



Castor and Ailsworth Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	256756
Inspection date	21 November 2005
Inspector	Parveen Ashraf

Setting Address	The Village Hall, Peterborough Road, Castor, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE5 7AX
Telephone number	01733 380190
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Registered person	Registered Charity 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 satisfactory. 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?

Castor and Ailsworth Playgroup was registered in 1980. It operates from Castor village hall in the village of Castor on the outskirts of Peterborough. The playgroup serves the local community and some of the surrounding villages. There are currently 32 children on roll. This includes 2 funded 4-year-old children. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with special needs or who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup opens 5 days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45 each weekday morning. There are currently 7 full-time and part-time staff working with the children. Over half the staff have or are working towards a level 2 or 3 qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing an understanding of healthy eating. They have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of this as they take part in cooking activities. For example, learning to make a vegetable soup with fresh ingredients. Children are offered a variety of healthy and nutritious snacks, including cheese and biscuits, cereals and fruit. However, snacks are usually pre-cut and prepared, limiting the opportunities for children to help in preparing their own snacks, which in turn does not encourage their independence.

Children participate in physical and energetic play which encourages their gross motor skills, helping them to remain healthy. They have access to outdoor play on a daily basis. They learn how to slide, jump, balance and climb with care and confidence on large apparatus. Children use a range of equipment to develop their manipulative skills, for example, using a hammer during a woodwork activity. Children show spatial awareness and are skilled at negotiating space they as place cushions on the floor and use them as stepping stones.

The pre-school have a health and safety policy which is implemented by staff. Four members of staff have completed an appropriate first aid course. Accidents are dealt with effectively and all medication documentation is recorded accurately, helping to meet children's medical needs. There are systems in place to minimise the spread of germs. For example, a daily cleaning rota ensures that the premises and equipment is cleaned regularly but there is a risk of cross-infection as children do not consistently wash their hands after using the toilet or before snack time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in a safe and secure environment, where hazards are identified and procedures are in place to minimise risks to children. The group carries out detailed risk assessments that include all areas, both indoors and outdoors. Children take part in activities that help them understand about keeping themselves safe. For example, a talk from a local policeman about road safety and making cars for a road safety topic. Children are learning to take responsibility for their own safety, as there is good reinforcement of rules from staff. For example, telling a child not to run with a skipping rope in case he falls over and injures himself. The fire safety procedure clearly outlines staff's roles and responsibilities. The fire drill is practised

on different days enabling all children to have the opportunity to learn what to do in an emergency situation, helping to keep them safe.

There is a good range of resources that are suitable for the ages of children that attend. Children help themselves to equipment from low level drawers that are labelled with words and pictures. They have access to a variety of outdoor toys, including equipment to enable them play in the rain, which includes Wellingtons and umbrellas. The supervisor continues to extend the range of toys and buys new equipment that encourages children to learn through play.

Effective systems are in place to safeguard children's welfare. Two members of staff have completed child protection training and are familiar with the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) guidance procedure, which they adhere to. The child protection policy and guidance is available and is shared with parents, making them aware that their children's safety is prioritised. Strategies are in place to keep children safe and help to protect them from harm. There is a detailed uncollected child policy and 'Procedures for when a child leaves the playgroup unaccompanied' which is implemented by staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled. They form good relationships with each other and with the adults in the setting. They participate in a varied range of activities that promotes their development in all areas. They have the opportunities to explore colour and texture through activities such as making vegetable soup. Children are offered activities which contribute to their creativity, such as collage-making or taking part in the Christmas Pantomime. The group's curriculum policy clearly outlines the aims of using aspects of 'Birth to three matters' and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Long term plans are detailed and cover all areas of learning. Staff frequently carry out observations on children's development. These are recorded in their records of achievements and are regularly updated and shared with parents. They are used to help staff set future targets for each child.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The majority of staff have a sound knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. They interact with the children asking them open ended questions. For example, helping to develop children's cognitive skills when playing a memory game. Staff support and extend children's individual learning through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Observations are successfully used to plan further activities to enable children to steadily progress through the stepping stones. All members of staff have the opportunities to organise and focus activities in each area of learning. Most of the adult-lead activities are well-planned.

Children are confident speakers and initiate conversations with adults and each others. They talk with ease about personal experiences as well as in role-play situations. For example, pretending to be a fireman with a hose-pipe made from

popoids. They enjoy stories and rhymes and staff ensure that children have opportunities to learn new vocabulary, such as, names of dinosaurs. Children are introduced to language relating to size, quantity, position and develop awareness of shape and pattern using puzzles and games. They are beginning to learn to problem solve, for example negotiating space and turning a wooden block around to make it fit a specific area.

Children have opportunities to develop a sense of time and place through themes and involving their homes, families and local community, as well as the wider environment. They use materials, tools and equipment confidently and gain an awareness of other cultures and lifestyles through activities, such as, celebrating Christmas or Chinese New Year. Children are beginning to understand that information conveys meaning. They find their name cards at the beginning of the session. However, there are missed opportunities for children to develop their writing skills. The mark making area is not inspiring and is not regularly visited by children. Subsequently, children are not developing their independence when selecting resources to begin to ascribe meaning to marks. Children have limited opportunity to begin to recognise, and attempt to write, their own names.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well behaved and demonstrate good manners. They say 'excuse me', 'please' and 'thank you' at appropriate times. