

Kennington Playgroup (The)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	133403
Inspection date	22 January 2008
Inspector	Jill Milton
Setting Address	Old School Buildings, St Swithun's School, The Avenue, Kennington, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX1 5PP
Telephone number	01865 326606
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Registered person	The Kennington 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 good. 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?

The Kennington Playgroup opened in 1969 and is managed by a voluntary committee. It operates from two rooms in the Old School Building in the grounds of St. Swithun's school in the centre of the village of Kennington in Oxfordshire. Children have access to secure enclosed play areas. The playgroup serves the local communities.

The playgroup opens from 09.00 to 12.00 on weekdays during school term time and children attend for a variety of sessions. Separate afternoon sessions are also offered on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 12.30 to 15.00. A maximum of 24 children aged between two and five years may attend at any one time. There are currently 49 children on roll and of these 27 receive nursery education funding. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The playgroup also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

There are eight staff working with the children, five of whom have a recognised early years qualification. The playgroup receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because the staff have competent procedures in place. The staff team ensure their first aid training is up-to-date and there are generous first aid supplies on site. There is good liaison with parents so that children have their health needs met effectively. This includes finding out about any dietary requirements and reminding families of the sickness policy of the playgroup. Children learn consistent messages regarding hand washing and they see good examples of staff maintaining the cleanliness of the setting. Staff make frequent use of antibacterial gel to reduce children's risk of infection.

Children have exciting selections of fresh fruits and vegetables to sample at snack time. They make successful attempts at pouring their own drinks and they can access water at any time during the sessions. The children often take part in cooking activities to provide them with encouraging messages about healthy eating. Snack times are sociable occasions though the children can become quite restless as they wait for food to arrive or for the next activity to begin. Outdoor play in one of two garden areas is popular and many children choose this option when free-flow play to the outside begins. Children show good balance skills and spatial awareness as they steer toys around the garden and they have high quality climbing equipment on which to stretch their physical abilities. Alternative active play equipment is in use inside the setting too and this coupled with plenty of action songs means children are progressing well and enjoying the benefits of energetic play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy coming to play in this welcoming group. Staff make good use of the two available rooms to display a whole array of posters, art work and photographs of the children. Colourful fabrics and lots of low-level storage help to create a pleasant atmosphere. The staff work hard to keep the children safe and comfortable as they play and should problems arise, for example with the heating, then staff act sensibly to alert help and obtain extra equipment. Children play with a broad range of stimulating resources that support all the areas of their development. The extensive range is in good condition and staff renew areas as funds allow, for example restocking the book corner with an attractive range of stories that attract the children's attention. There is a good emphasis on natural materials with displays of real objects like shells for children to handle and a netted cage of stick insects to observe.

Children play in safe surroundings where staff consistently monitor the indoor and outdoor areas. There are a number of successful safety procedures in place, for example buzzer alerts when doors open or the request to parents for family passwords. Staff use daily written risk assessments of all areas to ensure they maintain safe and suitable environments for young children to play. Staff have a strong understanding of the area of child protection. They attend the latest training courses to ensure their knowledge is up-to-date and they maintain an accessible range of information on child protection. Staff share their policy on this area with parents so that they are aware of staff responsibilities to work in the best interests of children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children receive a warm welcome into the group and they receive help to separate from their parents. They soon involve themselves in the exciting activities and at times during the session they receive reassurance from the staff if they become a bit unsure. Staff have a good understanding of the Birth to three matters framework for working with the younger children. They cross-reference all aspects of their care to the framework to make sure they are offering children a successful mix of activities. Younger ones have plenty of chance to experience sensory play and to make their own choices. Children of all ages spend a happy and busy time at playgroup where there is a stimulating range of activities on offer.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children are making good progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. The staff understand how to plan effectively so that all areas of the curriculum receive a balance of daily activities. Staff put time and careful thought into planning and they are clear about the aims of the activities. Helpful notes are on show around the setting to remind staff of the focus of the week, for example near the sand tray a reminder to 'use size language such as big and little'.

The children are developing positive attitudes to learning as they choose from the wide range of options. They are learning to share and take turns, for example when a small group of four play a colour and shape matching game with a dice. They are developing their independence as they manage their own coats and outdoor shoes with varying degrees of adult support and many visit the bathroom as they need to. Children are developing confidence to speak out during large group times and share items they bring in from home. Staff listen to children and show an interest when they talk about their families and events like holidays. Children frequently visit the colourful book corner and adults help to foster an early enjoyment of story books. Children see different types of print around the playgroup and they are enjoying using several different areas for their early mark-making. This is effective when coupled with imaginative play such as a hospital where children use clipboards to take 'telephone messages' and make 'notes'. Children recognise their own names when they arrive at playgroup and many are starting to write the letters of their names though at times they lack suitable guidance in how to form the letters.

