

The Village Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 146925
Inspection date 15 January 2008
Inspector Angela Jackson

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Registered person The Committee

Type of inspection Integrated

Type of care Full day 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?

The Village Playgroup opened in June 1990. It operates from two play rooms, kitchen and outside play area. It is situated in the St. Mary's Welcome Centre, in a residential area, close to local amenities. The centre provides a range of activities for the local community. The playgroup provides a child care service for children from the local and surrounding areas. There is access for wheel chair/scooter.

The play group operates during term time only. On Monday it is open from 09.15 until 11.45; with a lunchtime club from 11.45 until 12.30; and an afternoon session from 12.30 until 15.00. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday it is open from 9.30 to 12:00. It is closed on Thursday.

A maximum of 36 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 28 children on roll. This includes 14 funded children. The playgroup supports children with English as an additional language and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are four full time staff who work with the children. Of these, two staff have NVQ level 3 qualification and two staff have NVQ level 2 with one of these currently working towards level 3. In addition to the staff, there are two full time students studying for level 2 in childcare and a regular volunteer helper.

The group receives support from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in the large bright hall and adjoining rooms where staff protect them from cross contamination by carrying out sound hygiene routines such as wiping over food preparation areas and tables prior to use, with anti bacterial spray. Children are provided with mid-session snacks that are well balanced and contain a variety of nutrients as well as contributing to their five a day recommended quota of fruit and vegetables. For example, they have pitta bread, cheese, cucumber and apple slices accompanied by water, milk or fruit juice. Children are learning to be independent and to take care of themselves by following the staff's example and washing hands before eating then helping themselves to a plate and selecting from the foods offered. They choose their drink and may help pour from the bottles or jugs on the table. In addition to the snack time drinks, the risk of dehydration is further minimised by children having beakers of drinking water available throughout the session. Again, children help themselves and quickly adopt the practice of emptying the beaker after use and putting it in the washing up bowl for rinsing before anyone else uses it. Children who stay all day on Monday take in a lunch box that is stored on a trolley in the coolest part of the building. Parents are given information about this and are asked to comply with the setting's policy for healthy eating as well as taking into account the storage arrangements. This enables parents to pack a lunch that will be fit to eat and provide them with the energy to participate fully in the afternoon's activities.

Children take themselves to the toilet, under the supervision of staff. They wash their hands at the basins where paper towels and liquid soap are accessible and within reach when standing on the booster step or the adjacent bench. Children are generally sensible and thorough in this process, understanding that they have to wash to keep themselves clean. The water in the hot taps remains cold despite previous recommendations for warm water. However, staff have tried to adjust the temperature without success and it is felt that it is preferable for children to have cool water rather than risk being burned.

In the event of an accident or injury, children have ready access to treatment from either the member of staff that holds a relevant up to date first aid qualification or by being taken to the hospital where medical professionals are authorised to treat the child as parents give permission for this at the outset. There is a complete first aid kit readily available throughout the session and accidents and incidents are recorded on loose leaf accident forms that parents sign. The forms are organised and stored in month order. When children become unwell during the session, staff monitor them and contact parents as necessary. Medication is not normally administered as children who are unwell are expected to be looked after at home. However, there is a medication consent form that parents sign in cases where children with chronic conditions such as asthma or eczema have medication such as a pump or cream, stored on the premises. Staff follow parent's instructions and sign the record but do not ask parents to sign each entry, after the medication is given.

Regular physical exercise, indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather, promotes children's physical good health. The outside paved area leads down to a grassed area that becomes very muddy in wet weather. Children enjoy running after the play leader when they go outside

although there is little access to toys or equipment in winter. Indoors, they dance and move around to music, jiggling and singing or else practise balancing on the beams or crawling through the tunnel.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

There is ample space for children to move freely and reasonably safely, around the setting. The large hall is organised with most activities at floor level, on plastic sheets or mats, reducing the chances of bumping into tables. The doors between the hall and the toilet are fairly heavy and children sometimes struggle to hold them open in order to pass through. It is also difficult for anyone pushing the door to see whether there is anyone on the other side trying to pull it open at the same time. Resources are well maintained and checked and cleaned regularly. A daily risk assessment by staff ensures that damaged toys or equipment pose no danger to children as they are thrown away immediately. The setting's procedure for emergency evacuation of the premises is practised regularly and a record kept of the time taken to get all children and staff to safety. The atmosphere is often very lively and noise levels rise accordingly. This means that staff often have to raise their voices in order to get the attention of all children to manage their safe movement between the rooms.

Children are made welcome and quickly settle in as parents have the opportunity to drop in and stay with children on Monday afternoons and can stagger the admission days and times until children feel secure and happy to be left. Visitors to the premises gain access by ringing the front door bell and being admitted by the administrator or another member of staff. There is a visitors book. Home time is busy as parents collect children and buggies and spend time getting feedback from staff. A designated member of staff stands at the front door to ensure children only leave with parents. Children are further safeguarded by staff's sound understanding of child protection issues including how and when to make a referral and what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

