

Cutgate Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	316402
Inspection date	12 October 2007
Inspector	Gillian Patricia Bishop
Setting Address	Norden Methodist Church, Edenfield Road, Norden, Rochdale, OL12 7QE
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Registered person	Cutgate Playgroup Committee
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?

Cutgate Playgroup has been registered since 1992. It is managed by a voluntary management committee. The setting has sole use of two ground floor rooms within Norden Methodist Church, which is situated in the Norden area of Rochdale. The building is a multi-functional building which accommodates other community groups. These groups do not access designated playgroup areas during opening times. The playgroup is open five days a week from 09.30 to 12.30. Afternoon sessions are provided on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 12.45 to 14.45.

The playgroup is registered to care for 32 children aged from two to under five years at any one time. There are currently 30 children on roll, of which four receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language. The setting employs five full-time staff, two of whom hold recognised early years qualifications. A supply member of staff is working towards a qualification and two permanent staff members are due to commence National Vocational Qualification level 2 training in the new year. The setting is supported by a number of regular volunteers and receives guidance from local early years curriculum and advice teams.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's welfare is successfully promoted by well established policies for health, for example, all staff receive first aid training and they have effective procedures in place for sick children and accidents. First aid resources are replenished on a frequent basis and appropriate documentation is kept in relation to medication. Children develop a secure understanding of the necessity for good personal hygiene because staff talk to them about how to prevent the spread of germs. This message is reinforced by pictorial notices in the bathroom which remind young children to wash their hands. Children learn to keep themselves healthy and clean because staff encourage them to wipe their noses when they have a cold and cover their mouths when coughing.

Children develop a positive attitude towards healthy eating due to the wide range of foods they are introduced to during snack time. For example, children enjoy a variety of fresh fruit, such as mangos, raisins and grapes. Children benefit from frequent opportunities to try new and less familiar foods during food tasting activities. Consequently, children show their willingness to try vegetable samosas and cucumber during the playgroup's Eid celebrations. Children have a designated area where they can independently access milk and water which helps to keep them refreshed throughout the session. Snack times are happy social occasions where adults and children sit together, chat and discuss good social skills. Helper roles are very much encouraged which enables children to be responsible. For example, they take turns giving out the plates and food, and they help to pour the drinks.

Children display great enthusiasm for physical activity both indoors and out, and they become very excited when asked to collect their coats. They benefit from daily opportunities to play outdoors in the fresh air, alongside a programme of planned activities designed to challenge and support their physical development. The use of bikes for peddling, bats, balls for throwing and catching and action games, help children to develop a good sense of control and coordination over their bodies. They enjoy obstacle courses which require them to crawl, run and skip. They frequently create large collage displays which require them to stretch high and low to reach sections of the paper.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a bright, vibrant and interesting environment. The colourful displays of children's work create a sense of ownership and welcome which children and their parents benefit from. Space within the main playroom is extremely well-organised to create many exciting play and learning experiences for children. The wide variety of toys and educational equipment is successfully stored and displayed to promote children's independence and choice, allowing them to initiate many of their own play opportunities.

Safety is given high priority within the setting as children are cared for in multipurpose premises, which a variety of community groups operate from. Security arrangements are effective because doors are routinely locked to prevent access from other centre users and a procedure for dealing with visitors is successfully implemented. Regular emergency evacuation drills take place which ensures children are well prepared in the event of an incident. Management have devised a secure risk assessment procedure which includes building maintenance, daily safety checks and

safety action plans complete with timescales. However, on the day of the inspection a routine safety precaution was overlooked leaving some electrical sockets uncovered in the small community playroom.

Operational procedures are successful in safeguarding children during trips off-site because staff seek support from parents for trips, to ensure adult-child ratios are in excess of the requirements. Children's welfare is protected by effective vetting procedures which ensure appropriate checks are undertaken for all staff and volunteers are provided with clear guidance about the range of duties they are expected to undertake. Furthermore, a robust child protection policy and procedure exists which all staff are familiar with.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, confident and secure because they are supported by experienced staff who spend a great deal of time talking and playing alongside them. Children who are new to the setting settle quickly because staff ensure their emotional needs are met. For example, circle time is reduced to ensure little ones don't have to sit and listen for too long. Some children bring comforters from home which helps them to feel secure, although they soon begin to leave these behind as their confidence and curiosity begins to grow. Children develop positive relationships with staff which ensures they are able to seek their company and support as they require it. For example, children seek help with coats and aprons and they are eager to show staff the pictures and models they have made.

