

Humpty Dumpty Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119484
Inspection date	09 November 2007
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion
Setting Address	1 Sutton Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 5PA
Telephone number	079848 79986 or 01702 616742
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Registered person	The Trustees of Humpty Dumpty 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Humpty Dumpty Pre-school is run by a management committee of volunteers. The pre-school opened in 2001 and operates from a church hall situated in central Southend-on-Sea. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Session times are from 09:30 until 13:30 on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and from 12:00 until 16:00 on Tuesday. Children can attend for a shorter session of two and a half hours on each day.

There are currently 30 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 13 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding areas. The setting supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four staff, all of whom hold early years qualifications. There are also two student trainees working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children are not fully protected from the risk of cross-infection because there are unsatisfactory arrangements for nappy changing. Children are currently being changed on the kitchen floor and this presents a risk of cross-contamination. Children are learning about simple health and hygiene procedures because they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Paper towels are provided with step stools, potties and child-size toilet seats so that children can access the facilities independently. There is a policy regarding sick children and staff sensitively care for children who feel unwell. All staff have attended food hygiene training and hold first aid certificates so that they can deal with minor injuries. Appropriate records are kept of accidents and when medication is administered.

Children are offered nourishment each day. Parents provide lunch boxes and children learn to manage food and drinks containers and unwrap their sandwiches as they sit and eat their midday meal with the staff. Children are sometimes encouraged to make healthy choices at snack time when fruit is occasionally offered. However, children currently sit for prolonged periods on chairs in a formal line to eat their snack. They are not offered tables in small social groups where they can sit and talk to staff and each other. Water is available throughout the session to ensure that children do not become thirsty and staff are aware of any allergies or special dietary requirements.

Children have some opportunities to promote their physical development. The pre-school does not currently have a secure outdoor area where children can play in the fresh air. However, space is provided in the hall and children access apparatus such as a small trampoline, tunnel, balance beam and rocking horse to develop their physical skills. Children carefully manoeuvre pushchairs with control, changing speed and direction to avoid obstacles. They enjoy taking part in exercise routines and explore a range of movements as they stretch tall, crouch low or jump like a frog. Active circle games are organised such as 'Ring a Roses' or 'Farmer in the Den'. Visitors from Southend United Football Club join the children and they practise ball skills. Children can rest or relax because a cosy area has been created with cushions and soft toys and they can sit quietly and look at the books.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children play in a warm environment. Staff make the hall welcoming with displays of posters and examples of the children's artwork linked to recent learning experiences. Although staff check the premises each day, children's safety is compromised because the storage cupboard door leading from the corridor remains open throughout the session and cleaning products are not always securely stored in the kitchen. A formal risk assessment regarding the premises is undertaken annually. Although the minimum required staffing ratios are usually met, during some sessions there are not sufficient staff to closely supervise the children during free play and as a result the younger children sometimes have access to potential hazards which they put in their mouths, for example, batteries. The staff are vigilant about the security of the children. The entrance door remains locked throughout the session and a bell alerts staff when someone arrives. Any visitors are closely monitored and their identity documents are scrutinised when they enter the premises.

Children learn about their own personal safety when they practise fire drills to enable them to swiftly evacuate the premises in an emergency. They learn the safe way to carry chairs and use tools such as scissors under close supervision. Children use play materials that are mostly age-appropriate and suitable. Most toys are clean and staff usually check that they are not damaged prior to use. Appropriate child-size tables and chairs are provided so that children can play in comfort.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff are aware of their responsibilities. The child protection policy has been updated in line so that it is consistent with the guideline procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This ensures that staff know the correct child protection procedures and can act in the best interests of children if they have concerns about their well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Most children enter the pre-school confidently and find something to interest them. Children are forming warm relationships with the sensitive staff and plenty of cuddles and reassurance is given. Some children and staff chat happily about recent experiences and discuss what they are doing. There is a key worker system and as a result the staff get to know the children and their families well.

