

Tensor Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220301
Inspection date	06 March 2008
Inspector	Heidi Falconer
Setting Address	Tensor Village Hall, Main Street, Tensor, Northamptonshire, PE8 5HS
Telephone number	07718288477 R Fitch
E-mail	
Registered person	Tensor 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Tansor Playgroup opened over 40 years ago and operates from the main room in a village hall. It is situated in the village of Tansor, Northamptonshire. 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 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 28 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 17 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The playgroup employs five members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are offered a variety of snacks during the session, which are generally healthy and nutritious. These include foods such as crackers, cheese, apple, chocolate brioche and yoghurts. Staff are aware of children's allergies and parental wishes regarding their diet and these are taken into account when planning snacks. Children are able to easily access drinking water throughout the sessions to ensure that they do not become thirsty.

Children are familiar with the daily routines of washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet. However, the arrangements for hand washing do not effectively reduce the risk of cross infection or help children to learn what good hygiene procedures are. Although there is running water at the setting, staff fill a sink with soapy water which all children use to wash their hands in before eating and after using the toilet.

Activities are provided each day to encourage children to develop their small physical skills. They use hammers and nails as they bang shapes into cork boards and scissors are accessible to them each session. Children are able to practice skills such as climbing and balancing on outdoor equipment. Outside younger children balance on stepping stones whilst older and more able children balance along a bendy narrow trail. Children riding the wheeled toys have few collisions and demonstrate good control and awareness of space. Older children are beginning to understand the affect that exercise has on their bodies. They say 'when you run lots you puff cause you have run lots'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children's safety is significantly compromised as staff at the setting do not have clear understanding of their role in safeguarding children. Staff and the committee are uncertain of who to contact if a concern about a child arises or if an allegation was made against a member of staff. Their child protection policy lacks detail and would not support them in making a referral if a concerns should arise.

Children are cared for in a bright and airy village hall. Staff work hard create a welcoming environment for them. Each morning before the children arrive they set up the hall with a wide range of activities. Although staff are unable to display children's artwork on the walls they use display boards instead. Children use a varied range of toys and equipment which are age appropriate and well maintained. Children are able to access some of these resources freely.

Appropriate security systems are in place to keep children safe. An internal door is kept locked during the session to ensure that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. This also ensures that visitors are unable to enter unannounced. A fire evacuation plan is clearly displayed and this is practiced with the children periodically to ensure that they are aware of the procedure. Children are learning to keep themselves safe through discussion with staff. For example, during a story about a rabbit that was playing near a railway track, staff asked the children if it was safe to play near railways. The children replied 'it's not safe because of the trains'.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are greeted warmly by staff as they arrive at pre-school. As a consequence most separate easily from their parents and take a seat ready for the registration circle time. Children are happy to be at the playgroup and are interested by the activities and play resources on offer. For example, they enjoy building train tracks, completing number puzzles and playing with buckets and spades in the sand. After registration time they enjoy the opportunity to choose where they would like to play. However, there are fewer opportunities for them to choose additional resources and they are discouraged from mixing the toys such as putting the tractors in the sand. This limits their ability to express their ideas and extend their own play.

Children particularly enjoy taking part in role play and dressing up. They use dressing up resources frequently choosing to dress up as cowboys, brides and princesses and announce 'we are off to the king's castle'. Staff regularly change the role play area into different play situations to maintain children's interest. For example, it is currently a post office. Planning is in place, which covers the six areas of learning. However, the group do not use the Birth to three matters framework with the youngest children when planning or carrying out assessments for children under three.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a suitable knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn and use this to plan a suitable range of activities for children which cover all areas of learning. Staff monitor children's progress and complete assessments which show their progress towards the early learning goals. However, the frequency of observations and the information detailed in assessments are not always used effectively to inform planning. As a result, some activities do not offer sufficient challenge for older or more able children.

Children are keen to take part in creative activities at the playgroup. However, staff's use of pre-cuts shapes and templates limits children's ability to express and communicate their own ideas. For example, when making rabbit's hats as part of their Easter celebrations children were given hats with ears already cut out and attached. All the children were required to do was decorate the hats with paint which the staff had chosen.

Children recognise numbers written as figures well with some of the older children being able to recognise numbers up to ten. For example, as they play hopscotch in the playground they are able to throw beanbags to land on different numbered squares which are called out by staff. However, although staff are aware that some children can recognise numbers one to ten easily activities such as this are not extended. Children use mathematical language in context as they recognise and describe shape, position, size and quantity. For example, they compare the lengths of their wool snakes saying 'I've got a long one; I want to have some more wool so I can make my snake longer'.

