

Styvechale Grange Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507727
Inspection date	19 February 2008
Inspector	Carol Johnson
Setting Address	Church Centre, Lonscale Drive, Coventry, West Midlands, CV3 6QR
Telephone number	02476 417865
E-mail	
Registered person	Styvechale Grange 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Styvechale Grange Playgroup opened in 1983 and is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the playgroup and members of the local community. It operates from a large room and associated facilities within the church centre. The playgroup is situated in Coventry and is open four mornings and three afternoons a week during term-time. Sessions are from 09.15 to 11.45 and 12.30 to 15.00. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 44 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 31 receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting has systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are effectively protected from the spread of infection because they are cared for in a clean and healthy environment. Staff members are good role models and they help children to understand why everyday hygiene routines are necessary. Children are encouraged to be independent with regards to their personal care and they have easy access to liquid soap and paper hand towels. Nappy changing routines are thorough and include the wearing of disposable aprons and gloves by staff.

Children benefit, in the event of illness or a medical emergency, from the well-stocked and easily accessible first aid supplies and the high number of staff who have attended first aid training. A clear written sickness policy makes sure that parents are aware of the setting's health procedures and know not to send children who are clearly unwell and could pose a potential health risk to others. Information is displayed, on the playgroup notice board, to inform parents of exclusion times and the various symptoms of a range of common childhood illnesses.

Children benefit from healthy options at snack times because a selection of fruit is offered on a regular basis. A self-service snack system is in operation and children choose when they want to have their snack and what items they wish to eat. They skilfully use tongs to move pieces of fruit from trays into their own bowls and this helps to prevent cross-contamination. Occasionally, snacks are varied and children are offered alternative choices such as pancakes, toast or biscuits. A staff member is placed near the snack area and is available to offer help and guidance to those children that need it. Children display good manners and sit at a table whilst eating and drinking. Children are effectively protected from the risks associated with special dietary needs and food allergies because children's individual dietary needs are known, noted and respected. Children are not at risk from dehydration as drinks are freely available.

Children benefit from lots of physical play and exercise that helps to develop their muscles, co-ordination and confidence. Children regularly enjoy 'free-flow' between the inside and outside environment. This offers them the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. The outdoor area includes areas for children to dig, run about and ride wheeled toys. Also, there are child-sized tables for children to participate in less energetic activities, for example, looking at books or drawing. Resources to support children's physical play are plentiful and a selection is used at every session. Indoors, there is plenty of space and this allows staff to plan indoor physical activities that incorporate a range of play equipment, for example, a climbing frame, small slide, balls and hoops. Children also enjoy moving to music and understand the need to find a space so they do not bump into or accidentally hurt others.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the provision's warm, spacious and welcoming premises. They are provided with furniture, toys and equipment that are safe, clean and developmentally appropriate. Children's independence and freedom of choice is suitably promoted as a variety of resources are presented at their height, for example, on tables or spread out on mats on the floor. Further resources can be safely and independently accessed from low-level storage units and toy boxes that are clearly labelled with both words and pictures.

Children's safety is generally assured because a variety of security and safety precautions are in place. The main door is secured whilst sessions are in operation and children are only released into the care of known individuals. Regularly reviewed written risk assessments are in place and there is a suitably trained member of staff responsible for health and safety issues. Staff carry out additional daily safety checks and most risks to children have been identified and minimised. However, children's safety is at potential risk because there is a gap under the fence to the side of the premises and there are strong fumes emanating from a heating vent sited on a wall in the outdoor play area.

Children's safety in the event of a need to evacuate the premises is satisfactorily protected because appropriate and suitably maintained fire safety equipment is in place. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in the event of a need to evacuate the building and fire drills are regularly carried out. Fire exits are marked and kept clear. Children are learning how to protect their own safety as staff help them to understand how to behave appropriately indoors and outside. They know they need to be careful when using wheeled toys and that they must not leave toys and equipment where they may pose a potential safety hazard to others.

Children's welfare is suitably protected because staff understand their role in child protection. They have a sound knowledge of the symptoms of child abuse and they know what action to take if they have concerns about a child. Children are not left unsupervised with unvetted persons, for example, students or visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive at the setting happy and eager to participate and learn. They have access to a suitable range of toys and equipment. Staff put out a selection before sessions start and children are able to make some independent choices from those that are available. They are encouraged to help staff tidy away some of the resources and children eagerly assist staff when asked.

