

Toybox Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113799
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Inspector	Joanne Lindsey Caswell
Setting Address	Wakehams Green Community Centre, Heathfield, Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 3NU
Telephone number	01293 883034
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Registered person	Toybox 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?

Toybox Playgroup has been registered since 1992, although it has been established in the local area for many years. It offers sessional care and operates from Wakehams Green Community Centre in Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex. The playgroup serves the local community. Children have access to a large hall, toilets and hand washing facilities. An adjoining public playground is used for supervised outdoor play. A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. The playgroup is open Monday to Friday, during term time only, from 09:30 to 12:00.

There are currently 39 children, aged from two to four years, on roll. This includes 33 children who receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

A team of six staff work with the children. Of these, five staff hold recognised early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There is good provision in place for children to develop a healthy lifestyle. Children clearly understand the importance of personal care routines and recognise why they must wash their hands before eating and after toileting. Effective procedures are in place to help children develop independence with these routines. For example, there are clear, pictorial reminders which are displayed at low level, helping to reinforce the importance of washing hands thoroughly with soap and water. In addition, within the playgroup routine children learn about healthy eating and nutrition. As a result, children recognise which foods are good for them. The snack time routine is relaxed and children enjoy a healthy range of different fruits and raw vegetables. Children choose from mainly healthy drinks and fresh drinking water is available throughout the playgroup session, ensuring that children remain hydrated at all times.

Children enjoy many activities which encourage their physical development. For example, children develop their manipulative skills and dexterity by handling resources such as pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, scissors and construction pieces. They confidently knead with dough, pour their own drinks and undertake activities, such as threading, to develop their hand/eye co-ordination. Children enjoy many active games and enjoy using a range of resources and apparatus to develop their spatial awareness, muscle control and balancing skills. For example, children crawl through tunnels, climb on the climbing frame, play active games with the parachute, participate in action songs and dance and move around freely in the adjoining playground.

All relevant information is obtained and recorded regarding children's health needs. This ensures that staff are made aware of any allergies, medical needs or dietary preferences. As a result, children's welfare is promoted appropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are well-presented and staff provide a colourful, bright and welcoming environment for children. The effective use of temporary, low level display boards and partitions enables children to see their work displayed clearly. This helps to create a stimulating and child-centred environment. Relevant safety checks and precautions ensure that the premises are secure and unauthorised visitors are prevented from accessing the building. Before using the adjoining public playground staff check it thoroughly to ensure it is safe for children.

Children play with a very good selection of toys and resources, all of which are seen to be of high quality and are safe for children's use.

There are effective procedures in place to help children learn about safety. For example, children remind one another of the playgroup's 'Golden Rules', such as not running inside. This helps children to understand how to keep themselves, and others, safe. Whilst using tools such as scissors children recognise that they must be careful and are aware of the possible risks. Staff take generally effective precautions to ensure children's safety. For example, good staff deployment at the beginning and end of each session ensures that children never leave the premises unsupervised and are only collected by authorised adults. The kitchen is inaccessible to children and all staff and children are familiar with the emergency evacuation procedure.

However, low level, unprotected radiators pose potential risks to children and this has an impact on their safety.

Children's welfare is promoted as staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding children. All staff complete appropriate training to ensure they are familiar with relevant procedures and appropriate records are maintained to ensure children's safety and well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop very positive attitudes towards learning as they clearly enjoy their morning at playgroup. They arrive with enthusiasm and excitement and greet their friends and the staff positively. All children's care needs are supported extremely well. Staff have a very warm, kind and sensitive approach and are very much led by the children. Staff play alongside children and gently extend their play and learning through effective interaction. Children approach staff confidently, clearly aware that staff will respond positively to them. There is a very happy, busy and fun atmosphere evident and children are engaged in a very good selection of practical, well-planned activities. This enables children to benefit from rich, valuable play opportunities with good provision for child-initiated play and learning. As a result, children develop their interests and curiosity and enjoy very warm relationships with staff.

The care and learning needs of the younger children are planned for effectively. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework and use this appropriately to monitor the children's development.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are skilled early years practitioners who understand the value of providing practical, fun learning opportunities. As a result, children enjoy their learning and develop high levels of self-confidence and self-assurance. Children's individual needs are clearly respected by staff who provide children with total freedom of choice. As a result, children show sustained interest and concentration in activities. Staff are totally committed to meeting all children's needs and help to ensure a smooth and seamless transition between playgroup and school. There is good liaison in place between the playgroup staff and local schools. An effective 'job share' arrangement with school staff enables visits to be carried out between the two settings. An organised key worker system is in place to ensure that children's progress towards the early learning goals is appropriately planned for and met. Staff regularly carry out observations on children, although these are not always sufficiently evaluated to identify children's next steps in learning.

Children benefit from many practical learning opportunities and this is particularly evident in the provision of mathematical activities. For example, children thoroughly enjoy playing in the role play cake shop and experiment with the concepts of number, size, shape, weight and money. Children show a clear awareness of numbers and confidently sort items into number groups and by different attributes, such as colour, size and shape. Staff respond to children's interests and adapt the timetable of activities and planning of themes and topics based on the children's own suggestions. As a result, children are competent, independent learners with the confidence to make their own choices.

Children have very good social skills. They play co-operatively with their friends and share and negotiate well in their play. Children talk positively about how they are feeling and are keen

to discuss whether they are happy or sad during the morning greeting song. Children know the names of their friends and show very positive relationships with each other.