Children of all ages engage in a rich, varied and imaginative range of activities which motivate them and foster their all round development. Children are engrossed in their play as they concentrate on many of their activities for lengthy periods of time. For example, when working on the computer, working out mathematical problems and playing games with the magnetic numbers. Younger children particularly enjoy role play, where they dress up, act out familiar roles and experiences from home and write their shopping lists. They explore media such as sand, water and paint daily, creating their own pictures and using their senses to describe how it feels. Children are encouraged to think and talk about what they are doing and making. For example, they describe the long, pink snakes they have made in the dough and they discuss their painting by describing the colours, shapes and who the picture is for.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are very secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and of how planning and assessment systems work in supporting children's development. Successful planning systems make clearly defined links with the stepping stones and early learning goals which ensures a balanced curriculum across all six areas of learning. Children's progress is routinely monitored, recorded and discussed which ensures their next steps in learning are effectively planned for. Staff's expectations of children are high but realistic; the curriculum is influenced by children's own pace, personal interests and readiness for the next step. Children are challenged through purposeful questioning which extends their knowledge and understanding. Staff are also aware when not to intervene which allows children to think for themselves and make their own decisions. For example, a child struggling to use a piece of equipment is asked if he would like help, but he confidently refuses. Staff make good use of new teaching methods they have learnt during training workshops. For example, they have recently introduced 'Look and Listen' sessions, which encourage children to develop good listening and concentration skills.

Children are making good progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Most cope well with the separation from their parents and they quickly begin to develop close friendships. They learn to share and cooperate which ensures they play in harmony. Children develop good self-help skills and social skills. They help to tidy up, pour drinks and a child volunteer helps to take the staff register. Children routinely count, name and match numbers and they explore shape and form when making two-dimensional and three-dimensional pictures and models, such as, boomerangs and patchwork elephants. They frequently use size language to describe tall, small, long and short and they explore mathematical concepts such as weight, measure and pattern, during baking and threading activities. Older children are introduced to simple calculation by adding two sets of numbers together when playing a number recognition game.

Children develop a good understanding of how print carries meaning through story times, independent reading and meaningful activities. For example, children are frequently encouraged to link the sounds and letters in their name. Children develop good pencil control due to the wide variety of mark-making activities. They benefit from a well-organised circle time which encourages them to speak individually as they respond to questions or share their own news. Children have very good opportunities to be scientific and explore why things happen and how things change. For example, they note how colours change when they mix together and they explore how sand can be used when it is soft, dry or wet.

Children have freedom to explore a variety of media such as sand, water, paint and collage. They design and paint on a small and large scale, often linking music and movement at the same time. For example, when painting large wall murals to classical music. Children benefit from a generally good range of activities which develop physical skills. For example, throwing bean bags into buckets, rolling hoops backwards and forwards, peddling bikes and scooters which they have to manoeuvre carefully within a confined space. Music and movement sessions encourage children to move their bodies in different ways to music. Children become agile in their large movements when they crawl through tunnels, run and climb. They develop control over their fine movements when using a wide variety of tools and equipment, such as dough cutters, paint droppers and pencils. However, outdoor play is not consistently planned for within current planning systems, so learning objectives for some activities are not clearly identified in relation to children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the strong sense of community within the setting as this is built on mutual respect and concern for each other. Children's individual needs and differences influence the care and education they receive. For example, pictorial images and dual language notices are effectively used to support children who speak English as an additional language. Staff are successful in creating an inclusive setting because children with learning difficulties are extremely well supported. Designated staff are confident and secure in their role which ensures the setting works cohesively with parents and external agencies in supporting children's care and progress.

