

Eckington Under Fives Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205317
Inspection date	05 October 2007
Inspector	Valerie Fane
Setting Address	The Recreation Centre, Pershore Road, Eckington, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3AP
Telephone number	01386 751692 or 07946 882120
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Registered person	Eckington Under Fives 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 satisfactory. 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?

Eckington Under Fives is a committee run group that was registered in 1998. It operates from two rooms of the sports pavilion in the village of Eckington near Pershore in Worcestershire and has an extensive area for outdoor play. The group serves the surrounding area.

The group is open Monday to Friday in school term times from 09:30 to 12:00. There are currently 27 children on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for nursery education. The group supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Seven staff work with the children. Of these, three have appropriate qualifications to Level 3. The group receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children develop a good understanding of the benefits of fresh air and exercise because they play outside regularly in most weather conditions. They make excellent use of their outside play area as well as the adjacent playing field and playground. Children build their own balancing constructions with logs and planks and then try to walk along them. Staff support their development of balancing skills as they provide help to those children who lack confidence but also encourage them to try unaided. Children develop balance and control as they ride a good range of wheeled vehicles appropriate to their age and stage of development and as they use the large play equipment in the park. They improve ball skills as they throw, catch and kick a selection of balls.

Children develop their understanding of the principles of healthy eating as they enjoy a range of healthy snacks that includes choices such as banana, carrot sticks and cheese biscuits. They are suitably hydrated because they know they can ask for fresh drinking water at any time. Children with special dietary needs receive appropriate food and drink because a list of special requirements is clearly posted in the kitchen for use by the adult preparing the snacks. However, children's care is potentially compromised because the admission form does not clearly ask for such information, unless the requirements are linked to their medical needs and parents have to remember to include it under the section headed 'other information'.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene routines as they wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. They receive good care in the event of an accident or needing medication because all staff have current first aid knowledge. Staff keep accurate records of any accident that occurs and ensure that these are signed by parents. They are aware of the information to record and signatures to obtain should children need medication. Children are protected from cross-infection because the pre-school has a clear policy not to accept children who are unwell and this is made known to parents before their child attends. Although hot running water is not available on site for hand washing, staff ensure that the water provided is changed frequently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children use premises that are mainly suitable and are kept clean. Staff work hard to overcome the difficulties of using shared premises that are ideally due for rebuilding. The layout of the equipment is attractive and welcoming. Children see their own work displayed as well as posters to support their learning. They use a range of good quality, well-maintained equipment that is stored in containers that they can access easily.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where all risks have been identified and minimised. Staff make excellent use of risk assessments to review children's safety, identify hazards and put appropriate steps in place to reduce risks. For example, they have identified the possibility of children shutting their fingers in the toilet doors and have fitted stops so children cannot shut the doors completely. They have fitted a more secure gate between the playing field and the enclosed play area. Children learn to protect themselves in an emergency because they have regular opportunities to practise the evacuation procedures. They have a

good awareness of safety issues. For example, they come to tell a member of staff if they realise a bike is broken.

Children go on regular outings in the local area, to the church or down to the river. They are safe because good procedures are in place and staff take extra adults so that all children can hold an adult's hand. Children learn how to be safe when they are out because staff talk to them about staying on the pavement, holding hands, listening to instructions and avoiding the nettles.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of the symptoms of child abuse and the procedures to follow if they were to have concerns about a child in their care. Several staff have previously undertaken training in child protection and all staff are booked on courses to improve or refresh their knowledge this term. Children learn to protect themselves because staff use discussion times to help them build positive images of themselves and discuss issues such as going with strangers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages settle well in the friendly family atmosphere. They develop good relationships with staff, particularly with their key worker. The younger children enjoy the extended times of free play with toys and activities that are appropriate to their needs. Staff carry out observations of their development and use these to inform their planning. Although they do not make specific use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, they are meeting the needs of the younger children well.

The younger children enjoy imaginative play. They develop their hand control as they try to join together pieces of the train track and then push the trains along the track. They play with the garage and like pushing the cars down the ramp. They develop good listening skills as they take part in 'Melody Monkey' music sessions and listen to stories in small groups.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress towards the early learning goals. This is because staff have a sound knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and understand how children learn. They are aware of the breadth of learning that children gain from activities such as outdoor play in the wooded area. Children benefit from an interesting range of planned activities that covers all aspects of the six areas of learning. They generally progress well because staff evaluate activities carefully and record how different children have responded to a particular activity. They use these evaluations to inform future planning for the group but do not make consistent use of the evaluations to record children's individual development on their nursery profile record and check that each child is progressing in all areas of the curriculum. Children behave well and are enthusiastic learners. Staff are fully involved with the children to support their learning and development and they make excellent use of questioning and spontaneous learning opportunities, particularly at snack time.

Children develop their independence and self-help skills as they take turns to give out the fruit at snack time. They use good descriptive vocabulary such as 'crunchy' to describe the food and compare different textures, such as carrot sticks and bananas. Younger children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world because staff ask children which animals would eat

carrots and older children say that rabbits and donkeys would eat them. Children improve their shape recognition because staff ask them about the different shapes of the biscuits. They talk about their families and develop calculation skills because staff help them count how many boys and how many girls are in their family and add the numbers together. Children are aware of their local surroundings and talk excitedly about the new play equipment, such as a zip wire and a climbing wall that is being installed in the playground.