A good range of activities is set up for each session and children move purposefully between the different areas as they try out several of the options each day. For example, they explore a range of media and textures such as painting with potato shapes and tracing pictures in peppermint smelling mashed potato. They make up stories as they entertain each other with puppet shows using brightly coloured glove puppets such as a bumble bee, a snake and an owl. This helps develop confidence and good social skills as they learn to listen to each other and to appreciate what each has to offer. Children enjoy small group activities such as working out how to fit together large scale construction kits with over sized spanners and screws. This helps develop problem solving skills. Children use floating panels of fabric and sheets of foil to swirl around and explore and discover the variety of sounds that can be made.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Activities are planned to cover all six areas of learning although there are inconsistencies in the challenge presented to children in each of the areas and staff use more closed questions than open questions. This prevents children from fully exploring their ideas and does not encourage them to predict or consider how things work. For example, children are learning about new technologies through easy access to a

computer and age appropriate computer programs that support learning about the natural world and help with number skills. Children recognise and can name and manipulate, hardware such as the mouse and remind each other to use the mouse mat. However, they are not given sufficient time or opportunity to think about what is going on in the pictures presented such as how the animals may have got into the fenced field. Similarly, children are not encouraged to use number skills to count the number of animals in the field.

There is an office area set up where children are able to freely access and use stationery items such as scissors, paper, pencils, chalks and hole punch. This helps develop fine motor skills and helps children to write for different purposes. There is a good range of books in the quiet area where the cushions, mat and chairs ensure children can relax as they sit back and look through their favourite stories. Children enjoy having stories read to them.

Music is played throughout the physical play time and there are a number of unusual instruments that children are encouraged to shake, rattle and bang in order to see what sort of noise they make. Their vocabulary is being broadened as they learn the names of the instruments and describe the sounds they make and they jiggle around in time to the familiar songs being played.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and staff come from a range of backgrounds and cultures that reflect the diversity of the local community. There are resources such as small world play people and books that provide positive images of difference including disability. Children with English as an additional language are supported through staff's sound understanding of a fair range of strategies for encouraging language development. For example, staff work with parents to learn everyday words in the home language of children so that staff and children help each other in acquiring new vocabulary. This helps children to develop a sense of self as their identity and background is valued. Children's individual needs and preferences and the views of parents, are taken into account in planning activities and ensuring children receive appropriate support. Other professionals are positively welcomed into the setting to provide advice and support for children and families who are experiencing learning difficulties or have disabilities.

Children on the whole are well behaved and cooperative. They are happy and are learning to share with others. Staff have a satisfactory number of positive strategies in place to promote positive behaviour although they frequently have to raise their voices in order to get children to listen. Parents views are sought regularly and are asked to complete a questionnaire to help staff identify areas for improvement. There is a complaints policy in place in accordance with regulations. Overall, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. There is a key worker system in place and staff maintain close links with the children and parents in their groups. Parents are asked to complete an initial profile of children when they register and staff record observations of children as they play. This information helps staff to gain a sound knowledge of each child's stage of development but the assessments are not used to identify next steps or used for planning for individual learning. Parents meet with staff each term during consultation week for verbal feedback on what children have been learning and are given a written report when children leave. Regular newsletters and the notice board at the entrance, help to keep parents informed about planned activities and information about local support organisations including a translation service.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting employs an administrator who ensures that all documentation including policies and procedures, are up to date and written in accordance with regulations and National Standards. She has a sound understanding of the need to carry out appropriate checks on new staff for suitability, experience and qualifications although one check is still outstanding. Staff:children ratios are maintained and all staff have either level 2 or level 3 qualifications. There are two full time students currently working towards a level 2 qualification in childcare and a regular volunteer. Continuing professional development is encouraged and staff are encouraged to keep up to date with current practice through training courses such as behaviour management, equal opportunities and first aid. There are record keeping and confidentiality policies to ensure personal records are stored correctly. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. The play leader motivates the staff to provide integrated care and education for children. She sets a good role model and is actively involved in all aspects of the provision. New staff and students have satisfactory understanding of the policies and aware of who to go to with concerns or issues. Key workers are responsible for record keeping for children in their groups. The play leader supports the staff in this but does not regularly monitor children's progress by checking consistency in observation and assessment records.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, it was suggested that a staff recruitment policy be developed and this has now been implemented to ensure children are cared for by suitably experienced and qualified staff. It was also recommended at that time that warm water be provided for children to wash their hands. This has not proved possible as the temperature cannot be controlled and this puts children at risk of burning their hands. Children therefore continue to wash their hands in cold water.

Recommendations for improving nursery education included staff training in relation to the six areas of learning and devising programmes and plans to promote children's development in mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and personal, social and emotional development. Children are moving around independently and participating in a good range of activities planned to take into account all six areas of learning. Their knowledge and understanding of their local environment is supported through activities such as feeding squirrels in the garden and having access to natural resources such as large fir cones. Children are learning to count up to 10 and to use resources such as different size bottles and funnels in their water play help them to explore mathematical concepts such as volume.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 staff's understanding and knowledge of a wide range of positive behaviour management strategies to promote children's awareness of the behavioural expectations within the setting and to understand what is right, what is wrong and why
- maintain a record of all medication administered to children that is signed by parents to acknowledge they are aware of what has been given

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):

- use initial profiles completed by parents, along with ongoing observations and assessments carried out by staff, to identify children's next steps. Use this information to plan activities that ensure all children make good progress towards the early learning goals
- create an active learning environment by raising staff awareness of how to use effective questioning techniques and discussion to develop children's language skills and enable children to express their emotions and to explore new ideas and concepts

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