Children are introduced to diversity and the wider world through a programme of meaningful activities which often reflect their own lifestyles and experiences. For example, children have been preparing for Eid celebrations by designing Eid cards in the mark-making area and by making chapattis and nan bread with the play dough. Images and equipment in the play environment reflect diversity in society which encourages children to develop positive relations and attitudes towards others.

Children develop a clear understanding of the behavioural expectations within the setting because staff implement strategies which are consistent and developmentally appropriate. Circle time is effectively used to introduce conversation about what children should do if toys fall on the floor and why. Children learn songs which reinforce the necessity to take care when playing with sand and they frequently refer to pictorial signs and photographs which introduce everyday routines, such as sitting nicely for registration time. Children learn to share, be patient and take turns, and they receive lots of praise and attention for little achievements, such as their willingness to respond to staff when their name is called at registration time. Consequently, children settle quickly and feel confident and secure within the setting.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely well fostered. Children display close friendships by seeking out their favourite friends who they sit and cuddle with during story time. Older children share their skills with younger ones by supporting them in their early experiences of using the computer independently, by guiding them thoughtfully but not taking over. Strong links with home and families ensure events in children's lives are discussed and valued, for example, children are made to feel special during birthday and festival celebrations. Children learn the importance of friendship and how these sometimes continue at a distance. For example, they talk about a child who is moving abroad, how they will miss him, but how they intend to keep in touch because he will send photographs and letters about his new life.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents are asked to complete an 'All about me' booklet on entry, which ensures they have the opportunity to share information which is pertinent to their child's care and learning. They receive information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and they have opportunities to be involved in the children's learning when asked to bring items for theme work, from home. Parents have sight of children's assessment records as 'I can do' books are made available to them at various points each term. However, parents are not completely clear about the importance of these records in relation to the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals the children are working towards.

Verbal feedback from parents describes the setting to be very welcoming and exciting to children. Parents and carers are very complimentary about the care and education their children receive. They describe staff to be approachable and caring and they value the progress their children have made since attending. Parents are well informed about the setting. They have access to written policies and procedures and newsletters keep them informed about theme work, activities and events. The parent noticeboard is effectively used to display health guidance, menus and regulatory documentation.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting is very well-organised which ensures children's welfare, enjoyment and contributions are effectively promoted. Excellent consideration is given to the deployment of staff which ensures children are very well supported in their play and learning. Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities which they are appropriately trained for. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed which ensures they present an accurate reflection of the childcare practices within the setting. Staff development is recognised and valued as a means of developing the care and education provision. Therefore, an ongoing training programme has been established which includes higher level training for managers. Recruitment, induction and vetting procedures for staff and volunteers are secure and expectations and responsibilities are clearly understood by all. As a result, the play sessions for children run smoothly and calmly.

Children are cared for by sensitive and caring staff who spend time getting to know the children as individuals. Children settle quickly due to the positive relationships they develop with their carers and due to the daily routines they have become familiar with, for example, circle time and snack time. Children receive appropriate care and attention and they are well engaged in all that they do.

The leadership and management are good. Staff are secure in their roles as educators which ensures children are effectively nurtured and challenged through structured and purposeful play. Planning and assessment systems are effectively designed and implemented because they take account of children's individual abilities. Staff have established good links with local schools which ensures a smooth transition for children moving on to other settings. They also work closely with outside support networks, such as local early years teams. Management have established comprehensive self-evaluation processes which enable them to identify their own strengths and areas for further development, therefore securing a means of continuous improvement within the care and education provision. Documentation and children's records are kept and maintained to a high standard and they contain all relevant detail.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two recommendations were made requiring the provider to devise an additional written policy statement and improve outdoor security. The provider has since developed the operational plan to contain a policy in relation to lost and uncollected children and an external gate has been fitted outdoors to create a safe and secure area for children to play.

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.

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 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 all electrical sockets are made safe or inaccessible to children.

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):

- ensure learning objectives for outdoor activities are clearly and routinely recorded within planning
- further develop assessment records to provide parents with a clear picture of how children's learning is planned for in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum and the early learning goals.

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