Children enjoy a general range of spontaneous and planned activities that help to improve their all-round development. For example, activities available include imaginary play, painting, sand and water play and lots of creative opportunities. Planning systems are still under development and staff are not using their observations of children effectively to inform future planning. Written plans provide only very general information regarding children's individual needs and the purpose of activities. Topics are used as a focus for learning and a recent topic of 'Growth' inspired gardening activities in the outdoor area. Children planted bulbs, flowers and grew tomato plants. Sessions follow a familiar routine and this helps children to settle and feel secure as they generally know what is going to happen next.

Children are warmly welcomed on arrival at playgroup. A 'hello' song is sung at circle time, where each child is greeted in turn and this helps children to learn the names of others and contributes to a sense of belonging. Children have formed good relationships with staff and happily play both on their own and with others. Many children have begun to form friendships with others and this is evident in their play. There is lots of chat and laughter and children are keen to talk to adults and share things that are of interest to them.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and have attended a variety of additional training to help enhance

children's experiences. However, staff do not use observation and assessment and information from parents effectively to identify where each child is at along the stepping stones that lead towards the early learning goals. Consequently, there is limited information to accurately inform progress records and to ensure that staff know children's interests and challenge them appropriately to lead them towards the next step.

Children demonstrate developing independence skills. They go outside on a regular basis and this offers opportunities for them to practise putting on and doing up their own coats. Some children can do this with ease, whilst others still require some help from staff. Physical development is supported well. Children have lots of opportunities to develop their skills, both inside and outside and they show good progress in this area. Children are learning about what is expected of them in terms of acceptable behaviour and they know that they need to share and take turns. Staff encourage children to develop a sense of responsibility by involving them in everyday tasks such as tidying up, watering plants and helping to set up the snack area.

Children show an interest in books and stories and a general selection of both fiction and non-fiction books are accessible in the book corner. During story time children are divided into two different ability groups so that staff can select the right level of story for their needs. Staff hold children's attention by reading with expression and involving the children. They invite children to look at the pictures and encourage them to predict what might happen in the book. Staff make children aware of words that rhyme and encourage them to think and talk about their own experiences. Children are learning to recognise their own names as they self-register on arrival and more able children can write their names and those of others. Children demonstrate good pencil control and staff model how to write both numbers and letters as they write names and numbers on a wipe board during daily circle time. Children count the numbers of adults and children and this is recorded on the board, along with the names of the 'helpers' for that day.

Staff make time to talk with children and they use mathematical vocabulary as they intervene in play and chat during daily activities. They provide children with words to describe shape, position and number and children are learning about more and less during planned maths activities. More able children can count to 15 and beyond and children are able to name a range of two-dimensional shapes. The 'Maths area' contains a wealth of resources to support children's mathematical development, for example, number lines, sorting items and matching games. However, opportunities for children to calculate on a regular basis are not fully explored. Children have access to a computer at every session and skilfully move their fingers on the laptop keypad to move the cursor to where they want it to go. Most children require little adult intervention when using the computer; they are able to follow on-screen instructions and know how to start and exit different programmes.

Children are provided with plenty of opportunities and resources that encourage them to explore, discover and experiment. For example, they play with sand, water and dough and can dig in the soil outside. They go on walks in the local neighbourhood and staff encourage them to notice changes in nature and the weather. A range of creative activities is available at every session and children regularly take part in music and movement sessions. Children's imagination is encouraged through role-play experiences where they are able to create their own scenarios and act out familiar roles, for example, as parents and shopkeepers. Non-stereotypical play is encouraged and both boys and girls have equal access to dolls and dressing-up clothes. However, children's learning potential within role play experiences is not maximised as resources that encourage children to develop an awareness of how reading, writing and number are used in daily life are not readily available.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and their parents are warmly welcomed by the friendly and approachable staff. Children's sense of belonging and self-esteem is increased as staff encourage them to talk about home and share their experiences. Staff discuss individual care needs with parents and the setting's key-worker system helps to provide children and parents with a consistent adult with whom they can develop a trusting and supportive relationship. Children have access to a general range of toys, resources and activities that encourages them to develop a positive self-image and an understanding of diversity.

The provision has suitable systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The playgroup premises are all on one level and suitable toilet facilities are available. A variety of relevant training has been attended by staff and they know where to get additional help or support should it be required. Children's welfare is considered as staff are aware of the need to work collaboratively with parents and other agencies to try and meet children's individual needs.

