

Heather Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113519
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Inspector	Teresa Elkington
Setting Address	North Heath Lane School, Erica Way, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 5XL
Telephone number	01403 262 320
E-mail	
Registered person	The Trustees of Heather 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?

Heather Playgroup opened in 1978. It operates from a single-storey building, within the grounds of North Heath County Primary School, in a residential area of Horsham, West Sussex. Children have access to a large room, toilets and an enclosed outdoor area. Staff have access to a kitchen. The playgroup serves the local area.

There are currently 21 children, aged from three to four years, on roll, of these 17 children are in receipt of nursery funding. The group is experienced in supporting children with special educational needs. There are currently no funded children present, for whom English is an additional language.

The playgroup opens Monday to Friday, during school term times. Sessions last from 09:00 to 12:00. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

A team of six staff work with the children, three of these have an early years qualification. All staff members have attended first aid and child protection training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children relish the frequent opportunities to play outside. Children use the wide variety of resources, which helps them to promote and develop their physical skills. They learn to balance, catch, throw and have opportunities to ride and climb. Children move with confidence both inside and outside, showing that they have a good perception of spatial awareness. They have frequent opportunities to develop their fine manipulative skills. For example, they thread beads, use scissors with skill and enjoy using a variety of small world toys.

Children's good health is promoted in a premises that are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness. Effective systems are well implemented to reduce the risk of infection and prevent the transmission of communicable diseases. For example, individual hand towels are provided which children spontaneously place in the laundry basket after use and through the use of the clear and concise sickness policy which is adopted by the setting. Children learn about the importance of keeping their bodies healthy through the daily routines which they know well. For example, as they place used tissues in the bin and as they wash their hands in preparation for snack time and after toilet use. Staff are able to act in the best interests of the children should they require medical attention, as all staff are first aid trained and clear policies and procedures ensure that all emergencies are dealt with effectively.

Staff provide varied, healthy and nutritious snacks for the children. The children enjoy choosing from the selection of fruit that the staff have prepared for them. Worthwhile games promote children's awareness of the importance of healthy eating; for example, as they discuss different food types and decide if they are healthy for them to eat. Children are encouraged to ask for drinks if they need one, however there are no systems in place to allow children to independently access drinks when they are thirsty. Staff protect the welfare of children with special dietary needs and work closely with parent to ensure they fully understand and accommodate individual requirements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a warm and welcoming physical environment. They arrive happily and settle well, playing in a friendly environment, which is well organised to allow them to move around and play safely. Displays of children's work adorn the walls which provides children with a sense of belonging. Children have access to a good range of toys and equipment which are set up for them daily by staff. However, children have limited opportunity to make independent choices as they are unable to select resources of their own choosing. All resources are of good quality and well maintained to ensure that children can play and learn safely.

Staff employ positive practices to help keep children safe. Ongoing risk assessments of the premises and outside areas ensures that all potential hazards are identified and reduced. There are effective procedures in place for the safe arrival and collection of children. Staff wait ready to greet the children and ensure that they only leave with adults who have been made known to them. Fire drills are practised at regular intervals so that children are aware of how to proceed in the event of the premises needing to be evacuated. Gentle reminders from staff help children to develop a good awareness of the importance of keeping themselves and other safe. For

example, staff discuss with children the importance of playing with the sand carefully so that it does not get into their eyes or that of others.

Staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures. They know what action to take if they have concerns about a child in their care, which ensures the welfare of the children is protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children feel very secure in the calm, well-organised and welcoming atmosphere. They settle well into their regular routines of the day, which helps build their self-confidence. Daily routines are organised to allow opportunities for free-flow, where children can move freely around the setting, deciding what they want to play with and select from the resources available to them. However, there are limited opportunities to allow children to select resources of their own choosing. Children show great interest in all activities and spend sustained periods of time concentrating on their self-chosen activity. For example, playing alongside their peers and during independent play. They enjoy choosing hands on activities, such as crafts and role play which captures their interest and provides many opportunities to explore and experiment.

Staff provide good levels of support for all children, they are always alert to what they are doing, ready to guide and encourage when necessary, helping to build children's growing confidence and self esteem and to ensure that they get the most from their play experiences. For example, children seek out adult help if they need it and staff are attentive to children settling into their new routine.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching is good. All practitioners have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children's progress is carefully monitored and recorded well, through the use of regular observations and pictorial evidence which enable staff to plan the next stage in learning and development. Staff understand the needs of individual children and provide a range of purposeful activities and learning experiences, through a well planned curriculum. They create a well presented and stimulating environment, in which children can explore and investigate. The methods of teaching provide challenge and staff have realistic expectations and support children well, to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Throughout the day children are focused and engaged in their play. They show a willingness to co-operate with one another and readily share and take turns which promotes their awareness and respect of others. Children have warm and friendly relationships with both staff and each other, which gives them confidence to ask questions in order to develop their thinking. They freely move around selecting activities independently. However, there are limited opportunities for children to develop their independence further as they have no involvement in their daily routines for example, in the preparation of snack time. Children listen with interest and respond to their favourite stories and songs. They are encouraged to develop mark making skills in a variety of opportunities and staff ensure a range of resources are set up for them on a daily basis to support this. For example, they make lists in the role play corner and spontaneously write their names on their work. Children are confident speakers. They readily join in conversation with staff and their peers and delight in recalling their own experiences as they share of their news.

