



Emerson Valley Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	141769
Inspection date	20 September 2005
Inspector	Jackie Pulsford / Stella Grace Dykes
Setting Address	6 White Horse Drive, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK4 2AS
Telephone number	01908 506982
E-mail	
Registered person	Emerson Valley 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Emerson Valley Playgroup is a community group, managed by a committee of parents, which opened in 1984. It operates from a community hall in a residential area of Milton Keynes. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. A maximum of 29 children may attend the group at any one time. It is open each weekday during term time. It opens from 09.30 to 12.00 and from 12.30 to 15.00 on Mondays, from 09.30 to 12.00 on Tuesdays, from 09.30 to 15.30 on Wednesdays

and Thursdays, and from 12.30 to 15.00 on Fridays.

There are currently 46 children from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 39 children receive funding for nursery education. Children usually come from the local catchment area, and attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup currently supports some children who speak English as an additional language, and also supports some children who have special needs.

The group employs 11 staff. Of these, 4, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. A further 2 staff members are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy regular opportunities for energetic physical activity when they play outside. During this play, they develop their physical skills, and learn about controlling their own bodies. Children move around skilfully and with good control, for example when negotiating with the baby buggies around obstacles or pedalling wheeled toys. They run, stop, start, and when playing 'What is the time Mr Wolf', they creep stealthily. They are beginning to be aware of their own bodies, and comment on the changes that happen when they engage in vigorous play, but staff do not encourage children to think about why they happen. Children are dexterous when using a range of tools and implements, and are given good support to develop their skills, for example using scissors.

Children play in clean and hygienic surroundings. They begin to learn about safeguarding their own health by washing their hands and using tissues properly. Staff implement the group's effective health policies to protect children from the risk of infection. They can act in the children's best interests if they become ill, because they have the necessary information and consents from parents.

Children enjoy the sociable snack times. They take steps towards developing their independence skills as they choose from a variety of healthy and nutritious snacks, spread butter on their toast and select what drink they want, although they do not pour their drinks for themselves. They have only those foods that are suitable for them, because staff ask parents about their children's dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move confidently around the group, and are settled and at ease in familiar surroundings. They move freely from inside to outside, enjoying the group's well set-up outside play area. They play in a welcoming environment that is made bright and colourful with pictures, posters and displays of their artwork.

Children have free access to a wide range of appropriate, good quality toys, games and play materials. Items are well maintained, and stored so that children can choose for themselves. Staff work throughout the session to keep toys and equipment in order and ready for the children to use. For example, they hang up dressing up clothes and tidy puzzles after children have used them, so that they are always attractively presented.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment due to the good safety and security procedures in place. For instance, staff make daily health and safety checks and supervise children effectively. Children are well protected because staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the procedures to follow in relation to child protection, which they share with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time in the group. They have many opportunities to take part in child led and imaginative play, and they make decisions and choices about what they do throughout the session. Children who are familiar with the group have affectionate relationships with each other and with the adults in the group. They are settled and content.

Children receive good care and support. Staff readily respond to children's requests, for example to read stories, or to get additional materials for the craft table. They are attentive, and listen carefully when children speak, so that children learn that what they say is important.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have an adequate understanding of how young children learn. Children take part in a range of activities that interest and stimulate them, but not all provide sufficient challenge, because the planning and assessment is weak. Staff observe what children do, but these records are not clearly recorded against the stepping stones. Consequently staff do not have sufficient information to help them plan the next steps in children's learning so they make good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children are keen to come into the group and to explore what is on offer. They are confident in familiar surroundings. They play in a focussed and purposeful way, and are sufficiently motivated to devise and play their own games. They behave very well, and older children show a high degree of care and concern for others.

Children are self-assured speakers, and older children initiate conversations with adults. Children enjoy looking at books and hearing stories in the book corner, but are less attentive in the large group story times. Some more able children are learning to identify familiar letter sounds and shapes, for example those that are found in their names, but there are too few occasions for children to do so routinely. Children have opportunities to make marks using paints and pencils, but do not attempt writing for a purpose. Children count confidently up to six, when encouraged

by staff at story time, and some older children can count well beyond this. However, most show no interest in counting in the course of their everyday play, and they are rarely encouraged to calculate, for example, how many more cups they need at the snack table.

Children use paper, scissors and sticky tape machines skilfully and inventively to construct envelopes and butterflies. They show curiosity about bugs found in the garden and ask to look at them through a lens. Children learn about the wider world through the good range of resources which show positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. However, information and communication technology equipment is poorly presented; calculators and keyboards do not work and children become disinterested. Children engage in a wide range of imaginative and child led play, and they explore the texture and feel of paint on their hands when making hand prints. Most children join in with simple nursery rhymes during group times, but do not have regular opportunities to take part in action songs and ring games.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have equal access to toys and activities. They develop self-esteem as they make choices and decisions about their play. Staff know the children well, so they can meet their individual needs. The setting has effective arrangements to care for children with special education needs. They make sure that children who have additional needs are fully included in activities, and they support parents to get the best outcomes for their children.

Children behave very well. They know what staff expect of them, because they set consistent boundaries which children have no difficulty in conforming to. Staff understand some of the causes of poor behaviour, and so are able to deal effectively with the very few instances that do occur.

Partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from the easy and relaxed relationships that staff and parents have, as they exchange information about their children's care and development informally at the beginning and end of sessions. There are notice boards and regular newsletters that keep parents in touch with what is happening in the group; in addition parents receive good quality information about the group's intended educational programme so that parents can be actively involved in their children's learning. Parents of older children may take projects home for children to work on if they wish. Staff review this work, and it can form the basis of discussions about children's progress. Staff offer an open session in the first term of the year, so that parents can visit and speak with staff. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the effective organisation of the group. Staff set up the room

before children arrive so that the environment is warm and welcoming with a good range of toys and activities. Children are properly supervised throughout their time at the setting, because staff are deployed well.

Training and well written policy statements help staff to promote children's care and welfare. All the required records and consent forms are in place to ensure children's health and safety, but parents do not sign the record of medicines given. The leader is effective in promoting a fully inclusive environment.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. There is no system in place to monitor and evaluate the nursery education provision, which results in ineffective planning of activities and children not being extended in all areas of learning. However, children benefit from an appropriate range of activities and experiences and the leader has a firm commitment to helping children to achieve their potential. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last Children Act inspection recommended that parents sign incident records and that the group should develop a lost child procedure. Both these issues have been effectively addressed to further promote children's welfare.

At the last nursery education inspection the group was asked to extend the assessment of the provision to maximise learning opportunities, and to ensure that observation records are linked to the stepping stones so that children's progress and learning needs can be identified. These issues have only been partially addressed, and are the focus of the recommendations at this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004, there has been one complaint relating to National Standard 2: Organisation and National Standard 11: Behaviour Management regarding recording of incidents and accidents, ensuring policies and procedures are up to date and understood by staff and that the committee understand their roles and responsibilities. Ofsted asked the registered person to investigate and report back within 10 working days. The registered person sent a detailed account of how behaviour is managed, how incidents and accidents are recorded, how staff are kept up to date with policies and procedures and how it ensures that the committee understand their roles and responsibilities. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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):

- ensure that the written record of medicines given to children is signed by parents

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 planning of activities to ensure children are extended and make progress towards all the early learning goals
- develop and implement a system for monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education

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