

Fir Bank Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	508030
Inspection date	26 September 2007
Inspector	Carol Ann Dixon
Setting Address	Fir Bank Primary School, Grasmere Road, Royton, Oldham, OL2 6SJ
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Registered person	Fir Bank School 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?

Fir Bank Playgroup is managed by a committee. It was registered in 1994 and operates from designated rooms within Fir Bank Primary School in Royton, near Oldham.

There are currently 17 children on the register. This includes 14 children in receipt of nursery education grant funding. Children attend on a full or part time basis. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The setting opens from 09.00 to 15.15, Monday to Friday during term time. There are three staff who work with the children, all of whom hold early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow effective procedures and practices which meet the children's nutritional, physical and health needs. The successful implementation of a key person

system means children's emotional well-being is carefully nurtured. Children learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care through planned activities and through the daily routines. They understand that they need to wash their hands before meals to get rid of any germs that could make them unwell. They use soap and paper towels and disposable tissue to wipe their noses. There are visual reminders displayed in the bathroom areas to encourage children to wash their hands. Consequently, children are developing a very good understanding of staying healthy.

Promotion of healthy eating is a high priority within the setting and they have obtained a healthy eating award. Children gain a very good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily as snacks are carefully planned and balanced to incorporate five fruits or vegetables each day. Stimulating and fun activities support the development of children's knowledge of healthy eating. These include discussions about healthy foods, planting cress seeds, making fruit salad and smoothies. Children are provided with regular drinks throughout the session, however, they are unable to help themselves to drinking water when they are thirsty and this limits their independence.

Children explore, test and develop physical control in stimulating daily indoor and outdoor experiences. Staff know the children well as individuals and this encourages children to confidently try new skills, ask for help and set their own limits within a safe environment. Excellent use is made of the outdoor environment which enables children to get plenty of fresh air in all weathers. They put on coats and wellingtons and go outside in the rain. They participate in fun and challenging activities and demonstrate very good co-ordination and control when riding the wheeled vehicles. They develop a good awareness of space as they have fun running in the playground whilst playing a game of 'traffic lights'. They listen carefully to a member of staff to determine whether they should run, walk or stand still. Children have use of a broad range of tools within their play which develops strength and control in their small muscles. They manipulate scissors, glue and pencils with increasing skill as they develop their hand and eye co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and parents are very warmly welcomed into the bright, colourful environment, which is maintained to a high standard. The child orientated environment is enhanced by stimulating displays of the children's creative work and photographs of the children involved in activities. These increase the children's sense of belonging.

Rooms are maintained at a comfortable temperature and sufficiently ventilated. The organisation and arrangement of the rooms meet the needs of the children effectively as the areas are set out thoughtfully to promote a range of children's skills and independence. Rooms are attractively divided into areas and this results in children experiencing a balanced range of resources. Toys and resources are organised effectively, making them easily accessible to the children. They are labelled clearly with text and pictures, helping children to identify resources and promote their independence. Effective systems are in place for checking resources, thereby ensuring that they are always safe and suitable for children's use.

Comprehensive risk assessments on the premises, and also for outings, ensure that safety is continually monitored and reviewed. Children are informed in advance of any outings so they gain an understanding of how they must behave to keep themselves safe. For example, holding hands with a member of staff when walking along the road. Children also wear identity badges

to ensure further safety and protection. They learn how to keep themselves safe within the setting as they receive consistent reminders from staff about how they should use the equipment. For example, when using scissors children are aware that they should stay seated at the table.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are very aware that the child's welfare is their main concern. Staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of the procedures to follow in the event of concerns about a child. Their understanding of the procedures to follow is regularly updated through attendance at courses. A comprehensive child protection policy is shared with parents to keep them informed of the staff's responsibilities.

Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised because staff are extremely vigilant in reducing potential hazards. No safety issues have been identified. Children are cared for by adults who are vetted, experienced, extremely knowledgeable and skilful.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children feel very secure, safe and contented in the setting through the effective admission procedures and implementation of a key person system. There are close and caring relationships throughout the setting creating a happy and harmonious environment. High quality interactions between the adults and children results in confident children who develop a strong sense of self in an atmosphere of trust. Children are valued and listened to by the staff which helps them to develop a positive self esteem. High staff to child ratios allows children to benefit from individual attention and staff to respond to children's interests.

Staff confidently follow 'Birth to three matters' guidance to provide the children with high quality care and education. Staff are very sensitive towards children's needs. For example, children place their special items in a basket as they arrive at the setting reassured that they can access them at 'show and tell' time. There are effective planning and assessment systems in place to ensure the learning programme matches the needs of the individual children. Staff record ongoing observations to monitor children's progress and successfully use this information to inform future planning. Consequently, children experience highly stimulating activities that are skilfully planned to be suitable for their age and interest levels.

The young children become engrossed in sensory play with different materials, such as sand, paint, dough and shredded paper. They search through the shredded paper to hunt for hidden animals which they collect in buckets. They thoroughly enjoy exploring the touch and feel of the sand as they squeeze it and let it trickle through their fingers. Children love looking at books and listening to stories, joining in action rhymes and singing sessions. These activities are helping them to listen, respond to language and build their vocabulary. Children enjoy building with construction toys and completing jigsaws and inset puzzles, carefully matching and manipulating pieces into place. They thoroughly enjoy moulding or rolling the dough and make good use of various sized cutters to create shapes. They have lots of opportunities to develop their imaginations through make believe and pretend play. They make good use of the home corner and have great fun dressing up and making pretend meals with the food and utensils.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, achieved through effective sharing of practice and skills. They use this

knowledge to plan a stimulating curriculum programme for children across all areas of learning. Staff ensure children access a wide range of activities and experiences which maintain their interest and enthusiasm. Detailed planning incorporates the six areas of learning, reflects the stepping stones and clearly links to children's individual development records. These records identify children's progress through the stepping stones and identify their next steps in learning. Through continual review and observation, staff are fully aware of children's progress enabling them to effectively meet their needs. Staff use their skills to effectively challenge and question individual children. They skilfully adapt activities to meet the diverse needs of children, taking into account the different ways children learn.

