

The Woodlands Primary School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130547
Inspection date	14 December 2007
Inspector	Jill Nugent
Setting Address	Woodlands Primary School, Alban Crescent, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, WD6 5JF
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Registered person	Woodlands Primary School 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Woodlands Primary School Playgroup registered in 1992 and operates from the nursery classroom within Woodlands Primary School in Borehamwood. Children share access to a secure outdoor play area. The playgroup is open from 12:00 until 15:00 every weekday during term time.

A maximum of 28 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. Currently there are 22 children on roll of whom eight receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

A total of five staff work with the children, all of whom hold relevant early years qualifications. The playgroup has achieved the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well because staff have good procedures in place. All medical records are maintained appropriately. Children are protected from infection as parents are given information about excluding children when ill. In the event of an accident children are well taken care of as staff are qualified in First Aid and have good access to equipment. They are attentive to matters of hygiene and ensure that children are cared for in a clean environment. Children are becoming aware of good hygiene practice themselves, for example, they know they must have clean hands for cooking and eating. These procedures contribute effectively to keeping children healthy.

Children learn about healthy eating through finding out about different foods and talking about their health value. They enjoy growing fruit and vegetables and are looking forward to growing more as the garden is extended. At snack times they are offered a range of healthy snacks, such as fresh fruit and salad vegetables. They have access to drinking water throughout the session in order to avoid the risk of dehydration. Staff meet the needs of those with special diets because all adults are made aware of these needs. Therefore, children are well nourished.

Children enjoy very good opportunities for physical activity. They have access to the outdoor area at all times and this provides a wonderful learning environment, comprising a variety of play experiences. Children benefit from the fresh air and enjoy opportunities to run, ride and explore. They develop their control and co-ordination as they build models, dig in sand and steer toy cars. They learn to negotiate space as they travel around each other and follow tracks. In this way, children continue to keep fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment. The playgroup operates from the nursery classroom and so children have good access to a wide range of resources in both indoor and outdoor learning areas. The environment is enhanced through the colourful displays of children's work and offers a comfortable reading corner where children can relax. Children's safety and security is promoted through ongoing risk assessments which help to minimise potential risks. Staff are particularly careful about risk assessing new activities so that children keep safe.

The school has appropriate fire precautions in place and children practise an evacuation plan regularly so they know what to do in the event of an emergency. The outdoor area is generally safe for children as they do not have access to storage sheds and gates are kept locked. Children are well supervised at the beginning and end of sessions as staff are on duty at the main door. However, the internal door leading to the adjacent classroom, and on into other areas, is often left open. This results in a potential security risk to children who may wander through unnoticed.

Children use a collection of suitable resources and are able to choose independently as these are stored at low level and easily accessible. Staff keep a check on resources for safety and continually extend the range available. Children are becoming aware of personal safety. They are reminded of how to use equipment safely when participating in activities. They learn about road safety and this increases their awareness of safety when travelling to and from playgroup. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. There are procedures

in place for safeguarding children, including the recording of concerns and referral to the Headteacher. Staff have the necessary information to enable them to seek advice if necessary. Therefore children are well protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are very well settled and extremely happy in the setting. They enjoy a stimulating learning environment where they can explore independently and get involved in a wide variety of interesting activities. Staff interact effectively to promote children's learning, always following children's leads and moving them on according to their ability and understanding. As a result children learn through relevant and meaningful play experiences. For example, they explore mark-making and pattern making, sharing books and music. They gain confidence and independence as they make their choices and enjoy the interaction of staff who enhance the learning experience.

Staff have a very good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and refer to it in order to assess children's early development. Children have many opportunities to be imaginative and creative. They often devise imaginary situations in the role play area, for example, organising a 'birthday party'. In the creative area they choose materials from a wide selection and use their imagination freely. Staff engage them in conversation thereby encouraging children to use language in different ways. They make excellent use of a small group time to share books and sing with children. Children benefit greatly from the support of staff and develop self-esteem, and a range of skills, in a wholly child-centred environment.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning. They plan the programme of education around themes, linking together the activities to offer learning in all six areas of learning. The written planning is visual, using words, symbols and pictures, so that it can be shared easily with all adults and children. It details the various resources and activities on offer to children indoors and outdoors each week. Staff also make use of activity plans to help focus children's learning. Plans show clearly what children are expected to learn and how they will present their learning.

Staff use a variety of teaching methods to encourage children to learn individually and in group situations. They are especially versatile in their interaction with children, knowing when and how to offer support, or present a challenge, according to children's needs. At times staff search out extra resources for children and always remain flexible in their approach, letting children complete tasks in their own time. They allow children to make their own decisions, for example, when choosing materials for wrapping 'Christmas presents'. Children's learning is extended through staff's searching questions and conversation, and continual encouragement to try things for themselves.