Children are provided with a suitable range of activities which help them to find out about and identify features in their local community and the natural world. For example, they go for walks in the village to look at the church and watch building work at a new house being constructed. They observe changes as they grow tulip bulbs and cress. Children are beginning to show an interest in how things work. As they use an 'echo microphone' they take turns to show each other how to use it saying 'if you talk through it your voice gets louder'.

Children have some opportunities to practise their own 'pretend' writing in role play situations. For example, in the current post office area, children use pencils, paper and envelopes to write letters. Older children at the group show an interest in letters and can recognise the letters in their name. Children show an interest in books and generally listen well to stories. Many children are able to recognise their written name as they see their name cards at the snack table.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children take part in a suitable range of activities which help them to learn about the world they live in, other people's cultures and beliefs. They take part in activities which help them to learn about festivals which are celebrated around the world. For example, they recently tried eating rice with chopsticks as part of Chinese New Year activities. Parents are asked to complete an 'All about me' booklet for their child before they start at the playgroup. This asks parents to give the staff details of their individual needs such as they likes, dislikes, home language and favourite toys. Staff are able then to use this information to help young children settle at the group. Effective systems to support children's with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, staff work with parents and also liaise with other professionals.

Children's behaviour is generally good. They take turns with popular resources and play well together. For example, as they build train tracks, children work well together, sorting out the pieces and handing them to each other. However, staff do not consistently give children explanations about why some behaviour is not appropriate. As a consequence, they do not learn what is expected of them. For example, they do not always listen well at story time and throw books on the floor as their parents arrive. Overall children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage through the setting's prospectus and a booklet which is produced by the Northamptonshire County Council. Parents are able to discuss their child's progress and see their assessment files. However, they are not actively encouraged to add comments and share what they know about their child's achievements.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children's safety and overall well-being is significantly compromised through poor organisation. The limited organisation of documentation has resulted in written policies and procedures being out of date and not reflecting current legislation. The setting's certificate of registration and current insurance details are not on display and although an action plan was written following the last inspection, too little has been done to ensure that the action has been implemented. In addition, the committee are not clear in some of their roles and responsibilities. Overall, children's needs are not met.

However, suitable recruitment and vetting procedures are in place, overseen by the committee. These ensure children are cared for by suitable staff who have completed the required checks. Attendance registers are maintained and these detail when children, staff and visitors are in attendance.

The leadership and management of the nursery education are satisfactory. The setting has made satisfactory progress overall in tackling the weaknesses identified at the last education

inspection. Staff are competent within their roles and have a generally secure understanding of the Foundation Stage and use it in practice to support children's learning. However, on occasions older and more able children lack challenge and have limited opportunities to interpret their own ideas in creative activities. These weaknesses in the provision for nursery education have not been identified as there is no clear system in place to monitor the quality of the nursery education and evaluate its impact.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the playgroup were asked to ensure: the registration system shows children's times of arrival and departure; continue to encourage children to be independent, and organise resources so that they are more readily accessible to them; give children more opportunities to be active indoors and especially outside; ensure current legislation and guidance on special needs is understood and implemented by all staff; develop the policy and behaviour management strategies and continue to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and ensure the written statement addresses all the required elements.

The group have not met all of the recommendations from the last inspection. The staff have reviewed their attendance register and now accurately record children's times of arrival and departure. The organisation of resources now gives children some opportunities to make free choices about how they play and allows them some independence. Greater use is now made of the outdoor area to allow children to be more physically active. Staff have introduced effective systems to support children's with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the setting's child protection statement continues to lack sufficient detail and staff and committee members do not have a sound understanding of child protection issues. As a result children's safety and welfare is significantly compromised.

At the last nursery education inspection the setting were asked to continue to improve the links between planning, and observation and assessment to ensure that activities provided are challenging and relevant to individual children's interests and learning needs, review the organisation of sessions in order to provide children with more choice between activities and to increase staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage.

The setting have made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The organisation of sessions now allows children to freely choose between all of the activities which have been set out. This promotes their ability to work independently and with greater levels of involvement. The staff are now beginning to use their assessments of children's achievements to plan activities, however, at times some of these activities still lack challenge for older and more able children. All staff working with children entitled to nursery education have a satisfactory of the Foundation Stage.

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 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 satisfactory.

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 all staff are made aware of the child protection policy and that they understand the procedures to follow if concerns about a child arose or if an allegation was made against a member of staff
- comply with conditions of registration with regard to displaying the registration certificate
- review all written policies to ensure that they are inline with current legislation, this particularly refers to the policies for child protection and complaints
- improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations and set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of relevant matters such as changes in committee members.

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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that creative activities give children opportunities to express and communicate their own ideas
- extend opportunities for parents to share what they know about their child's progress
- extend the use of assessments to ensure that they are used effectively for planning activities which offer children appropriate challenges and build upon what they already know and can do
- develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the provision, using this to identify areas for future development.

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