Children show some curiosity and higher levels of involvement when they are provided with activities that encourage them to explore and experiment. Although staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework when planning activities for the youngest children in the setting, the routine and the resources are not always adapted for their needs. While children become absorbed in activities such as playing in the sand, the sand tray is sited on a table and not at a comfortable height for the youngest children to use. Children can only make choices about their play during the morning and then staff clear away the play equipment. After lunch children take part in whole group activities with very few play materials and no alternative experiences are offered. The younger children are expected to sit for prolonged periods at story time and due to their differing concentration levels they easily lose interest and become distracted. By the end of the session some of the youngest children are rather tired and become upset.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. The staff spend time planning a broad curriculum that covers all areas of learning. They show a sound understanding of the early learning goals and stepping stones but not all staff understand the principles underpinning the Foundation Stage. Children are not always encouraged to investigate or extend their learning by contributing their own ideas. For example, when children are tenderly caring for the dolls and taking them for a walk in the pushchairs, they are prevented from entering the home corner because this is sited in a area where pushchairs are not permitted. Some resources are poorly presented, for example, dressing up clothes are offered to children in a heap on a mat. During some sessions staff are fully stretched dealing with domestic tasks and the needs of the youngest children and cannot spend time delivering activities to the funded children. Due to constraints regarding the premises the children are not offered regular outdoor learning experiences.

Each day a focussed activity is planned for the children. This ensures that children have chances to acquire new knowledge and staff promote language development. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed as they use magnifiers to observe objects closely.

They investigate the changes that happen when balloons are blown up and show excitement as they anticipate what will happen if they let the balloon deflate quickly. Children learn about technology when they use the computer with digital camera and independently insert DVDs and manoeuvre the mouse to control the movements on screen.

Children are making limited progress towards the early learning goals. Although staff observe children as they play and keep records linked to the stepping stones, they do not yet identify their next steps in learning and use this information for future planning. The long-term plan ensures that the curriculum covers each area of learning and the staff have developed photographic evidence that in the long term children will have stimulating learning experiences. However, children are not always encouraged to achieve as much as they can as some activities lack inspiration. For example, during some creative tasks children are directed to use certain materials or tools and are not offered the opportunity to self-select alternative art resources or provide their own ideas.

Children are starting to develop their independence skills as they attempt to put on the dressing up clothes or deal with their own hygiene needs. They demonstrate satisfaction and pride in their achievements, for example, when completing a jigsaw. The older funded children respond well to the staff's expectations for responsible behaviour and are aware of the boundaries. Some children are starting to communicate with staff and visitors and initiate conversations. Labels and signs are displayed in the environment so that children learn that words convey meaning. Children handle books carefully and enjoy listening to stories; although children's concentration at story time can be hindered by the behaviour of younger children in the group. Mark-making materials and clipboards are provided so that children can write for a purpose within their role play.

Children are starting to count and use numbers. They easily count to five and some children recognise numerals. Children explore simple calculation through singing number rhymes or working out how many cartons of milk are needed for snack time. They learn about capacity and as they scoop sand into containers and measure items with rulers when using the work bench. Children develop their hand-eye coordination as they carefully cut out pictures with scissors and explore malleable materials by patting, rolling and squeezing play dough or clay into the required shapes. Children enjoy singing and playing musical instruments and are building up a repertoire of Christmas songs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Most of the children behave well and play harmoniously. They are learning to take turns and share their toys. However, towards the end of each session when the younger children become distracted this hinders the learning and enjoyment of the older children. Staff have not yet developed consistent and appropriate behaviour management strategies when working with the younger children in the setting.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children learn about their own and other cultures and communities. Resources such as books and dolls reflect diversity so that children feel good about themselves and respect others. Children learn about festivals and traditional events. For example, they make diva lamps to celebrate Diwali and learn about the significance of poppies for Remembrance Day. Children are encouraged to say 'sorry' and offer a cuddle if they hurt each other's feelings. They willingly help staff with simple tasks such as tidying away the toys or inserting the straws in the milk cartons for snack.