The provision for children's communication development is very good. Children converse confidently with adults and clearly make their needs understood. There is good support in place for children who are learning English as an additional language and the provision of dual-language books helps children to see other languages reflected in print. Children talk confidently about their favourite books and stories and take part in organised events, such as celebrating World Book Day and dressing as characters from books. This inspires children to make their own books and enjoy 'reading' stories to their friends. The many examples of printed text and notices on display throughout the playgroup help children to understand that words carry meaning. This encourages children to develop their writing skills and children have good opportunities to use writing for a purpose. For example, children make cards for their parents and write their names on their pictures and art work.

There are good opportunities for children to explore nature. They observe the weather each day and are aware of seasonal change. Recently, children enjoyed observing the life cycle of butterflies. Children confidently use resources such as magnifying glasses and binoculars, and clearly understand what they are used for. They use the computer competently and select their own programs and use the mouse skilfully. Children develop an awareness of the role of others and the community in which they live. They regularly visit the local schools and recognise features of the neighbouring community, such as the shop and post box where children posted their home-made Valentine's cards.

Children develop their imagination through their play. There is very good provision for role play and children happily re-enact scenes which are familiar to them. Children's art work is displayed around the room and clearly reflects their own creativity. Children access creative resources easily and make their own pictures. There are good opportunities for children to handle a range of different textures, such as dough, sand and shaving foam. This enables children to explore using their senses and experience a range of textures and materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's personal needs are met very well. Staff fully respect children as individuals and clearly understand their different characters and personalities. The information gained from parents in the 'All About Me' book is used extremely well and staff take time to get to know children's individual likes and dislikes. For example, to help a new child settle into the playgroup, staff noted what toys and activities the parent had stated he liked and made sure these activities were available on the days the child attended playgroup. Children's personal preferences are clearly respected by all staff. For example, if children choose not to participate in group activities or do not wish to take part in the morning greeting song, this is accepted and respected and no child is forced to participate.

Children have very good opportunities to learn to respect the needs of others. They regularly take part in charity and fund raising events and begin to recognise and celebrate diversity. There are many images of the modern world reflected in the children's toys and play materials and the supporting resources. As a result, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

There is good support in place for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff work closely with parents and any external agencies to ensure children's personal needs are recognised and addressed.

Children behave very well. They form close friendships with their peers and clearly understand acceptable behaviour levels. Children fully understand the playgroup's simple 'Golden Rules' and gently remind one another of these. Children treat each other with courtesy and respect and spontaneously apologise to one another and use 'please' and 'thank you' without having to be reminded.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff provide a great deal of written information for parents regarding the Foundation Stage curriculum and the playgroup's policies and procedures. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved with the playgroup and a parent rota system is in place. This gives parents a valuable insight into the work of the playgroup and the benefits of child-initiated play and learning. There are also opportunities for parents to become involved in the management committee. There are good lines of communication in place between parents and staff and parents clearly understand who their child's key worker is. Effective systems are in place to strengthen the partnerships formed between staff and parents. For example, to assist a child in sharing their news from home at playgroup, parents can complete an 'Ask Me About...' sheet. In addition, the Book Club is a good system for encouraging links between playgroup and home and enables parents to share books and enjoy stories at home with their children. Feedback from staff is given on a daily basis regarding the playgroup's activities and all necessary parents' consent is obtained for all care routines.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The daily routine is organised effectively around the needs of the children. A good balance of child-initiated play, adult-led activities and group times offer a stimulating, varied and interesting routine. More than half the staff hold recognised early years qualifications and are committed to keeping their knowledge and skills up-to-date through further training. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to cover staff absence, ensuring consistency in routines for children. Staff have a secure understanding of the playgroup's policies and procedures and this has a positive impact on the smooth organisation of the group.

Relevant vetting procedures are in place for all staff members and parent helpers and visitors are fully supervised at all times. However, insufficient action has been taken to ensure that all members of the management committee are vetted. As a result, the details of the management committee have not been shared with Ofsted and this is a breach in regulations.

Appropriate documentation is in place to support the organisation of the playgroup. Staff are aware of all policies and procedures and necessary records are in place to promote children's health and welfare. Secure procedures are in place to ensure that all documentation is kept confidential.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The playgroup supervisor is a strong manager and is well-respected by the staff. She has a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and leads a dedicated, supportive and committed team. At present, the lack of involvement from the committee restricts the management from overseeing the delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff development is a priority of the supervisor and she ensures that all staff benefit from regular appraisals and updated training.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Care inspection, one recommendation was raised. This related to keeping a record of children's attendance times. Staff have addressed this by reviewing the format of the attendance register to include all necessary information. This ensures that documentation supports children's welfare and is accurate at all times to ensure children's safety.

At the last Nursery Education inspection, two key issues were raised. These related to the format of planning for children's individual learning and the teaching of large groups. Staff have partly addressed these issues. The management of large group activities has been improved through better staff deployment. This ensures that all children receive appropriate attention and their interests remain focused on the activity.

The format of curriculum planning has been reviewed and generally provision is made for planning for children's individual learning. Staff monitor and review daily activities in order to inform further planning and children's interests and ideas are listened to and acknowledged. Although staff carry out regular observations on children's progress, these are not always sufficiently evaluated in order to identify children's next steps in learning. Therefore, this aspect still remains a weakness.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted which 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

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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):

- ensure the radiators are made safe for children
- ensure that relevant vetting procedures are completed for all members of the management committee

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 use of observation in order to identify, and plan for, children's next steps in 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