

Playmates Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	155340
Inspection date	31 March 2008
Inspector	Amanda May
Setting Address	The Institute Hall, Crawley Road, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 4ET
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Registered person	The Trustees of Playmates Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 good. 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?

Playmates Pre-School opened in 1988. It operates from a large room in a community hall, located in Horsham. The setting serves the local area.

There are currently 26 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 19 funded three and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens Monday to Friday term-time only. On Monday and Tuesday sessions are from 09:15 until 12:15. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday sessions are from 09:15 until 14:45. This includes a lunch club.

There are seven full and part-time members of staff working with the children, of these five hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are on training programmes. The setting receives support from a mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and the FIRST inclusion team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy keeping fit and healthy as they play in the garden and whizz around on scooters and bikes. Children enjoy free-flow play into the garden and staff are always on hand to support them in their activities. Children also enjoy the chance to dance inside as they decide to have a disco. They put on their favourite music and dance together at the end of the hall. Children continue to make healthy choices as they enjoy taking time out of their play to visit the snack bar. Children help to prepare some fruit for themselves and their friends, and pour their own drinks of milk or water confidently. Children are provided with a variety of different snacks. They all help to prepare their food as they toast crumpets before spreading them with margarine.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure children's health is protected. Children use the toilet facilities independently and potty training resources are available to support children in their individual stages of development. Staff ensure that gloves are worn when children's nappies are changed. This ensures that the risk of illness and infection is effectively minimised. Accidents and the administration of medication are also well managed. Records are appropriately maintained and shared with parents who sign to acknowledge the entries. Parents are asked to collect children who fall unwell during the session and information is shared with parents about any outbreaks of contagious illnesses. This helps to ensure that other children who are attending the setting are protected from cross-infection whilst ensuring that their health is maintained.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in premises which are welcoming, secure and safe both indoors and out. Staff demonstrate a clear awareness of potential risks within the setting and minimise these effectively as they become evident. Staff have worked hard to ensure the outside play area is safe by covering low level metal fencing with soft crash barriers. Children develop their awareness of how they can look after themselves and stay safe as they play. They use plastic knives to cut up fruit and staff remind children consistently about the importance of walking inside.

Staff provide children with the opportunity to practise fire drills whilst they are attending the setting. They understand what the fire alarm sounds like and know to walk out together to the designated meeting point. Staff have their own responsibilities in supporting children and know these accordingly. Records are currently marked within the register when a fire drill has been practised. However, as these are not currently evaluated, staff are unaware of whether children are being effectively supported in their understanding.

Children are protected through staff awareness of issues surrounding safeguarding children. Documents are in place for staff to view to ensure their knowledge is current and thorough. The manager takes responsibility for ensuring that children are effectively protected and secure written procedures are in place for staff and parents to view. The setting understands the importance of recording existing injuries that a child may attend with and is aware of the importance of monitoring this to ensure children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children experience a varied and exciting range of activities which contribute very well to their development. Children are very confident and secure friendships are in place. Staff spend time listening to what children have to say and take care to bend down to speak to them at their level. Children's self-esteem is enhanced and children visibly enjoy talking to members of staff about their experiences.

Children play very well together and have many opportunities to self-select their resources within all areas of their care and learning. Children choose the activities which interest them and are effectively supported by staff who join in their play.

The provision provides children with the opportunity to enjoy many trips and outdoor activities including visits to the farm in the Summer as well as pond-dipping in the woods. Children's work is displayed around the setting on a number of coloured display boards. This allows children to see the pictures they have made and ensures children are cared for in a setting which is bright, colourful and welcoming.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making sound progress in their learning and understanding in line with the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. A range of activities are provided for children to choose from covering all areas of learning.

Planning is carried out by the manager of the setting in discussion with staff. They work together to share ideas and suggestions, and plan activities and themes accordingly. Plans include a wide range of stepping stones of learning for each activity. As a result, activities lack clear objectives, therefore, learning opportunities are missed. Activity focus sheets have been devised to support staff in ensuring that children are supported in some key learning objectives as they participate in adult-led activities. This allows staff to have some opportunity to support children in their awareness.

The majority of staff are confident in their teaching and work well together to provide each other with support and share information about children's development and progress. Staff carry out some observations of children during play, however, as many of these are generally done during adult-led activities, important aspects of children's learning and development in child-led play are missed.

Staff evaluate adult-led activities which have been enjoyed by the children and spend time discussing what ideas work and how children react to the activity. This allows staff to generally be able to improve teaching as they reflect on their practice and the children's enjoyment.

Staff provide some exciting opportunities to develop and extend children's learning. Staff have recently extended opportunities for children to enjoy role play. Children all work together to paint and decorate a large castle. They stick on paper flowers before helping to make a working drawbridge. Staff extend the activity further by planning a banquet lunch for the children who arrive dressed up as princesses and knights. Children wear the special hats that they have made to their lunch. This demonstrates that staff are able to recognise children's interests and work hard to capture these within some areas of their play.

Children are able to help themselves to a range of resources to develop their early writing skills and mark-making. They sit at the table and concentrate as they draw. A child who is interested in dinosaurs finds some stencils which they lay on a piece of paper. Staff talk about the different dinosaurs they have found and children are encouraged to practise their pencil control as they draw around the shapes.

Children show interest as they discover books and stories which they can help themselves to from the book corner. Children listen as staff read to them, doing the actions together as they go. Simple rhymes and songs are also enjoyed by the children who join in enthusiastically. Children are able to use the tape recorder to listen to music and in doing so, demonstrate a clear understanding of how to work simple technology.