Staff observe children's development closely and record this in line with the stepping stones of learning. Some key observations are shared with children so that they can be involved in their own learning. Children's next steps are highlighted for attention by each key worker. In this way staff have an excellent awareness of each child's needs and can use this to guide future planning. This dynamic and integrated system of planning and assessment provides a framework in which children thrive. They learn to concentrate and persevere at self-chosen tasks and

become keen learners. This is reflected in the significant development shown in all areas of learning.

Children develop a good use of language as they talk about feelings, describe objects, and answer questions. They learn about the rhythm and rhyme of language as they listen and share. They have opportunities to find out about the sounds and letters of the alphabet, for instance, when grouping together objects having the same initial letter. They develop early writing skills as they experiment with pencils, complete labels and cards. Children count confidently and learn to recognise numerals during play and organised activities. They develop problem-solving skills as they find suitable pieces of paper to wrap up presents and work out the required lengths of sticky tape. At snack time children decide how many drinks are needed for the number of children in their group. They are beginning to calculate as they add and take away objects, for example, in a fish game.

Children learn about living things and their environment. They explore colours in different ways, in foods, autumn foliage and acetates. They enjoy cooking activities, for instance, making Christmas puddings and discover what happens when they mix ingredients together. Children are learning computer skills when using the computers to support their learning. They develop creative skills through the freedom to experiment with paint, glue and collage materials. In directed activities children learn techniques such as bubble painting, apple printing and self-portraiture. When shaping play dough they develop good manipulative skills, making use of these in other activities, for instance, choosing bricks for building or rolling cars down drainpipes. In music and movement sessions children learn to make shapes using their bodies and to move around in different ways.

Overall, children are making exceptionally good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas and this provides a sound base for further learning as they progress into and through the nursery.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and included as staff take care to value all children's contributions and ensure open access to all activities. Children have a sense of belonging at playgroup and play, and chat, happily together. Staff are aware of their individual needs and offer good support. Children are given individual attention if becoming upset and offered an alternative activity to interest them. All children respond positively to staff's requests and are very cooperative at tidy up time. They are encouraged to develop personal independence, for example, washing up after cooking and helping out at snack time. They learn about a wider society through using resources that reflect diversity and finding out about different cultural and religious events. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children have good relationships with each another and play harmoniously. They are aware of their boundaries and behave well. They learn to share fairly and take turns. Staff help children to negotiate with each other in order to avoid conflict. Consequently, children learn to behave responsibly. There are good procedures in place for supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The playgroup works closely with parents and carers. An information booklet provides details of their policies and procedures. Newsletters inform parents about the current topic and forthcoming events. Various notices also keep parents and carers up to date. Staff carry out a series of home visits prior to children starting at playgroup to help them settle in. Children benefit from this working partnership with parents.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive detailed information about the Foundation Stage of learning. The weekly planning is on display so that parents are fully aware of the activities on offer for children. Staff suggest extra ideas for parents to extend children's learning at home. They have introduced link books to enable the daily exchange of information between home and school. Staff are available to speak with parents about their children's progress at any time and arrange formal consultations when children move on into the nursery class.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The playgroup's policies and procedures work well in practice to promote the outcomes for children. Staff adhere to the school's policies although parents are also provided with key policies specific to the playgroup. Information about individual children is kept securely and attendance registers are well maintained. Paperwork relating to the nursery education is up to date and readily available. The documentation provides a sound framework for the playgroup's practice.

The playgroup is run as part of the nursery and as such employs the same team of staff, all of whom are well qualified. There are good induction and appraisal systems in place. Staff are committed to the ongoing improvement of the playgroup and attend training regularly. Since their previous inspections they have attended a wide variety of courses, including aspects of Communication, Language, Assessment, Phonics and Food Hygiene. Children benefit from their acquired knowledge and skills. During playgroup sessions staff spend their time with children, supporting, directing and interacting effectively. They follow a set routine which allows children to explore freely and to take part in group activities so that their interest is maintained throughout the session.

Overall children's needs are met.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The nursery teacher leads a team who work together extremely well to promote and extend children's learning successfully. They continually monitor their provision and set up action plans to show areas of focus and development, for instance, the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage, increased learning opportunities in language, literacy and numeracy and the extension of the outdoor area. A recent introduction has been a new system of cards showing children's potential learning in different areas. These are to be used to increase further the effectiveness of the planning and assessment systems already in place. The team's proactive approach is instrumental to their success in the provision of high quality nursery education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the playgroup was asked to ensure children's safety with respect to hot water pipes, to make the address of the regulator available to parents and to ensure that parents sign accident records. The hot water pipes have been covered with foam so that they do not pose a risk. The contact details for Ofsted are now available to parents. Staff always request a parent's signature on accident records. This response has led to an improvement in the outcomes for children.

At the previous nursery education inspection the playgroup was asked to develop the written planning, clarify the learning intentions for children, extend the system of assessment and

share records with parents. The planning and assessment systems have been developed and extended so as to encourage children's involvement and record their progress towards the early learning goals. Staff liaise closely with parents through the home/school link books. These developments have contributed to an overall improvement in the provision of nursery education.

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):

- ensure children keep secure in the premises with regard to the internal classroom doors.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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