Children can say, use and recognise number names in order and count reliably up to 10 everyday objects; however children do not have opportunities to undertake simple calculation during everyday activities. Children's measuring skills are encouraged as they participate in activities which provide a recorded account of their height which enables to recognise similarities and differences. Children delight in the activities provided to develop their imagination. They have opportunities to act out scenarios in the roles play area, where children are well supported by staff to enable them to extend their thinking and to experience purposeful learning opportunities. For example, use of a café scene promotes children's understanding of the importance of healthy eating. Children participate fully in their regular music sessions and sing songs that are familiar to them while playing instruments with confidence and precision, keeping to the beat of the piano accompaniment.

Children enjoy designing and constructing with a variety of resources such as junk modelling, Lego, train tracks and other building bricks. Staff encourage children to develop a sense of time and place as they talk about their recent outings. Children learn about their immediate and their wider world as they engage in practical and purposeful activities to support and broaden their understanding. For example, children plant, tend and monitor the growth of their vegetables which they then harvest and take home to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are well supported as they play and staff recognise and value them as individuals, encouraging them to feel settled and develop their sense of belonging within the group. Staff are fully committed to providing an inclusive service. Children are beginning to develop an awareness of their wider society through planned activities, for example, Christian celebrations, Chinese New Year and through the display of posters depicting different parts of the world. They play with resources promoting diversity, such as books, dolls and play people in wheelchairs. This positive approach fosters, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Children behave very well because staff use positive behaviour management techniques. They are encouraged to play and work harmoniously together which is supported by the regular praise given by staff. Older children willingly help new children through the routines of the setting, which promotes harmonious relationships and develops a sense of belonging for all.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are actively encouraged to become fully involved in the life of the setting. For example, they play alongside their children on arrival to help settle them, they provide artefacts for interest tables and help maintain the premises. Parents are fully informed as to the play experiences and educational programme provided, through the use of an informative welcome pack which they receive. Staff are available each day to discuss children's progress and they share information through a regular newsletter and well presented notice boards that are situated around the setting. All children are valued as individuals and their needs understood using the information gathered from parents. The strong relationships and ongoing dialogue between parents and the staff ensures a two way transfer of information, which enables children's individual development and changing needs to be fully met. Parents report that they are extremely happy with the setting and how much they value the commitment of the well established staff team.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are cared for in a secure and friendly environment where they can learn and play happily. Children benefit from the constant supervision and continuous support due to the effective deployment of staff, which enables them to enjoy their time at playgroup. All activities are well prepared by staff and are planned to enable children to have sufficient time for child-led games, free play and group activities. However, children have limited opportunities to develop their independence in their daily routines. For example, preparation of snacks and children selecting toys of their own choosing.

Children are cared for by suitably qualified staff who have been appropriately vetted due to the effective recruitment procedures. All staff have a good understanding of the National Standards and have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills through additional training. The strong staff team work together extremely well and have many opportunities to contribute their ideas to ensure the continual well-being of all children.

All required mandatory documentation is in place and well maintained for the safe and effective management of the setting. Policy documents are made available to parents and clear information regarding Ofsted is displayed. All children's records are well maintained, stored confidentially and securely.

Leadership and management of the setting is good. Systems for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the nursery education within the setting ensures that all elements of the curriculum are appropriately addressed. The excellent organisation of the setting and expertise amongst the established staff team ensures that all children receive a broad and balanced programme of activities that promote all areas of development and learning. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting were asked to ensure that all regulatory documentation is regularly reviewed and amended where necessary; review child protection policy to include details of procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff; review uncollected child policy to meet National Standards for Sessional care.

Positive actions have been taken following the recommendations made. All regulatory documentation is in place and well maintained to ensure the smooth operation of the setting. Staff are aware of what procedure will be followed in the event of any allegations being made against them, as laid out in the disciplinary and grievance policy. There is a clear policy in place to support staff in the event of children not being collected at the end of the session. This ensures that all policy documentation supports the care provision and the continual well-being of the children.

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):

- ensure children have independent access to drinking water
- develop the opportunities available for children to play an active role in their daily routines for example, preparation of snack time and allowing them have independent access to their resources

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 mathematics especially in the area of simple calculation in every day activities

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