Children extend their knowledge and understanding of the world as they help care for the group's pet two African snails. Children help to spray the snails with water and help to feed them with lettuce and cucumber. Staff support children in their awareness of the wider world as a large map is displayed with lots of different animals on. Children show interest in their activities and enjoy being able to experiment as they look at different mini-beasts and the snails with a magnifying glass.

Children are supported effectively in their awareness and use of number. Staff encourage children to develop their awareness of size and shape through simple questioning during model making with play-dough. Children point out to a member of staff the different shapes they have made with the dough and staff praise them encouragingly. Staff also talk to the children about the specific number, shape and colour of the week at registration time. Children develop their awareness of these and confidently call out the different shapes.

Although children are making sound progress in their learning, key objectives of each activity are generally not specified. Therefore staff are not always using questioning or providing challenge to its best advantage to aid children progress in their learning and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show kindness and compassion to their friends as they play together nicely. Children are eager to help each other in their activities and work together as they play on the computer. Staff spend time encouraging children to think about the difference between right and wrong, and children demonstrate a good awareness of rules and taking turns as they share their news with their friends at registration. Children eagerly accept stickers when they have been kind or behaved well and smile proudly before going home to show their parents. Staff work hard with families to provide good consistency of care, particularly in relation to children who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Staff have experience of working with children with additional needs and support them very well through arranging home visits and seeking funding to increase staff numbers so that more support to children can be provided. Staff are aware that some children can develop learning difficulties and disabilities, and know to support them by sharing information with parents and providing activities which help them to reach and exceed their potential. Children are also very well supported through the wide use of visual aids. They are able to show pictures to staff which aid communication problems, whilst providing children with directions of how to use equipment or resources properly. This helps to develop children's confidence whilst allowing them to take some responsibility for their own care.

Children develop their awareness of the local community and the wider world as they learn about people from different countries and cultures. As a result, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. They share their own experiences about the different countries they have visited and explain to their friends the different animals which live there. Staff provide many opportunities for children to experiment as they dress up in costumes from around the world and celebrate festivals such as Eid and the Jewish festival Yom Kippur, where they dip apples into honey to celebrate the new year. The manager has recently extended the registration forms in place through asking parents for information about children's religious and cultural beliefs. This allows staff to better support children in their individual cultures and experiences.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to come into the setting to help. Information about the curriculum for the Foundation Stage is shared with parents through themes and information about the letters and numbers of the week being sent home. A copy of the stepping stones of learning is also provided for parents to refer to. However, the provision lacks the procedures for sharing learning objectives with parents on a daily or weekly basis. As a result, parents are not able to easily see what children have achieved through the activities on offer to them in respect of their learning.

Children's development profiles are kept updated by staff who are available to discuss children's achievements and progress at the end of each session if required. Annual meetings are also held for parents to discuss any concerns or see children's progress files with the manager. The provision shares information with parents through written procedures being displayed on the notice board, which also contains other informative information that parents may find useful and beneficial.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit highly from space within the setting being organised very well. Children can help themselves to resources in many instances and staff deploy themselves effectively to ensure that children are supported in their play. Staff work well together to support children and regularly share best practice. The manager has thorough recruitment procedures in place to ensure that the staff who are recruited are suitable and experienced in caring for children. Application forms are generally in place and two references are sought to ensure that staff are suitable to become part of the team. However, the current application forms lack some detail.

The manager insists that staff all gain relevant child-care qualifications. This ensures that staff are effective as they work together to provide children with good levels of care. The manager also ensures that criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are sought for all staff, although details for recording when these checks have been received are not currently effective.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Team meetings are carried out each term to discuss up and coming activities and themes, ensuring that all staff are aware of the different areas of learning to be covered within the planning. The manager observes staff in their teaching and as she is very hands-on in providing care and education, she is able to support staff and suggest areas of development.

Appraisals are completed for all members of staff and this provides the manager with the opportunity to discuss training needs. The manager provides staff with opportunities to meet

other professionals from local child care provisions and encourages them to share ideas to enable them to help enhance and improve the service provided. Children benefit from new ideas being included into the curriculum and enjoy the activities on offer.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the provider was recommended to make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the procedure to be followed if they have a complaint, improve the information given to parents regarding the educational programme provided and ensure that effective teaching methods are used to enable children to participate in activities that are challenging and develop children's concept of simple calculation.

The setting was also recommended to develop planning to include; the learning intention of activities, how activities will be adapted for children's differing levels of ability and the evaluation of activities to provide the information required for future planning.

The setting has effectively addressed these issues. A written complaints procedure is in place and is displayed on the notice board for parents to view at any time. Information regarding the education provided at the setting is also shared with parents. The setting sends home newsletters which contain information about over-arching themes and encourages parents to get involved as they help their child write a diary about their time with Boris the Bear. However, the amount of information could be extended to ensure that parents are aware of specific learning objectives.

Effective teaching methods are used to encourage children to participate in activities which are relevant and challenging for their individual stages of learning and development. Children are encouraged to make some links between number and make some simple calculations as they cut up fruit to eat with their friends for a snack. Adult-led activities are generally evaluated and staff spend time discussing with their colleagues which activities worked well and how they could be improved. However, the evaluation of child-led play would ensure that all activities and plans provide continuous challenge and aid children further in their development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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):

- develop current fire drill procedures to ensure that they are regularly practised and evaluated, allowing staff to all be aware of children's individual needs and levels of understanding
- develop methods for ensuring that information about previous employment and qualifications is sought on application forms and devise methods for recording when CRB checks have been completed.

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 plans to include key learning objectives in planned child-led activities to extend children's early learning and devise methods for sharing this information with parents
- ensure observations and evaluations are made regularly and link to developmental files, in order to ensure teaching is specific to children's individual learning needs.

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