Children take part in fun activities to learn about numbers, such as action songs counting down from 10 dinosaurs. Resources to support early mathematics are plentiful and children select games they know they like for counting, sorting and matching. Children are active learners when they explore shape and volume with containers in the water tray or when building a house from large construction bricks in the garden. Children are progressing well with their knowledge and understanding of the world. They select to play at the table where they use recycled materials like card, foil and wood shavings to make their own constructions. They are confident at using a computer mouse and play with items like binoculars and sand timers which all help to develop good co-ordination and manipulative skills. Children can handle some exciting natural objects like bones and animal skulls, effectively linked by staff to the current theme of dinosaurs. Staff are good at providing links across the curriculum to reinforce ideas and this may include the use of story books, art work and visits to local museums. Children and staff make photograph books of such visits to recall later on what happened.

Children choose imaginative play with enthusiasm and they have plenty of time during the sessions to follow their own ideas. They use a wide range of props to develop their own stories and to play with friends. Staff ensure the weekly plans include opportunities for children to experience music and outside visitors come in to share music times. The staff use a key person system to monitor the children's development and levels of support overall are good. They record dated observations and photographs of the children's achievements and use the information to plan activities for each child to help them progress to the next step. However delays in collating all the written information may result in gaps in some areas of children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Both parents and children receive a friendly welcome into the playgroup. Staff meet the needs of the children very well since they find out about their home backgrounds and spend time during settling-in visits getting to know them. Children soon become familiar with the routine of the sessions telling others 'it's tidy up time' and staff use a time line of the routine and photograph books to reassure children. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is fostered. They celebrate a wide range of festivals during the year and they play with resources like dolls and books that help them to learn about diversity in the world. Staff access training to support children for whom English is an additional language so that they are able to offer good quality help.

Children who have learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from a caring team of adults who understand their needs. There are strong systems in place to seek out professional help and there are good levels of communication between parents and the staff at playgroup. This means that staff are aware on a day-to-day basis of a child's particular needs. Children are learning the difference between right and wrong since staff have effective strategies to manage children's behaviour. The children can name some simple house rules, like using please and thank you or sharing toys. Staff challenge inappropriate actions and explain to the children why an action is not desirable. Children respond well to encouragement and they are keen to collect rewards such as stars or paper leaves to decorate displays for the whole group to enjoy.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Families have access to a wide range of helpful documents that include some good descriptions of the educational curriculum. Parents are aware through newsletters and displays of the current topic and planning sheets are on display for them to see. Parents readily provide very positive feedback about how welcome staff make them feel and about the good individual support on offer to their children. The photographic displays of children at play and regular informal conversations help parents to know what their child is doing at playgroup. The staff seek out parental feedback through questionnaires and they offer workshops on topics like managing children's behaviour to support families in their parenting skills.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a well-organised playgroup that benefits from a close working team of adults. Staff maintain accurate registers to indicate who is present each session and they offer the children good adult-to-child ratios so that they receive effective support. There are well-established systems in place for the recruitment and induction of new staff and this extends to the on-going

support through training to the whole team. Staff have a positive attitude to improving the quality of the provision and also to extending their own skills and knowledge. This has a direct impact on the children, for example in the improvements to the outdoor play area with new climbing equipment, planting in tubs and exciting areas for sand play. The staff work well as a team during the sessions and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

The leadership and management of the nursery education are good. Staff work closely with other professionals and they respond to advice. They regularly reflect on their own work, for example making evaluative notes on the weekly activities so that they become aware of how to make their own improvements. Staff organise the documentation required for the successful running of the playgroup neatly and securely. They produce and display a wide range of information for parents and they have a strong emphasis on maintaining confidentiality. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the playgroup had to address two recommendations. One was concerning evidence that staff hold clearances to show they are suitable to work with young children. Full details of criminal record bureau checks are now held in a locked cabinet in the setting. Staff were also required to obtain training in administering medication that requires technical knowledge. The whole team at that time undertook specialist training and they know that should this situation arise again they need to refresh this training for each individual child. The impact on the children of these improvements is to ensure they play in safety and their health needs are effectively met.

At the last inspection of nursery education the staff were required to address four key issues and successful action has been taken on each one. Children are taking part in more mark-making for a purpose as they play in scenes set out like a dentist or hospital. Staff reinforce letter sounds when situations arise during the day, for example when a child is looking for their named tray. Staff also purchased some new resources such as foam letters and an alphabet frieze for children to enjoy and become familiar with whilst they play. Good progress has been made with planning for outdoor play. Children are taking part in a wide range of activities outdoors across all areas of the curriculum to make time in the garden more fulfilling. Lastly staff and the committee work together to conduct annual staff appraisals so that there is an effective way to identify areas of strength and to address any training needs. This helps to maintain good quality teaching and learning for the children.

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.

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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):

- review the organisation of snack times

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):

- continue to develop systems to record children's development
- provide children with more guidance when they are learning to write their names

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