

Leominster Play Scheme

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Jane Muriel Laraman

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Registered person	Marches Family Network
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Marches Family Network is a registered charity run by a management committee. It organises care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their siblings and runs several play schemes throughout Herefordshire and Shropshire. The Leominster Play Scheme has operated from Westfield School in Leominster since 2007. The group has access to the main hall, three classrooms, kitchen, toilets, changing facilities and a small reception area. Outside play facilities are provided in several enclosed areas, comprising both grassed and tarmac surfaces. The scheme serves the local and wider communities in Herefordshire and Shropshire.

Places are offered for 30 children from three years to under eight years old. Children over eight years of age can also attend the group. There are currently 25 children on roll and most of them have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The group also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens on Mondays and Tuesdays during the school summer holidays and on one Saturday per month (dates vary), during school term times. Sessions last from 10:30 to 15:00.

Four members of staff, assisted by volunteers, work directly with the children. Additional staff are deployed from within the Marches Family Network Organisation as and when required.

Over half of the staff have relevant qualifications and most are experienced. Volunteers are all required to complete 'in-house' training prior to working with the children. The scheme receives support from an area inclusion officer, health visitors, specialist social workers and Herefordshire Council.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a clean environment where good hygiene practices are encouraged. They learn about health and hygiene procedures as staff gently remind and encourage them in good practice. Staff teach the children about good health and hygiene routines through topic work, discussion or role modelling. As a result, children are learning to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene according to their individual ability. In order to help prevent the spread of germs, children respond to requests to wash their hands after using the toilet, playing outside, messy play and before eating food, but many children also spontaneously carry out the routine. Staff encourage children's self-care skills by praising and congratulating them when they remember hygiene routines without being prompted.

There is a plentiful supply of 'wet wipes', tissues, liquid soap and paper towels available for everyone to use. Disposable aprons and gloves are available for use by the staff when needed and they routinely use antibacterial hand gel after washing their hands. These precautions help to prevent any cross-infection. Staff consistently follow and apply agreed health and hygiene procedures in order to keep the premises clean. For example, tables are wiped using antibacterial sprays and disposable cloths, floors are swept as required, toilets are regularly monitored to ensure cleanliness and all equipment is kept clean. This means that children's good health is promoted and further protected.

Staff seek information about children's medical or special needs, allergies and dietary requirements prior to them first attending the setting. This information is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains accurate and is used to provide appropriate care. In the event of accidents, children are treated by staff who have first aid qualifications and access to a suitably stocked first aid box. Documentation is maintained regarding the recording of accidents and appropriate procedures are in place regarding the administration of medication, with suitable records kept which are in line with requirements. Clear, well-written policies, contracts and good relationships with parents ensure individual children are cared for appropriately should they become ill whilst at the setting and sick children are excluded from the provision until they are well, thus reducing the risk of cross-infection.

Parents currently provide packed lunches, snacks and drinks for their children and these are stored and served appropriately. On special occasions, such as the Christmas party, children enjoy eating party food treats from novelty cardboard lunch boxes. They have also had opportunities to dine in local restaurants or leisure facilities. Staff occasionally provide additional healthy snacks, such as fruit or salad items and children sometimes eat the biscuits or cakes that they have made during the activities of a play session. Individual dietary needs are discussed with parents and recorded. Details of allergies are available for all staff preparing and serving any food to ensure that children with allergies are not put at risk of an allergic reaction. Drinking water is always readily available throughout each session to ensure children do not become dehydrated. Meal and snack times are relaxed, sociable events. Adults encourage children's good table manners and independence, but sensitively offer children assistance where needed.