Children have a wonderful time outside. They thoroughly enjoy making complex constructions using the wide selection of resources provided by staff. They develop co-operative skills as they work together to make a big boat, attach a rope and then proudly take it for a sail pretending that the playground is the sea. They make dens in the woodland area and enjoy mark making with chalks on the playground. Children show excellent levels of concern for others as they draw a trail on the ground for the inspector to make sure she can find her way back to the pre-school room, and check on her return that she has used the trail to avoid getting lost.

Children enjoy using tools such as magnifying glasses to look closely at toys. They develop their use of maths language as staff talk to them about the different sizes of things they see. They talk about their eyes and think about what colour they are and look carefully at their friends' eyes too. They enjoy a wide range of creative activities using different materials to create collages, hand prints and pictures of their own faces as part of a topic on 'ourselves'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They develop a very strong sense of community in the group. Staff know them and their families extremely well and celebrate children's individuality as they encourage them to share their personal achievements at snack time. Children become aware of our wider society because they see posters around the room that depict children from other cultures and they use relevant equipment such as dressing up clothes, books and home corner equipment. They learn about other cultures and religions as they practise counting in different languages, enjoy activities such as tasting bread from different countries and celebrate festivals such as Eid and Chinese New Year. They discover that others are less fortunate than themselves as they help to fill shoe boxes at Christmas.

Children behave extremely well. They respond very positively to the excellent role models provided by staff and their calm manner and clear expectations for their behaviour. There are clear strategies in place for staff to manage challenging behaviour effectively. Children learn to consider the effect of their behaviour on others and whether it is making them feel sad or happy.

Children benefit from the good relationship that the staff have with their parents. Parents receive an informative brochure about the pre-school before their child attends. Children's ongoing needs are met adequately because parents gain information about their child's care through conversations with the manager at the end of a session. Children are protected because parents are made aware of how to make a complaint to the regulator and a log is in place to record any complaints that might be made.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents are aware of the six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage because parents receive information in

the welcome pack and information about the current topic is posted on the notice board. Children benefit from their family's involvement in their learning because parents or grandparents are strongly encouraged to come in and help regularly in the group, so they see what children are learning and can follow it up at home. However, parents receive very little information about their child's individual development and progress towards the early learning goals, so children do not receive support at home with specific learning goals or needs.

Effective procedures are in place to identify children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their needs are generally met because staff encourage parents to seek help from outside agencies. Staff attend relevant training themselves to increase their understanding of the support needed by such children and purchase special equipment to support particular needs. They have some awareness of the Code of Practice (2001) for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. They make regular observations of children's progress and support them well as they play. However, these children do not benefit from an individual education plan to identify measurable learning targets to support their progress and development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children flourish in the generally well-organised pre-school environment. All adults on the committee and on the staff have undergone checks with the Criminal Records Bureau and new staff receive appropriate induction that ensures that they are familiar with the pre-school policies and procedures. However, children are not fully safeguarded because staff do not keep a record of visitors to the premises.

Staff ratios are met and staff are suitably deployed throughout the sessions. They are committed to attending training sessions to update and improve their practice for the benefit of the children. However, children do not benefit from the expertise of sufficient qualified staff because there are some sessions when less than half of the staff working with the children hold a Level 2 qualification appropriate for the care or development of children. Children's welfare is safeguarded because all required policies are in place. Parents also provide all necessary information and consents before their child attends the group. Records are stored confidentially and where applicable kept for a minimum of two years. Relevant documentation is made available on request for inspection.

Leadership and management of the funded children is good. The three managers are committed to providing a stimulating learning environment where children have a good range of opportunities to learn and clearly put children and their best interests first. The managers work together well as a team and children are benefiting greatly from their different strengths because they complement each other well. They have a sound view of the strengths and weaknesses of the group and have made significant progress since the last inspection to improve the quality of the nursery education that they provide. The management committee understand their role to monitor the quality of the nursery education and do this through regular visits to the group and discussions with the managers.

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 was recommended to: develop the range of resources that reflect our wider society; ensure that all records and policies are on the premises and available

to parents; ensure that any person who has not been vetted is never left alone with children and ensure that hand washing facilities meet health and safety standards.

Children develop their awareness of our wider society because they use a good range of toys that reflect other cultures. Children are safeguarded because all records and policies are available on the premises and parents can ask to see them and all staff have Criminal Records Bureau checks in place. Children's hand washing facilities are not ideal, but staff change the bowl of warm water frequently to reduce the risk of cross-infection. Plans are going forward for a new building on this site and staff are aware that this is the only realistic way that the situation can be improved further.

At the last inspection of the nursery education the key issues were to improve the planning to show how all curriculum areas will be covered, to develop the assessment system to monitor children's progress and to provide adequate challenge for older and more able children. Children make good progress because excellent improvements have been made with the planning and it now shows clearly how the six areas of learning are covered and the relevant stepping stones. The assessment system has been developed and staff make regular observations of children's progress in all six areas of learning. Older and more able children make good progress because staff provide adequate challenge. They differentiate activities to meet their needs, they develop their learning through good use of spontaneous learning opportunities and in the summer term they provide an extended session for these children where they enjoy more structured learning opportunities.

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 satisfactory. 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):

- set out and implement an action plan to show how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a Level 2 qualification appropriate for the care or development of children
- improve admission procedures to include a request for information from the parent about any special dietary requirements the child may have

- improve procedures with regard to the Code of Practice (2001) for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs: use individual education plans to identify learning targets for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- improve procedures for keeping a record of all other people on the premises.

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 the information given to parents about their child's progress towards the early learning goals
- improve the recording of children's learning and progress towards the early learning goals.

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