The environment is rich in written language and children are offered many different mediums to make marks. Skilful questioning from staff ensures that every opportunity is taken to expand children's language. They learn about the days of the week and correctly describe the weather and what clothes they should wear when it is cold outside. They enjoy stories and rhymes and have their favourite books. Children make very good use of the book area to look at books and retell stories to each other. A planned activity where children name objects hidden in an 'alphabet bag' is very successful in helping children link sounds to the letter of the week. For example, a child identified a cat from within the bag saying 'it's c for cat'.

Children's skills in mathematical development are very good. They count confidently and use a wide range of mathematical language in their play. During an activity building with construction blocks, three-year-old children talk about making a hotel with the blocks they are using, describing them by size, such as smaller and bigger. Children sort the play dough cutters into size and confidently describe which one is the biggest and smallest and which one is the middle sized one.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing fully. They explore their environment with great enthusiasm as they go on nature walks. They ask questions and talk about what they see as they collect leaves from the trees. Children learn how to care for living things as they plant bulbs in the garden, provide water and observe some of the changes as they grow. They examine insects they find as they dig in the soil. Staff expertly adapt plans to follow the children's interests. For example, following a trip to a local market, the children wash and prepare the fruit they purchase for their snack and the role play area is adapted to become a fruit and vegetable shop so the children can act out what they have observed in their community.

Children purposefully explore the sounds of a wide range of musical instruments and move to music enthusiastically. Through creative activities, they confidently and freely express their ideas and feelings, using all of their senses. Children use mirrors to observe their facial features and create their own self portraits that are displayed on the wall. They begin to develop care and concern for others as they describe their feelings when they make pictures of happy and sad faces.

Children are very confident and show perseverance and great concentration as they participate in their chosen activity. They gain independence and develop skills in co-operation as staff provide lots of opportunities to encourage children to work harmoniously together and readily praise children when they do so. They readily take turns, share and ask for help when tidying away a heavy box. They attempt to put on and fasten their own coats when going outside and play co-operatively in the construction and role play areas. However, at snack time the staff serve the snack and drinks to the children which limits their developing independence and social skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the positive partnerships that are developed with parents and carers. They are cared for by staff who work closely with parents to meet their individual needs and ensure that they are fully included in the life of the setting. Consequently, staff fully understand the children's individual health, dietary, social and emotional needs, religious and cultural beliefs, and work hard to ensure that these are reflected and well catered for. Children learn about the diversity of our society through a range of resources which portray positive, non-stereotypical images and as they participate in various celebrations and festivals. For example, they celebrate Chinese new year with food tasting and make lamps for Diwali. These activities help children to learn about the wider world and to respect and value differences.

Staff skilfully support and encourage children to play fairly, share and take turns. Children respond to the frequent and meaningful praise they receive and behave well. They enjoy being helpful, such as when they sweep the sand that has spilled onto the floor and they glow with pride when they receive a sticker to acknowledge their efforts. Staff are positive role models who remain calm at all times and use consistent strategies to promote acceptable behaviour. Consequently, children are very well behaved and respond readily to requests from staff to help to tidy away equipment at the end of the session. Their self esteem and confidence are well fostered through the tasks they undertake and the acknowledgement they receive from staff. As a result of these positive strategies children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with a range of information relating to 'Birth to three matters' and the Foundation Stage provision. The reception area contains lots of useful information for parents, they receive regular newsletters and photographic evidence linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals. They are informed of their children's progress both informally and formally on a regular basis when they discuss their child's progress record with their key person. However, parents are not involved in their child's initial assessment to ensure that the child's prior experience and knowledge can continue to be built upon. Parents are further involved through participating in activities and outings organised by the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and content in the calm, friendly and well organised environment. New children receive consistent and loving care from staff to enable them to quickly settle and feel secure. The key person system is effective in enabling staff to get to know individual children well and to monitor their development. High priority is given to staff training and development. All staff hold an appropriate early years childcare qualification and regular attendance on short courses enables staff to continually enhance their skills in specific subjects, such as safeguarding children, managing inclusion and behaviour management.

The children's care is enhanced by the good organisation within the setting. Effective induction, recruitment and selection procedures are in place to ensure staff are appropriately vetted and their suitability assessed. Good use is made of staff meetings and planning meetings to promote effective team working. Robust policies and procedures are implemented to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Daily routines are flexible to respond to children's individual needs. Most of the required records are

well maintained, remain confidential and are easily accessible. However, records of staff and children's attendances lack the necessary detail required.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Children benefit from the well established procedures, which systematically and effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of the teaching and learning. Staff reflect on their practice as they evaluate activities provided for the children. There is a high level of commitment to improvement, reflected in a strong emphasis on staff development. Staff work well together and value the different skills they each have. This has a very positive impact on the quality of children's learning.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to improve opportunities for children to experience more challenging outdoor play experiences. The setting now has a dedicated outdoor play area which is made very good use of on a daily basis and staff planning has ensured that children experience appropriate challenges in this environment.

It was also recommended that an additional member of staff should be trained in first aid. This has been fully addressed, thereby ensuring children's health and safety is protected.

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.

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 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 access to drinking water at all times
- ensure that records of staff and children's attendances are appropriately detailed.

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):

- provide children with opportunities to further develop their independence skills at snack time
- consider how parents can be involved in their child's initial assessment.

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