

Island House Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119577
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Inspector	Jackie Nation
Setting Address	Roserton Street, London, E14 3PG
Telephone number	07792 403025
E-mail	
Registered person	Island House Pre-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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Island House Pre-school Playgroup has been in operation for approximately 30 years. It operates from one large room in a community centre situated on the Isle of Dogs in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It is run by a committee of parents. Access to the playgroup is gained through the community centre, on the ground floor there is an intercom system to enable access to the playgroup on the first floor. The group have access to a kitchen and children's bathroom on the first floor. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area. A maximum of 20 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday morning from 09:15 until 11:45 and Monday to Thursday from 12:30 until 15:00.

There are currently 25 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 14 funded three and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs four members of staff. Of these, three hold relevant qualifications in early years care and education. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

The setting receives support from the early years team of the local authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. All staff attend appropriate training and are vigilant in ensuring the environment, toys and equipment are clean and suitable for use. Children show a good understanding and willingness to keep themselves healthy and they learn simple hygiene practices through daily routines. Children know that they wash their hands to get rid of germs and wash their hands after using the bathroom and before snack times. Children's health care needs are supported appropriately with policies and procedures which work in practice. For example, if they require medication, have an accident or become unwell. A member of staff is on duty who is qualified to administer first aid and therefore respond appropriately to accidents should they occur. The setting obtain written parental consent to seek emergency medical advice or treatment and this supports children's health and well-being.

Children are engaged in a variety of healthy exercise both inside and outside. They explore, test and develop physical control using a variety of toys and equipment. This includes bikes, pushchairs, scooters and cars enabling children to practise manoeuvring and pedalling skills. Children love to play in the garden which provides many learning opportunities. They enjoy walking over the rope bridge on the climbing equipment before they go down the slide. Children use the large stones in the garden as 'stepping stones' and attempt to jump to the last stone using the tree trunk for support. This helps children develop skill and confidence, for example, one child told his friend 'I think I can do it'. A 'Healthy Eating' topic has been successfully introduced and children engage in discussions and activities that relate to healthy eating and the importance of exercise. This involves children and staff participating in a 'healthy workout' session during which children learn to move or balance like different sorts of beans and animals. Children run, jump and skip with great enthusiasm. Staff are positive role models as they join in the activities and exercises with the children.

Snack time is very sociable with all the children sitting together at the table, chatting with their friends and staff. They are well-nourished and all aspects of their individual dietary needs are discussed with parents and information about any specific needs is recorded. Good arrangements are in place for the provision of nutritious and appetising snacks for children. Children have the opportunity to try a vast selection of fresh fruit and raw vegetables, for example, strawberries, sweet corn, cauliflower and kiwi fruit. However, children do not have access to drinking water to ensure they remain hydrated throughout the session. The snack menu is displayed on the notice board for the interest of parents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment by friendly and approachable staff. Staff work hard to create a welcoming environment for children by setting up activities and resources before they arrive, and displaying children's work on the walls. Good use is made of both the floor and table tops to enable children to play with varied toys or take part in activities. The organisation of the playroom and use of appropriate resources helps all children to become

independent. Children use a range of child-size furniture, equipment and toys that are appropriate for their purpose, of suitable design and condition and well-maintained. Good attention is given to cleaning toys on a regular basis to make them hygienic and safe for children to use.

Children play in an environment where potential hazards have been assessed by staff. Staff undertake daily checks before the children arrive. They are vigilant and supervise the children well. However, there are occasions during the day when radiator temperatures become too hot. Following a change in the use of an office on the first floor means that adults not employed by the playgroup are able to access this office during the groups operating hours. Both issues potentially compromise children's safety and welfare. There are procedures in place in the event of a child being lost or not collected and visitors are required to show identification and sign the visitor's book. Children understand the necessary boundaries in place to keep them safe because staff discuss safe practices with them, for example, as they use the fire escape to access the garden. They are developing an awareness of fire safety through discussions and by practising fire evacuation procedures. This helps children to understand how to react in an emergency.

Children are cared for by adults who have relevant experience, knowledge and skills. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of child protection and their role in reporting any concerns to the relevant agencies. They are familiar with the signs and symptoms of abuse and this ensures children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and well-settled at the playgroup. They involve themselves in activities quickly when they arrive and go about routines with growing confidence. Children are welcomed by enthusiastic staff who provide a good range of activities, this ensures children have a fun and enjoyable learning experience. Children move freely between activities and display good levels of independence, interest and motivation. Children benefit from familiar routines and from being cared for by staff who are sensitive and caring. This helps children feel safe and secure. Good staffing levels ensure that children receive individual attention. Staff have a sound knowledge of child development and all children are included in a range of activities and experiences which overall contributes to their development and learning. Many activities are child-initiated although planned activities are incorporated to look at specific areas of learning. Planning and assessment of children's progress incorporates the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

