper so they look like 'mummies' without compromising the care of other children who do not want to join in.

There is an operational plan which sets out how the setting is run and includes a range of policies and procedures. This is generally well-written and presented but requires some updating in line with changes in child care and the setting. Overall children's needs are met.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. There have been considerable changes to the management team and committee since the last inspection and they are beginning to develop effective working relationships. The pre-school staff benefit from the support and guidance of an on site committee member who has considerable previous child care experience. The manager is developing her team of staff and monitors their practice daily by working alongside them. The management team are working towards their own action plan for improvements in the quality and care and education for all children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the setting have improved children's development and learning by providing more opportunities to use the outdoor area. This has recently been stopped due to reasons previously outlined in this report. However, the new garden area has the potential to provide children with immediate access to a safe and secure outdoor area for daily use. Children also experience some outdoor sensations as they play with natural materials inside.

The setting were also asked to obtain parent's written permission to seek emergency medical treatment. The setting misunderstood what was required of them to meet this recommendation and have devised new medicine and long standing treatment forms. What was required of the setting was to obtain written parental consent to seek medical advice or treatment in an emergency situation such as a visit to the hospital being required following an accident. Therefore this remains a recommendation at this inspection.

However, with regard to nursery education there has been little improvement in the short term curriculum planning since the last inspection. The setting have tried different approaches to develop their planning systems but this remains an area for improvement to ensure children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum both indoors and out to ensure they make further progress across all areas of their 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 action in order to meet the National Standards.

In April 2007 Ofsted received concerns regarding lack of staff interaction with children, failure to comfort a distressed child and supervision. The provider was asked to investigate these

concerns in line with National Standards 3: Care, Learning and Play, 6: Safety and 7: Health. The provider submitted a written investigation report and Ofsted was satisfied that the provider had addressed the concerns raised in the complaint satisfactorily. However it was identified that the provider has not informed Ofsted of changes to committee members therefore two actions under National Standard 1: Suitable person and 14: Documentation were set. Firstly to ensure that all people providing day care have submitted to checks prescribed in regulation as determined by Ofsted. This specifically refers to the completion of DC2 and CRB checks for new committee members. Secondly to ensure that Ofsted are notified of changes in the registered person. A response to the actions was expected by 20 July 2007. A suitable response to these actions was received at this inspection. 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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- obtain parental consent to seek any emergency medical advice or treatment and ensure the first aid box is maintained
- improve the environment further by making it more welcoming to children and parents and carers
- improve organisation of resources so that children can more easily access a wider range of resources to enable them to make choices and use their initiative
- provide further resources which reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability
- update the operational plan to reflect changes in policies and procedures.

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):

- improve the curriculum planning to ensure all children are provided with a broad and balanced range of appropriately challenging activities and experiences across all six areas of their learning and to show how their learning will be supported and extended by staff.

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