

Southchurch Park Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119520
Inspection date	13 November 2007
Inspector	Lisa Paisley
Setting Address	Northumberland Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS1 2TH
Telephone number	07790058510
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Registered person	Southchurch Park Playgroup Committee
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 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?

Southchurch Park Playgroup is run by a church committee. It opened in 1968 and operates from the church hall to the rear of the United Reformed Church in Southend, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.15 to 12.00 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 34 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 19 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The playgroup 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 playgroup employs six staff. Four of the staff, including both managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff members are currently attending training. The setting receives support from the local council.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning to be healthy as staff support them in adopting good hygiene routines such as hand washing after toileting and before snack and after messy activities, for example, gluing and play dough. They have access to cold water, anti-bacterial soap and paper hand towels, however, there is currently no hot water available for children to use. As a result, cross-infection is not always effectively minimised. Staff record all accidents and obtain signatures from parents and carers to show that they have been informed. A number of staff have completed first aid training to help them respond to accidents appropriately and procedures are also in place to care for children should they become sick or injured while on the premises.

Children are able to have snacks and drinks at set times and in line with their dietary requirements. Adequate and effective arrangements are in place to ensure drinking water is available for children during the session if they become thirsty, this ensures that they remain hydrated. Children have a range of healthy snacks such as apples, pineapples, carrots sticks, rice crackers bananas and dried raisins are offered and they are further helped to become aware of healthy eating through planned activities and discussions.

Children have daily physical play opportunities outside. They enjoy being active and are able to be energetic in a well-organised outside play space. They learn to move in different ways and use equipment, including balancing beams, stilts and blocks. Children particularly enjoy playing on the climbing frame where they climbed up the apparatus and went down the slide. All children are given a wide range of opportunities to develop their finer manipulative skills by using a variety of tools and other equipment. As a result children are making good progress in all areas of their development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play and learn in a warm and welcoming environment where they are able to freely move around resources and play activities during the session. Staff are vigilant about children's safety and ensure this by the effective implementation of thorough daily risk assessments. Consequently, all potential hazards such as hazardous chemicals, electrical sockets and the outdoor play area have been minimised. Children learn about keeping themselves safe through gentle reminders from staff such as using play equipment and resources appropriately, tidying away toys and practising regular fire drills to ensure they and the staff know how to evacuate the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency or an incident. Good safety procedures are in place to support children when on trips out, for example, a risk assessment is undertaken, staff obtain written parental request and children wear fluorescent jackets ensuring that they are easily identified.

Children are able to freely select a range of resources and play equipment, fostering their independence and confidence in choosing their own activities. Children benefit from using toys and play equipment which are maintained to a high standard. They enthusiastically select their own play resources which are appropriate to their ages and stage of development. Staff have a good awareness of how to organise space, furniture and equipment appropriately to enable children to move freely and with independence between activities and different play areas.

Children are well protected because staff have a good knowledge of child protection issues, recognise their role and responsibilities and know how to implement their own and local safeguarding procedures. The recording of all staff, children and visitors to and from the nursery, detailed policies for the collection and non-collection of children and arrangements for recording pre-existing injuries contribute to ensuring children are safeguarded from harm. Parents are informed of the playgroup's responsibility regarding child protection reassuring parents of their child's safety and well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are occupied throughout the session and show interest in what they do. They are able to make choices about the activities they choose and move independently around the room. Activities for young children are stimulating, interesting and appropriately challenging as staff have a good understanding of how young children play and learn. For example, books, puzzles, creative activities, construction and small world play are available to the children.

Staff have effectively incorporated the 'Birth to three matters' framework into their planning ensuring that they continue to effectively plan activities and track young children's developmental progress.

Nursery Education

Quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff use the Foundation Stage curriculum soundly to plan a balanced range of activities to promote the six areas of learning. Planning is in place and is detailed, however, the current format does not provide a clear overview of activities offered as a result, staff are unable to assess the effectiveness of the education that is offered and children are making satisfactorily progress along the stepping stones. Focus activity planning that includes differentiation and evaluations are still to be implemented to provide clear learning intentions for children. A key worker system is in place and staff record children's developmental progress using initial profiles and the stepping stones. Children's individual progress is beginning to inform future activity plans, this ensures planning matches children's interests and ability. The structure of the session is free play with an emphasis on children's choice, however, staff teaching methods during group activities such as registration and circle times are not effectively planned, as a result children's interest is not successfully captured.

Children are happy and confident in the environment. They are keen to participate in the range of activities provided and are encouraged to independently select resources and initiate their own activities and games. Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet staff and each other upon arrival and they are learning to share, take turns and be co-operative, for example, completing puzzles and sharing the slide. Children are developing secure communication skills, as they engage in conversation with their friends and staff, who actively listen. They confidently handle and enjoy books in which they would sit in small groups to share stories. Children confidently use tools and resources to make marks and more able children are able to write their own names independently. Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy is promoted through daily routines including stories such as 'The Three Little Pigs'. Children are beginning to count confidently up to 10. However, limited attention is given to the use of mathematical language and play during the session. As a result, children's learning is not being fully extended. There are opportunities for children to participate in cooking, sand and water activities which help children's understanding of weight, measurement and capacity.