Children have regular opportunities to engage in creative play through taking part in activities such as, cutting and sticking, painting and they explore the properties of dough and sand. Children's art work is displayed in the playroom demonstrating that staff value their efforts and achievements. This helps to foster their self-esteem and confidence. Children enjoy positive relationships with both their peer group and staff. Older children readily engage their peers, staff and visitors in conversation and play. Their behaviour is good and they are actively and consistently praised by staff for their effort and achievements. Staff intervene appropriately with positive strategies when behaviour issues arise, these are usually related to sharing or taking turns. Staff interaction with the children overall is very good, they are patient, kind and genuinely enjoy children's company.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This ensures that children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff have a good knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and the early learning goals. This is evident in the variety of activities on offer. All staff are clearly very experienced in working with young children. Curriculum planning includes, long, medium and short-term plans and are linked to the six areas of learning. Although frequent observations are carried out the information gained is not always used effectively to help children to move to the next stage in their learning, at a pace which is suitable to their individual needs.

Staff initiate plenty of conversations and display enthusiasm in their teaching. Staff take time to chat with children about what they are doing and ask questions to extend their thinking. The room is set out to stimulate children's interest in learning and as a result, children are motivated and make many good links in their learning. The opportunities for children to self-select resources and develop their own play is good. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and child-initiated play. This has a positive impact on children's learning.

Effective use is made of staff time and resources. Staff work directly with the children and the playroom is set out in an inviting way and organised to encourage children to become increasingly self-sufficient. Staff with responsibility for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a sound knowledge of the procedures and recognise the importance of establishing good relationships with parents and other professionals. This ensures children with specific needs are included in all aspects of the provision and make good progress. Good consideration has been given to sources of support for children with English as an additional language.

Personal, social and emotional development is a strength of the setting. Children become increasingly self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences in a supportive environment. Children's attitudes to learning are good and they pursue activities without interruption, for example, during role play and sand play. Some children confidently use the computer with little need for staff direction, accessing appropriate software and manoeuvring the mouse with precision to complete the activity. Children are encouraged to develop independence with regards to their own personal care, they competently put on their coats to play outside and help to give out drinks at snack time.

Good emphasis is placed on developing children's communication, language and literacy skills. For example, by encouraging listening skills and extending their vocabulary during activities. Children are praised during an activity as they remember the names of fruit and vegetables, such as aubergine, pepper and watermelon. Children see their own names and other words displayed within the setting which supports them as they develop an understanding that print carries meaning. There are good opportunities for children to write and make marks in the writing and role play areas. Books are used well in the setting, and children enjoy story time as staff use puppets to encourage children's participation and enjoyment. Children respond with enjoyment when they listen to their favourite stories and join in with action songs enthusiastically. Children are encouraged to recognise their own name as they arrive at the setting and by finding their named placemat at snack time.

Children have regular opportunities to explore music, collage, junk modelling and cooking activities. Children competently use a wide range of small and large equipment, for example, scissors, paint brushes, rollers, play dough cutters, balls, hoops and bikes. Role play is a very popular activity and encourages children to introduce different characters into their play and develop their own ideas. The role play area changes frequently to support the current topic.

For example, it is currently 'Our travel shop' to support the topic about 'Journeys'. Children like to look at holiday brochures and decide where they would like to go on holiday while looking at the globe. Children talk freely about their holidays and their experiences while travelling on a plane.

Children are encouraged to show an interest in numbers and counting. These skills are developed through a variety of enjoyable, practical activities, including songs, games, puzzles, pattern making and solving problems. Children count within the daily routine, for example, how many children are present at snack time. Staff encourage children to think about simple calculation as they join in numbers rhymes and songs counting up and back. Children use mathematical language effectively while engaged in activities and are familiar with words to describe size, position, shape and quantity. Containers for pouring and comparing amounts are available in the water tray, and planned activities help children to experiment with a variety of objects which 'float' and 'sink'.

Children learn about their natural environment and develop an understanding of living things as they look at and discuss the features of birds and animals. They talk about changes in the weather, explore their local environment, visit the park and places of interest, for example, The Childhood Museum and a farm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a supportive and caring environment. A sense of belonging is fostered because of the familiar daily routine. Children arrive very enthusiastically and are happy to come to playgroup. Children settle quickly because staff offer parents a flexible settling-in period, giving both the parent and child the opportunity to get to know the routine and staff. Staff are aware of children's individual needs and preferences as they work closely with parents at the admission stage to gather and record all the required information. Children are beginning to learn about diversity and staff plan an 'International Day' to help children develop their understanding of the wider community in a meaningful way. Parents, staff and children all enjoy the opportunity to share their customs and traditions with each other. Children with English as an additional language are supported by effective strategies, for example, bi-lingual staff work in the centre and bi-lingual students at the setting also support children's language development.

The setting is committed to inclusion and good consideration is given to supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents and outside agencies to ensure children gain as much as possible from the activities available. The provision is accessible, with facilities that include a lift to the first floor and accessible bathroom facilities. This supports children's welfare and promotes their development.

