

Pebbles Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY320329
Inspection date	29 May 2008
Inspector	Susan Tuffnell
Setting Address	L.F.L.C.T., Tomlinson Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU4 0QP
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Registered person	Carol Bowman
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Pebbles playgroup was registered in 2006 and operates from a building adjacent to the Lewsey Learning Centre. The setting is open plan with two adjoining areas for play. It is situated between Dunstable and Luton, Bedfordshire. A maximum of fourteen children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 08:00 to 17:00 and includes a lunch club. The playgroup is open most half terms and for the whole of the school summer holidays. Children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently thirty two children aged from two to under five years on roll, of these eight children receive government funding. Children attend from the local area. The playgroup employs five staff, four of which hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is protected effectively by regular hygiene routines and good policies and procedures to safeguard children's health. Practitioners prevent the spread of infection by keeping the premises and equipment clean and use safe procedures when handling food. The staff take positive steps to develop children's understanding and awareness of good health and hygiene. They explain the importance of hand washing and provide encouragement and support. The children use good quality hand washing facilities before meals and at frequent intervals during the day. Anti-allergy liquid soap is used by the children and they dry their hands with paper towels and use the appropriate waste bin independently. Well managed procedures ensure that children who are ill or have an accident are cared for appropriately by staff, who are all trained in administering first aid. Practitioners are fully informed about the children's health and suitable documentation is in place to support this. All required consents are in place from parents. Well recorded medication sheets safeguard children and are signed by staff and parents.

Children sit together at snack time and have opportunities to practise social skills and table manners. The setting provides mainly fruit snacks and cold drinks for the children in attendance. At present, parents provide their children with a lunch box for lunch time and information in the newsletter gives details of healthy options and food to be avoided. Children are suitably hydrated because they are offered drinks regularly throughout the day. They have access to fresh drinking water from the water container. The children are learning about healthy living through a range of good activities that develop their understanding of foods that are good for them. For example, the children have taster sessions with different fruits and they identify and talk about different kinds of vegetables using pictorial examples. Simple cooking activities encourage the children to learn about healthy eating and food preparation. They help make sandwiches and practise using cutlery as they butter crackers. Food is provided according to the dietary requirements of the children to ensure that their individual needs are met.

The children enjoy varied opportunities to experience physical activity and develop their skills. Their physical development is encouraged and promoted through regular physical play, both indoors and outside in the fresh air. Children benefit from an interesting and stimulating outdoor play area with space to use a variety of equipment. Physical play opportunities are planned well to encourage children to use their bodies in various ways. For example, children practise their physical control on three wheeler bikes. They show confidence in peddling the bikes, as they go around in a circle and successfully avoid each other. Children's fine motor skills are encouraged through activities such as mark making, playdough, jigsaws and construction.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into a homely environment with stimulating and colourful wall displays making the rooms cheerful and welcoming. The children move freely and safely around the adjoining rooms and sit comfortably to play. Soft seating and carpet areas in the home corner make it a cosy room for children to look at books and role play. There are good systems in place to ensure the safety of children. For example, the staff carry out a daily health and safety check and there are excellent security procedures inside the setting. However, the outside play space

is accessed through public land and could present a risk to children from strangers. Well kept records of visitors ensure children's safety inside the setting is managed effectively.

Children use a wide range of toys and equipment that are of good quality and are safe. They access most resources independently. Equipment is organised into designated areas of play that give children free choice. A well resourced book corner contains an interesting and stimulating range of books for children to enjoy and an imaginative variety of different materials in the art and craft area gives children excellent opportunities to be creative.

Children are protected with a comprehensive child protection policy and procedure that is approved by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. They are protected from harm because staff understand the correct procedures to follow in the event of any concerns and an effective system of recording incidents is in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, settled and secure. They generally behave well and are developing confidence, independence and self-esteem. Activities and play opportunities are planned to help develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. Children relate well to each other and seek out friends to share activities. Most children spend their time in a purposeful manner as they move freely around the activities. Children are interested in the activities, they play together at the sand tray building mounds and burying sea creatures. Children play imaginatively as they explore a variety of equipment such as the doctor's bag, hairdressing tools and domestic play items. Staff support and encourage children in tasks and most children are able to concentrate and persevere at activities. They have a developing sense of awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and are beginning to understand how other children feel. For example, children have comment cards which they use to describe what makes them happy or sad at the setting. These are displayed and discussed at group time. Younger children are very well supported by staff to help them settle into routines and are given help and encouragement as they participate in activities. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is successfully incorporated into the planning of appropriate activities for the younger age group and this information has been transferred to the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework. This has a positive effect on the children as staff focus their attention on linking activities to the framework, identifying the area of learning and evaluating the impact on the children.

Nursery Education.

Children enjoy using language in their imaginative play and during some group discussions. They explore a range of words and texts, know how to use books for enjoyment and locate information. At lunch time the children chose books from the box. They enjoy sharing the books with each other, point to the pictures and talk about the story. The children's enjoyment of using books is encouraged by a stimulating book corner that is used frequently. Children attempt writing for a variety of purposes using different forms. They practise writing the letters of their names and activities are targeted to help children recognise and draw shapes, encouraging early mark making skills. Children have a growing concept of numbers as they count spontaneously as a group and in play. Effective planning for mathematics gives children opportunities to sort, match and sequence colours, shapes and numbers. Staff provide children with opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. For example, the children investigate different objects and materials. They use magnifying

glasses to look closely at natural objects such as tree bark, cones and shells. Children observe and find out about the natural world as they study the life cycle of a frog. This topic is extended through many other activities such as art and craft enriching the children's experiences. The children know about some of the uses of everyday technology. They use the computer to print out items such as number lines to support their learning. Children are able to be creative. They express their own ideas and feelings through art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play. The children explore texture, shape, form, and space in two or three dimensions through construction, play dough and collage designs. Children enjoy taking part in group activities such as singing and action songs.

