



AJ's Out of School Child Care

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	147492
Inspection date	22 August 2005
Inspector	Maggie Thorp
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Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

AJ's Play Out of School Child Care is one of two provisions and is privately owned. It has been registered since 1997. The group operate from St Joseph's Junior School which is situated off the Watford way and is close to local amenities. The areas of the school that are accessed by the children and used by the group are the dining hall, gym, girls and boys toilets, play room, art room, first aid room, staff toilets, staff room and the playground.

The group caters for children from the local community and those who attend the school. There are currently 80 children under eight years on roll and a maximum of

40 may attend at any one time. The group is not registered for overnight care. Some children attending have special needs. Children's attendance varies on a daily basis. Some children speak English as an additional language. The group also cater for children aged 8 to 11 years. The group is open from Monday to Friday during school holidays from 09:00 until 17:30.

At present there are eleven staff including the owners caring for children across both the older and younger age ranges, four of whom are who are appropriately qualified to work with children under eight. The staffing levels each day reflect the required ratios, of one to eight and the number of places filled.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health and wellbeing is promoted by the general cleanliness of premises and the regular checks made to ensure this is maintained throughout the day. Children are safely administered medicines, a good percentage of staff are first aid trained to offer appropriate care when accidents occur. Steps to stop cross infection further encourage children's health and their understanding of keeping healthy. Children are reminded about the importance of hand washing and the playscheme provide parents with clear guidance about keeping children with infections at home.

Care is taken to avoid any allergy a child may have being triggered. Children eat only the food they bring from home and the sweets they buy from the tuck shop in the afternoon. Special dietary needs are recorded. However, children cannot eat when they are hungry. The four hour morning session has no break for a snack and children saying they are hungry are asked to wait until one o'clock.

Children enjoy the use of the playground outdoors and the hall for lively games and sports throughout the day. They have plenty of exercise and learn new skills as they play with hoops, balls, scooters, skipping ropes and join in large group games.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a safe, secure environment and have sufficient space for play in the hall, playroom, TV room and art room plus a large outside playground. Children learn about keeping safe in the playscheme premises, when swimming and on outings, through the talk they have all together at the beginning of each day and through reminders during activities. Children's safety is further enhanced by the children wearing florescent waistcoats with the playscheme name on to ensure they are easily identified on outings and the two trained life guards supervising swimming sessions.

The children are independent and enjoy using the wide range of art, sports, and imaginative play resources and many games that are easily accessible. The equipment is in good condition, plentiful and well suited to the ages and interests of

the children attending. Children can eat and relax in comfort at meal times and in the playroom and TV room.

Staff are vigilant about children's security at arrival and collection times and they use walkie talkie radios to ensure everyone knows when children are leaving a group to go to another area of the premises. Children use toilets easily and safely and are protected by good fire safety at the group. However, children's safety is not promoted by the lack of clarity over which staff are fully checked. Sometimes staff without full checks are in sole charge of a group of children for short periods.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are generally relaxed and confident in the welcoming environment of the group. They learn new skills and enjoy the challenges offered by the programme. Children participated with great enthusiasm in African workshops put on by a visiting group. They learnt dances, percussion techniques and lots about the different areas of Africa. Children enjoy using the play room. They sit in pairs at the computers refining their skills as they play games on them together. Other children enjoy the other games available. Children playing Jenco with staff, laugh and chat together about techniques for removing blocks without toppling the tower.

Children's creativity and imagination is generally fostered well. Many children use the well set out imaginative play resources throughout the day. They dress up and play at taking their babies out, cooking and acting out different roles. In the art room children paint, draw and they decorate little wooden key fobs and yo-yos that they can then take home.

Children enjoy the wide variety of outings planned. They go swimming regularly during most play scheme weeks and this is very popular. Children talk with enthusiasm of the things they have seen at the Natural History Museum and those who have been before enthuse others about the planned outing to Royal Air Force Museum.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children develop self-esteem and learn to value each other through the welcoming environment of the playscheme. New children are paired with another child from their school to help them settle in and sensitive support is provided by adults if children are upset. All children interact well together and children with special needs can join in because staff are alert to their needs. Artwork, visiting artists and imaginative play resources all help children to value their own and others cultures.

Children co-operate well with staff. They understand what they cannot do and why, but not always what they can do. Some children in lively party games sessions do not realise they can opt out of this and choose another quieter activity. Sometimes staff

apply rules about children putting their hands up in order to speak in a small group activity and this inhibits children's play and enthusiasm. Children are very alert to the no bullying policy and their understanding of how to deal with bullies is fostered well by little role play sessions.

Children benefit from the good communication between staff and their parents. Parents receive sufficient information to help them be aware of the weekly programme so they can chat to children about their day and ensure they are prepared for coming outings and activities such as swimming. The managers listen to parent's concerns and adjust how they organise aspects of the playscheme to accommodate these.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are confident and have fun in this generally well organised playscheme. They are protected by the playscheme's recruitment systems which ensure children are being cared for by staff who are suitable and that Ofsted is informed of new staff so checks can be carried out. The quality of care children receive is underpinned by satisfactory policies and very comprehensive risk assessment for outings, swimming and for keeping track of where children are on the premises.

However, there are aspects of the organisation that do not foster children's well-being. Staff are sometimes responsible for groups larger than the required ratios, staff who are not fully checked are in sole charge of children on occasions and new staff are not always clear about how flexible they can be in applying the playscheme rules. Children enjoy the well organised programme of activities but the daily schedule is not sufficiently flexible to cater for children who are hungry during the morning.

Good record keeping ensures that children's individual needs are known, that parents can be easily contacted and that they are kept well informed of any particular care given to their child during the day. Overall the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the quality of children's care has improved in all the areas identified. The number of qualified staff working with the four to eight year olds has increased to the required 50% level. The safety procedures ensure hazards are not accessible to the children and their daily attendance is carefully recorded so that staff always know which children are on the premises.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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):

- Provide sufficient opportunities throughout the day when children can eat if they are hungry.
- Improve the team's awareness and practice in regard to which staff are checked and can be left unsupervised with children and which staff must not be, and in developing ways of ensuring that the appropriate staff child ratios are always maintained.
- Ensure children are aware of the freedom they have to choose to opt out of activities and that all staff have appropriate expectations of children's behaviour.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk