



Symonds Green Play Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146468
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Registered person	Stevenage Borough Council
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Symonds Green Play centre opened in April 1993 and is one of the Open Access Playschemes run by Stevenage Borough Council. It operates from the Symonds Green Community Centre Annexe Building. The scheme serves the local community.

The centre is situated in a residential area close to local shops. The area available for children includes one large play room, toilets and access to a public park area.

The playscheme is registered for 40 children aged 5 to 8 years. It is open all year round. The opening hours are 09:30 to 12:30 and 01:30 to 17:00 during school

holidays and 14:30 to 18:00 during term time. The playscheme also opens on a Saturday from 10:00 to 12:30 and 13:30 to 16:00. There are currently 30 children from 5 to 8 years on roll.

Eight members of staff work with the children and have appropriate qualifications and/or experience.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is protected with clear guidelines and procedures administered by staff. They carry out personal hygiene independently with some support from staff to encourage appropriate hand washing. For example children were reminded to wash their hands before snack time. Health checks are carried out by staff before sessions begin so that children's health is safeguarded. However, children and staff shared one toilet as the other two toilets are out of order and management had not been informed. This impacts on the children's ability to access male and female toilets and avoid queuing.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks. Food is sometimes linked to the theme. For example, children were given opportunities to try food eaten in South America. There was a very good variety of different types of food and the children were able to chose freely and go back for more. Children were enthusiastic about the theme and this encouraged conversations about the food they liked and disliked. Children have access to a tuck shop and water is freely available.

Children have opportunities to participate in physical activities which include using large and small apparatus. For example, they practise circus skills, play team games and join in fun activities such as pirate theme day and scavenger hunts.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into a stimulating, bright and cheerful environment with a good range of equipment appropriate for the wide age range attending. Children have access to a large main room divided into smaller areas for activities. They move freely around the room and have independent choices of activities and play materials. Safety in these areas is adequate, however the area housing the pool table and table tennis has not been risk assessed. Young children moving in and out of this area and standing too close to the pool table when play is taking place are at risk.

Staff carry out a health and safety check before children arrive. A comprehensive risk assessment detailing the activities inside and outside the premises help staff make

the environment safe and accessible to all the children. This reduces potential hazards and safeguards children.

Children are adequately supervised and staff are mindful that this is open access and children may arrive and leave independently. Children are reminded to inform staff when they leave which helps staff manage the play scheme appropriately.

Procedures for emergency evacuation of the building are in place and displayed for parents and children. However, children attending at the beginning of the playscheme are able to practise fire drills and children who attend later do not have this opportunity as only one fire drill takes place during the summer. This impacts directly on children's ability to understand and act upon a real life fire situation.

Children are protected by trained staff who have an understanding of child protection procedures and work with clear guidelines that ensure children's welfare is a priority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in the playscheme, they arrive happy and eager to participate. They access a good range of exciting and stimulating activities that are changed daily to promote children's interest and their anticipation of the days events. Children are relaxed and move freely between activities. Staff support and encourage children's play opportunities with the emphasis firmly on fun and enjoyment. Staff position themselves well and guide children through the planned theme. For example, the South American theme encouraged children to taste different types of food, hear Latin American music and design maps and kites.

Children play together well in small groups. They take turns and share equipment. For example, children write their name on the list for the computer and wait patiently for a turn on the snooker table. Opportunities for imaginative play are available. Younger children took full advantage of the home corner. They accessed a stimulating range of domestic play equipment and were busy shopping and cooking. They were fully engrossed in the role play.

Staff play a very important role. They join in fully with activities and are adept at making them fun and exciting for the children. For example, children participated in a general knowledge quiz. The questions were aimed at children's interests giving them a good chance to know the subject and answer correctly. The quiz generated lively conversation between the children and they were able to give their opinion and listen to others.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The staff have a positive attitude and provide children with a well balanced view of the world around them and an awareness of diversity through activities, discussion

and resources. For example, topics and themes are organised to allow the children to investigate different cultures and learn skills such as making African masks and learning circus skills.

All children are accepted and activities can be adapted to meet the needs of all who attend. For example, children attending with limited understanding of the English language joined in enthusiastically with activities and successfully communicated their needs through body language.

Children behave well. There was a lot of excitement and laughter and at times a high level of noise in the room. However, children had opportunities to access quieter activities such as art and craft and the home corner. Vigilant staff successfully defuse potential arguments, refer children to the rules of the group and encourage them to self-discipline and compromise.

Parents are welcomed into the group to stay with younger children or help with activities. This enables family groups to attend together with adult help. For example, a parent attending with children of varying ages was enthusiastic about the pleasure all the children experience at the playscheme. Parents are provided with a detailed and colourful brochure which includes relevant information regarding the organisation and aims of the group and a daily programme of events.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff arrive early and organise the room for activities. They discuss the day's events and are fully prepared and ready for the children's arrival. This enables the sessions to begin well and children to access activities and play materials freely.

There is a thoughtful and effective use of space and resources to maximise play opportunities for children. For example, a large area is available for children to work together cooking and creating art and craft designs.

Children benefit from the experience and knowledge of staff, some of which have worked in the playscheme for many years. However, although there is a high staff to child ratio qualification requirements for the manager are not being met.

Effective staff induction and training ensures that policies and procedures are consistently applied and staff are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities. This impacts directly on the quality of care and children's enjoyment of the facilities. However, accessible individual records of staff and volunteers which include information about recruitment, training and qualifications are not on the premises.

Overall the provision meets the needs of all the children attending.

Improvements since the last inspection

The playscheme was asked to ensure that 50% of staff are qualified to meet the requirement of a level 2 early years qualification. This requirement has been met and impacts directly on the quality of the provision and meeting children's needs effectively.

The playscheme was asked to ensure that safety measures are in place with regard to staff's hot drinks. This requirement has been met, staff have hot drinks in the kitchen only which makes sure children are not exposed to hot liquids.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report

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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):

- make sure that toilet facilities are available and meet the standards of 1 toilet and hand basin for every 10 children
- make sure that emergency fire evacuation takes place regularly to ensure that all children attending have opportunities to practise a fire drill
- make sure that risk assessments identify potential hazards to children using equipment, this refers to the pool table and table tennis activity
- make sure that the manager or the person in charge has a level 3 qualification appropriate to the post and all essential staff records are available for inspection by Ofsted at all times

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