Children are learning to behave and staff encourage them to be caring and considerate towards each other. Staff provide children with good role models; they react to any situations calmly and quietly and they explain the reasoning behind necessary rules and boundaries. Good behaviour is promptly acknowledged and praised. A range of coloured 'stampers' are used by staff to acknowledge some aspects of children's good behaviour, for example, sitting nicely and sharing. Children show good levels of self-esteem as they proudly show the stamps on their hands and describe why they have been given them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Relationships are suitably enhanced and supported because staff and parents maintain regular and friendly two-way communication. Settling-in arrangements for 'new' children are flexibly and carefully devised to suit individual requirements. All necessary paperwork is completed to ensure that children's individual care needs are exchanged. However, confidentiality for children and their families is not always respected as some personal information is currently accessible in public areas.

Parents receive regular newsletters and the playgroup notice board contains some useful information regarding policies and procedures. However, additional information given to parents and/or carers of children receiving funding for early education is limited. Little information is shared to help them understand the Foundation Stage curriculum and share what they know about their children. Also, although progress records are maintained for individual children, staff have yet to develop a clear and accurate system for gathering evidence to support these records.

Some strategies are in place to encourage parents and carers to be involved in the setting and children's learning. For example, they send items in for interest tables and they are asked if they want to come in and help on a parent rota. Also, they are invited onto the committee, can attend twice-weekly 'stay and play' sessions and are invited to social events. However, these strategies are not effectively explored or promoted and as a result children's learning potential is not fully maximised.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled in a welcoming environment. Staffing is organised appropriately to ensure children's welfare and safety. Suitable contingency plans are in place to cover both planned and unexpected absences and recruitment and vetting procedures are satisfactory. New staff and students go through a planned induction process to ensure that they are able to implement the setting's policies and procedures. Required documentation is in place and satisfactorily organised. However, children's welfare is not fully protected as records for staff and visitors do not always include their hours of attendance. Overall children's needs are met.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The committee meets on a regular basis and deals with issues such as staff recruitment, the premises and funding. The day to day running of the playgroup is left to the manager and she liaises between staff, parents and the committee and monitors the everyday care and education. Staff are clear regarding their individual and collective roles and responsibilities and demonstrate a commitment to improving their knowledge of relevant issues. They have attended a variety of training courses around subjects that include behaviour management, health and safety and supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff meetings are regular and these are used to discuss everyday practice issues and cascade training and good practice. The manager keeps abreast of childcare related subjects and any changes in legislation through reading publications, research on the internet and liaison with other professionals. She is aware of weaknesses that relate to planning, observation and assessment and has already sought help and guidance and is working with the staff team to implement suitable systems.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, the setting was asked to develop and implement the procedures currently in place to include lost children and ensure that children have an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote equality of opportunity with regard to disability.

Satisfactory improvements have been made to children's welfare. A lost child policy has been devised and shared with staff and a range of resources to promote diversity, in particular disability, is now easily accessible to children.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection the provider was asked to extend and develop children's learning during everyday routines and free play. Satisfactory steps have been taken to improve children's learning. For example, children's independence has been encouraged through the introduction of a 'rolling' independent self-service snack system and children self-register on arrival at playgroup. Staff have attended training in setting up a stimulating environment and a range of strategies have been introduced to encourage children's freedom of choice with regards to selecting resources and activities.

Also, the provider was asked to use what key staff know about individual children to improve planning and to ensure that more able children are appropriately challenged. Some improvements have been made with regards to this recommendation. For example, all children have been assigned a key worker, all staff have attended relevant training and external advice and support has been sought. However, staff have yet to settle on a system of observation, planning and

evaluation that works for them and successfully identifies children's individual needs. Consequently, a further recommendation has been raised at this inspection in this respect.

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 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):

- maintain confidentiality at all times
- ensure the hours of attendance for children and staff are accurately recorded
- ensure that the outdoor area is safe and secure; this specifically refers to the fumes coming from the heating vent and the gap under the fence.

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):

- develop systems for observation and assessment to help identify children's individual learning needs and interests and plan the next steps in their learning (also applies to care)
- provide more opportunities for children to calculate and to develop an increased awareness of how numbers and words are used in daily life
- increase strategies to help parents understand the Foundation Stage and to encourage them to be involved in children's learning.

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