Children have good opportunities to find out about the natural world as they enjoy exploring and looking at their environment, for example, using magnifying glasses to look at bugs, insects and leaves. They have good opportunities to go on trips out such as train rides to the local beach, visits to the local park and trips to the Sealife centre, Marsh Farm and Tropical Wings. Visitors are also invited into the playgroup to discuss their role within the community, this includes the fire safety officer, road safety officer and the local football team. They are developing an awareness of the uses of information technology in everyday life and are able to operate equipment such as domestic items and the computer. Their physical skills are well promoted through a variety of mediums such as the tri-cycles, balls, hoops and bean bags. Large group activities, for example, the parachute children can practise making waves slowly or quickly. Children's manipulative skills are well promoted through the good range of activities such as threading, puzzles, building with small bricks and using scissors. Children's imaginations and free expression is promoted through a range of activities, for example, painting, role-play, craft activities and music and movement. However, role play activities are repetitive, limiting children's development of imaginary roles and self-expression. They enthusiastically enjoy music and movement where they can practise moving their bodies rhythmically, stamping their feet, nodding their heads and waving their arms.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who work closely with parents to meet individual children's needs. Their individual needs are discussed with parents in detail and the needs of children who require additional support are recognised and are met sensitively. Staff work effectively with children who have English as an additional language. Children benefit from having access to a suitable range of play resources which promote positive images of diversity. Children participate in activities developing their awareness of diversity such as Halloween, Polish festivals, firework night and Christmas. However, this is not fully developed as strategies have not been put in place to further develop gender equality, as a result, children's understanding of valuing differences is not fully extended.

Staff provide positive role models for children by being calm and polite. Children are generally well-behaved as staff have adopted strategies to teach the children to behave acceptably, and are consistent and positive in their approach to behaviour management. Praise is given freely to children, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand that they have done well. Their individual needs are met very successfully by the staff. Children work harmoniously with others as staff create an environment that values positive behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from their parents being actively involved in their children's learning. Regular newsletters are sent out to parents informing them of future events and topic work. The notice board provides parents with all the required information about the pre-school, including the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, certificates and staff training qualifications. However, a system for having regular formal meetings with parents to discuss children's developmental progress has not been implemented, consequently, parents are not fully informed about their child's learning and developmental progress.

Parents are aware of how to make complaints about the provision and these are dealt with in a prompt and professional way. Staff listen to parents' concerns and, where appropriate, adapt

their policies and procedures accordingly. Parents are provided with the contact details for the regulator if they should wish to take a complaint further and all concerns are taken seriously.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is adequately supported by the secure organisation of the nursery. All staff have been vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), ensuring their suitability when looking after children. Staff make sufficient use of available play space both indoors and out, ensuring children are able to move freely and independently. However, the organisation of snack time limits children's play and learning and interrupts children's play. Documentation and records are comprehensive and are suitably organised. Policies and procedures including the operational plan are regularly reviewed ensuring that the playgroup continues to meet the National Standards.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager, deputy and staff are committed and professional in their approach to providing early years play and learning experiences. They are positive in their attitude and interactions with children, parents and one another, ensuring a relaxed environment is effectively promoted. Staff work closely together to ensure the day to day running of the playgroup runs smoothly. Children benefit from clear induction procedures for all new staff and existing staff experience and qualifications. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities which are implemented effectively. They are deployed effectively within the playgroup and good staffing ratios are maintained throughout the session ensuring children are well supervised and supported during activities. Regular staff meetings and yearly appraisals ensure staff are being suitably developed and training needs are met.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed, to ensure that Ofsted are informed of changes in committee members, meet any recommendations made by the Fire Safety Officer and devise a written procedure to be followed in the event of a fire, review hand washing procedures to ensure they prevent the spread of infection and devise a system for sharing policies and procedures with parents. Ofsted have been informed of committee changes, they have taken appropriate action to ensure that the fire safety officer recommendations are met, written fire notices are displayed, hand washing procedures have been reviewed to ensure the risk of cross-infection is minimised and there is now a system in place for the playgroup to share relevant information with parents. As a result, secure improvements have been made with regard to the care of children.

At the last education inspection the group agreed, to plan further opportunities to challenge the older and more able children and create daily opportunities for children to practise mark making and linking sounds and letters within a variety of play experiences. Planning has been updated to include differentiation of children's abilities and there are increased opportunities for children to practise mark making and some opportunities for children to link sounds and letters. Overall, progress has been made in the quality of nursery education offered.

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 hot water is available for children
- develop further strategies to support gender equality
- review the organisation of snack time to extend further children's play and learning and promote uninterrupted play for children.

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):

- update curriculum planning for the Foundation Stage to provide a clear overview of activities provided and how they are linked into the stepping stones
- develop further a range of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy activities and extend children's imaginative play
- extend further a range of teaching methods for children to successfully capture their interests
- devise a system for sharing information with parents informing them of their children's developmental progress.

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