Good behaviour and consideration of others is encouraged by staff who set realistic boundaries depending on the child's age and stage of development. Staff are positive role models, they are courteous and give children positive praise and encouragement. Children play alongside each other harmoniously, sharing space and resources. A clear written statement regarding behaviour management is shared with parents. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with policy information, information about the nursery education provision, and the early learning goals. Staff welcome parents into the setting and establish trusting, meaningful relationships with them. All parents have the opportunity to meet with the committee each month, help out at the group if they wish and join the organised workshops. For example, healthy living and first aid training. Arrangements are in place for parents to have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress and attainment and staff make themselves available at the beginning and end of the session to talk to parents informally. Staff encourage parents to become involved in their child's learning and planning information is displayed on the notice board. Parents are asked to contribute their observations of learning that takes place in the home, this information is included in the children's assessment profile. Parents speak very positively about the provision and the staff team, they also receive good feedback from their own children. Parents are informed about how they may make a complaint, the procedures are clear and include the necessary information and contact number.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from attending this child-centred, play focussed group. The adult: child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play. Children benefit from a caring, experienced and motivated staff team, who clearly enjoy spending time interacting and supporting children's individual needs. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are well-protected and cared for by staff with knowledge and understanding of child development. However, procedures have yet to be devised to check 'ongoing suitability' of staff, which potentially compromises children's welfare.

Leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. This contributes to children making steady progress towards the early learning goals. The manager has a good understanding of children's learning and developmental needs and encourages staff to develop their professional skills with ongoing training opportunities. The staff group are very committed and work well together as a team. Most of the required documentation, which contributes to the children's health, safety and well-being is in place and is regularly reviewed. However, the registration system for staff and visitors do not include their hours of attendance. The staff team and parent committee are committed to raising the quality and standards of care and nursery education for all children. However, the systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the nursery education provision are mainly informal and not rigorous enough to ensure that any areas for improvement are identified and addressed at an early stage. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was required to: conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying action to be taken to minimise identified risk in the outdoor play area and the radiators; ensure all records relating to day care activities are readily accessible on the premises and available at all times and obtain a copy of the Code of Practice. A risk assessment of the premises has been conducted and details the action to be taken to minimise identified risks. The provider has arranged for thermostats to be fitted to each radiator. As a result, this has been carried forward as a recommendation at this inspection to ensure children's safety is not compromised. Staff supervise children as they use the fire escape to gain access to the outdoor play area and they supervise children effectively while playing outdoors. This helps to keep children safe. All the required records are stored at the setting and available for inspection.

The provider has obtained a copy of the Code of Practice and an additional needs policy which is shared with parents. This ensures children's welfare is supported appropriately.

Regarding the nursery education, at the last inspection the provider was required to: develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals, ensure planning has clear learning intentions which are linked to the stepping stones, and develop effective assessment methods which assist children's individual learning, and informs future practice; introduce a rigorous system that effectively supports staff and monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching; increase opportunities for children to attempt writing for real reasons, for a variety of purposes through practical activities, and provide more opportunities for children to begin to recognise similarities in shapes in the environment; develop effective systems to keep parents informed of their child's ongoing progress, and enable them to become involved in their child's learning at home.

The provider has taken suitable action with regard to implementing the recommendations regarding nursery education. All staff have completed training to develop their knowledge and understanding of Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals. Planning documents are effective, showing the learning intentions linked to the stepping stones. Although observations are carried out regularly, they are not always used effectively to ensure the information gained is used to help children move to the next stage in their learning. Therefore, this has been carried forward as a recommendation at this inspection. The system for monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the provision is mainly informal and not rigorous enough to ensure that any areas for improvement are identified and addressed at an early stage. The issue has been addressed at the inspection with the Chair of the Parent Committee and carried through as a recommendation at this inspection. Increased opportunities are provided for children to attempt writing for a variety of purposes in the role play and writing area and activities are planned to enable children to recognise similarities in shapes in the environment. This helps develop children's play and learning. Partnership with parents is good and there are suitable arrangements in place to inform parents about their child's progress and attainment. Planning documents are displayed and staff encourage parents to become involved in their child's learning at home. Some assessment records include information from parents about their child's learning and development at home. This ensures parents are kept informed and involved in the provision of nursery education for their 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.

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):

- review the daily risk assessment procedure to ensure the effective monitoring of radiator temperatures and the arrangements regarding access to the office by other adults during the playgroup's operating hours
- ensure children have access to drinking water throughout the session
- ensure the registration system for staff and visitors shows their hours of attendance.

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):

- update recruitment and selection procedures for checking 'ongoing suitability' of staff and develop the system for monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the nursery education provision
- develop the use of effective assessments to ensure the information gained is used to help children move to the next stage in their learning, at a pace which is suitable to their individual needs.

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