Assessment of the children's learning is effective. The setting organises assessments so that they are meaningful and relevant to the child. Assessments have been transferred to the new Early Years Foundation Stage paperwork and show links to the six areas of learning. Evidence of children reaching each stepping stone is recorded in observations and photographs and these are evaluated regularly. Assessments are used to inform future planning and provide activities to help children's development. The staff recognise children's achievements and plan the next steps to learning. However, this is not documented in order to provide a record that clearly identifies challenge for the more able children and support for children who need extra help in their learning.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A consistent staff group has a positive impact on children's confidence and security through the key worker system. Appropriate settling-in procedures build on this giving children confidence to participate in activities. Staff know the children well and create a satisfactory balance of adult-led and child-initiated play. This gives children the skills to succeed in most given tasks. Staff are good role models, they are enthusiastic, patient and caring and this impacts greatly on the children's enjoyment and learning. The staff have a solid understanding of the educational programme and provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences across the six areas of learning. However, information about children's starting points is not collected by staff or used in future planning. Therefore, all children start at the same point and their individual achievements are not acknowledged at entry to the setting.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are positive role models for the children. They praise and encourage the children frequently and are fully involved in the activities. Children are generally kind and helpful to each other. They are learning to share, take turns and play co-operatively together. Praise is given freely to the children, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem. The staff have positive attitudes towards promoting equal chances and opportunities for children and treat all children as individuals with care tailored to meet their individual needs. Staff know the children well and have a clear understanding of equality in practice. Children are busy and motivated most of the time and staff manage their behaviour in a way that is appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. A satisfactory range of resources, play opportunities and activities are planned that reflect everyday experiences and the wider world. The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory and contributes to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Parents and children are greeted warmly by the staff and welcomed into the setting. Parents have clear information about the setting and their children's progress through regular newsletters, the information board, the daily contact book and displays. Policies and procedures are clear and available. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are valued and respected as individuals and their needs are fully documented and

implemented. Children benefit from an environment where they are nurtured free from any type of stereotyping and where the high staff to child ratio ensures close individual care is given to build the children's confidence and self-esteem.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive information about the educational programme with detailed weekly plans that clearly show the learning intentions and are linked to the stepping stones. Parents are encouraged into the setting to look at assessment documents and they have regular contact with the key worker to talk about their children's progress. This helps ensure children are settled and secure. Homework books are exchanged with parents so that they can share some of the activities with their children at home. Consultation meetings are held each term to discuss the educational programme and their children's achievements. Parents are asked for feedback and questionnaires are used to evaluate the care and educational programme. Parents give complementary replies to a recent questionnaire. For example, they praise the positive attitude of staff and the favourable impact on the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by the quality of the organisation. Effective use of records and documents ensure children's welfare. A range of comprehensive policies and procedures, including one for complaints are shared with parents. New staff have a well-planned induction process to follow. The manager acts as a mentor to new staff to help them through the induction period. Staff promote a welcoming and inclusive environment where each child is important and they organise activities and resources to ensure that children benefit from their time spent with the group. Documents are used well to support the care of the children and to comply with regulations. For example, records are clear, up-to-date, easily assessable and stored securely. Staff observe children's development and keep records that help them meet children's individual needs ensuring that children are cared for safely and their progress is monitored.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are very well managed and there are effective systems in place to provide clear direction, support and leadership. For example, regular staff meetings take place, staff appraisals and induction are effective and there is a clear system to monitor the effectiveness of the setting and children's welfare. The manager fully involves staff in the decision making and planning processes. Staff meet regularly for meetings where they discuss future planning. The well qualified staff have a comprehensive training programme to extend and enhance their knowledge and understanding of childcare and education. This is given a high priority. There is a strong commitment to assess the strengths and weaknesses of both the setting and the educational programme. A self-evaluation is completed every term and followed with an action plan for any issues. The manager and staff work well together and have built a strong staff team.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to: ensure all accidents forms have all relevant information documented (children's addresses); ensure written parental permission is requested to seek any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment; ensure resources enable opportunities for children's play and learning, to be inviting and stimulating (especially the book corner) and ensure all details in the significant event book are clearly documented.

Accidents are clearly recorded and the entries shared with and signed by parents. Parental consent for seeking emergency medical advice and treatment is maintained for each child. Soft seating and carpet areas in the home corner make it a cosy room for role play and looking at books and information and concerns about individual children is recorded correctly and followed through where necessary.

Complaints since the last inspection

A concern was received regarding staff's understanding of Child Protection procedures, their ability to implement these, recording of incidents and parental complaints not being acted on appropriately. This relates to National Standard 13 Child Protection, National Standard 14 Documentation and National Standard 12 working in partnership with parents and carers. An Ofsted Inspector conducted an unannounced visit on the 3rd October 2007 and found no evidence to suggest a breach of National Standard 12, 13 or 14 and no further action was taken. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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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 that areas open to the public and used by the children are risk assessed.

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 future planning clearly identifies the differential in children's learning
- acknowledge and record children's individual achievements on entry to the setting and use these starting points in future planning.

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