All children enjoy use of several well-designed, safe and secure outside play areas and are able to develop good physical skills as they exercise and benefit from regular access to fresh air. They enthusiastically participate in a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health by developing their muscles, physical skills, body control and co-ordination. The well-resourced adventure play area provides children with many physical challenges as they clamber over the tyres, use the slide, walk over the plank and chain bridge or slide down the fire-fighters' pole. Through playing energetic games, such as football or pass the ball, children are developing their skills of throwing and catching, running, kicking a ball and jumping. They also play more gentle, co-operative games, developing their understanding of sharing and turn-taking. Staff place a very high emphasis on ensuring children's individual needs are catered for and that appropriate challenge is offered. They work closely with parents to ensure that physical activities are suited to their child's ability. This encourages the children to develop confidence and helps to foster a positive attitude towards exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, safe and well-maintained environment. Children's art and craft work is displayed during session times and this gives them a sense of pride in their creative work. They are delighted when their achievements are praised and valued. Regular risk assessments are undertaken, thus ensuring potential hazards are identified and minimised and children's safety is maintained. Staff and volunteers are deployed effectively and the children are well-supervised to further ensure their safety. Children benefit from having sufficient space to engage in play activities, with areas for active and quiet play, as staff organise space, furniture and equipment effectively to enable children to move freely and independently between different activities and play areas. Consequently, children are confident and feel safe and secure.

Children enjoy using a good variety of high quality toys and play equipment and they are able to reach these resources safely, as they are mainly stored at child-level. This encourages them to make their own choices and develops their curiosity and independence. Toys, equipment and resources are appropriate for the age and developmental needs of the children and are kept clean and in a good state of repair.

Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to maintaining the safety and welfare of all the children and follow written procedures and guidelines. Children are learning about safety matters because staff provide explanations as to how they can keep themselves safe. For example, some children understand that they should not run when inside in case they fall, bump into others or hurt themselves. Children are also taught how to handle tools and other play equipment with care and they help to tidy toys away to prevent accidents from occurring. This helps them to develop their understanding of potential hazards and so they learn to take responsibility for themselves and help look after others. Regular fire drills are carried out to ensure that all staff, volunteers and children are aware of what to do in an emergency situation and there are suitable fire safety precautions in place.

Access to the building is very carefully monitored. Exit doors are kept locked where possible, with all exit doors fitted with portable alarms as an additional safety measure during each session. Clear procedures are in place for the collection of children by named adults. Consequently, children are suitably protected. All members of staff receive basic child protection training and they have a satisfactory awareness of child protection issues. They know the types of abuse and the likely presenting signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect. The person-in-charge has accessed recent additional child protection training and is confident to record, discuss and

appropriately pass on any concerns about a child's well-being. She has the relevant contact numbers available. As a result, children's welfare is safeguarded. However, the written child protection policy needs to be updated to reflect current Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and guidance, so that all staff are fully aware of the correct procedures to follow if they have any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive at the play scheme happy and eager to enjoy their time in the setting. They are greeted by friendly staff who are sensitive towards their diverse and sometimes complex individual needs. Staff have developed warm, trusting and effective relationships with the children, thus enabling them to feel secure and valued. This leads children to develop confidence and a strong sense of their own self-worth.

Staff have an excellent understanding of each child's needs because there are very good systems in place to gain information about children's care needs and preferences. There is a good continuity of staff, with key staff and volunteers working at more than one Marches Family Network play scheme setting. This helps the children to develop a sense of comfort and security with familiar and trusted adults. Staff use appropriate strategies to inspire and motivate the children and they are very interested in what the children say and do. Children's thoughts and suggestions are listened to and they are encouraged to contribute their ideas when planning topics and associated activities. This flexible approach to planning by staff facilitates a good balance between adult- and child-led activities. Consequently, many activities are spontaneously chosen or initiated by the children themselves, thus they make their own independent decisions about play and learning and they soon acquire new skills.

Language and communication skills are developed as a result of the staff engaging children in conversation. Adults interact very well with the children and give them lots of attention and encouragement to participate in a purposeful range of activities and play opportunities. Activities are skilfully adapted to meet individual developmental stages and all children are able to participate at their own level and according to their own special ability. Consequently, children are happy and settled as they play. Children respond very well to the positive interaction from staff and volunteers and are stimulated and appropriately challenged by the activities and resources that are available to them. As children learn to play co-operatively together, they are able to practise their social skills and develop good relationships with their peers and the adults.