Children show a sense of belonging to the pre-school. They find their name on arrival and affix a peg for self-registration. Regular opportunities for discussion with parents ensure that staff get to know children's individual needs. There are suitable systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good support is provided for children who speak English as an additional language. A member of staff communicates with parents and children in their own language and this boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. There is a regular exchange of information and relationships between the staff and parents are friendly and helpful. Parents are kept informed about the setting through newsletters and notices displayed on the premises. Assessment records are regularly shared so that parents are kept informed about the children's progress and achievements. The staff have recently started 'home-link' activities to involve parents in their children's learning. For example, children take a toy 'Humpty Dumpty' home and parents record where the toy has been to share with the pre-school. Parents have been asked to provide photographs of Southend so that children can learn more about the local environment. Parents speak positively about the pre-school and appreciate the care and attention their children receive. They value the efforts of the staff team and find them friendly and approachable. The staff are well aware of the need to keep a record of complaints made by parents and are currently updating the complaints policy so that it meets the requirements of the revisions to the National Standards of October 2005.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Overall children's needs are not met. Since the last inspection the pre-school has extended the duration of the sessions to four hours and have also lowered the admission age for children to two years. This has had an impact on the quality of care and education provided. Due to a misunderstanding the registered provider does not always meet the requirements for sessional care and sometimes children are cared for on the premises for more than four hours. The manager is now aware of the need to review the session times.

Children benefit from a caring, experienced staff team who have worked at the setting for many years. All staff have been vetted and cleared through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Staff hold early years qualifications and try to attend as many short training courses as they can so that they keep updated on current childcare issues and trends. However, the manager does not yet hold evidence that she has a Level 3 qualification appropriate to the post as manager.

The leadership and management is inadequate. The manager only works on one day each week and there is not currently a committee appointed to support the staff team. Ofsted has not been kept informed about changes to the committee and this is a breach in regulations. The manager is not realistic in her self-evaluation of the provision for care and nursery education and has not recognised the areas in which the pre-school needs to improve. Consequently, the setting is not making best use of time, space or resources. The small staff team work extremely hard during each session and understand their roles and responsibilities for each day. However, during some sessions there are insufficient staff deployed to ensure the safety, welfare and development of the children. Some staff do show commitment to improving the quality of care and education offered to the children. They evaluate the focussed activities and review recent literature to find out how they can implement new ideas to raise standards and improve outcomes for children.

All the essential documentation required for the smooth day-to-day running of the pre-school is in place. Staff are aware of the need for confidentiality and securely store records containing information about the children. There is an operational plan that explains how the setting runs. Staff are currently updating the written policies and procedures that promote children's welfare and safety.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure that the child protection policy includes the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer and to obtain parents' signatures when recording incidents or existing injuries. The child protection policy has been updated so that it is consistent with current advice from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). New incident books have been purchased with prompts for staff to ask for parents' signatures. These improvements to the documentation enhance children's welfare.

At the last inspection for nursery education two key issues were raised. The provider was asked to explore ways of introducing early maths skills through planned activities such as snack or circle time and to provide resources to encourage children to write for different purposes. At snack time each day children count how many of their friends are present and make sure that enough milk cartons are provided. During themed role play activities, writing materials with diaries and clipboards are provided so that children can practise their emergent writing while making appointments or taking notes as they play. Consequently, some improvement has been made to the children's mathematical development and communication, language and literacy skills.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that the arrangements for nappy changing meet Environmental Health recommendations

- assess the risks to children in relation to their access to batteries, the storage cupboard and cleaning products in the kitchen and take action to minimise these
- review and update the action plan for staff training with timescales to show how the manager will achieve a Level 3 qualification
- notify Ofsted of all changes to the committee and ensure that all members complete the appropriate vetting procedures (this refers to completing DC2 forms and CRB disclosures)
- ensure that sufficient staff are deployed within the premises to ensure the safety, welfare and development of the children
- ensure that children are cared for less than a continuous period of four hours in any day
- develop staff's knowledge and understanding of behaviour management, so that it is consistent and developmentally appropriate.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that the leadership and management promote high standards, set clear directions and manage the setting efficiently
- review the organisation of the sessions and the way the activities are presented to ensure that children have more opportunities to investigate, initiate their own learning and are inspired to achieve as much as they can (this also relates to care)
- complete the planning cycle by ensuring that staff identify children's next steps in learning and use these observations to inform future planning so that activities build on what children know and can do.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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