Children are imaginative in their use of the various art and craft materials that are provided and they clearly enjoy making colourful pictures, models, Christmas cards and glittering decorations. On the day of this inspection, they were thrilled and excited to enjoy the treat of a Christmas party, complete with party games and an interactive disco. Their fascination with the snow flakes from the DJ's special snow machine and delight on their faces as Father Christmas arrives on his sleigh with presents, captures a lovely festive spirit of smiles and laughter as they enjoy their celebrations.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from all backgrounds and of all abilities are warmly welcomed into the setting and made to feel at home because they are treated with equal concern and regard by staff and valued as individuals. This helps the children to feel happy and relaxed. Through being fully included in the life of the setting, children develop very good relationships with staff, volunteers and peers and they experience a strong sense of belonging. Time is taken to get to know the children and their families well and the staff work very closely with parents and carers to obtain relevant information on the specific individual needs of each child. This information is then used to provide sensitive care in accordance with parental wishes. This helps children to settle quickly into the play scheme and feel secure. Children benefit from having access to a range of resources which promote positive images of diversity. They have good opportunities to learn about themselves, other people and the world around them through planned activities, visitors to the setting and outings to local places of interest.

There are very good arrangements in place for meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they are fully included. When necessary, staff adapt the environment and activities so that all children can take part. Some children attending this play scheme and other play schemes run by Marches Family Network have their own specialist equipment and resources. The personal use of individual equipment and resources is respected and parents are consulted as necessary regarding its correct use. Individual Learning Plans can be carefully implemented to ensure that appropriate activities are provided which meet the child's developmental needs. Consequently, any child identified with specific needs receives a good level of support, as staff work well with parents and other professionals involved in the child's care to help the child achieve and make steady progress.

Children are generally well behaved and respond to the good role models being offered by the staff and volunteers. They are encouraged to share resources and take turns and are learning to accept responsibility for their own actions. Their understanding of right and wrong is increased through gentle reminders to care for their environment, the resources and each other. Children benefit from having consistent boundaries and their self-esteem is well promoted by staff through praise and encouragement. They respond well to the positive reinforcement of their good behaviour given by the adults caring for them.

Parents receive useful information about the setting, operational routines, events and fundraising activities through quarterly newsletters, notice boards and verbal exchanges of information and this contributes to children's well-being. Families using the service offered also receive home visits from a Marches Family Network support worker before a child attends the play scheme for the first time. This helps to assess the child's needs and establish good, friendly and professional working relationships from the outset. Personal information parents are asked to provide about their children is respected and acted upon and clear contractual agreements are in place. There is a written policy in place regarding complaints, which includes the procedures to follow and the contact numbers and address of Ofsted. A complaints log is available at the setting. This means that parents are kept informed as they are able to see information about complaints or confirmation that no complaints have been logged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit because the staff are well qualified and use their knowledge to plan and organise an excellent variety of quality activities and opportunities. The setting is organised appropriately and the available space is used effectively so that children are able to work, rest, and play in comfort. Excellent adult-to-child ratios and the grouping of children means that they are appropriately supervised, receive high levels of individual attention and are very well cared for. The staff team works well together, they support one another and are clear about their roles and responsibilities, which helps to contribute towards the smooth running of the setting. Staff demonstrate enthusiasm for creating a warm, welcoming environment that stimulates, excites and motivates the children. This means the children can enjoy activities and feel secure, happy and settled.

Good recruitment and induction procedures are in place, which ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Consequently, children benefit from being cared for by vetted staff, with a range of qualifications and experience and who are dedicated, friendly and very caring. Staff are able to attend regular training to develop their professional practice and their positive attitude to training allows them to recognise areas for improvement in their practice. This helps to further improve the standards of care received by the children. Staffing records with details of training and qualifications are kept in personnel files. All children are well known to the staff, resulting in their individual developmental and learning needs being met.

Policies and procedures are used effectively and the required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place. All documentation is stored securely, ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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

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.

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 and update the written child protection policy in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and guidance.

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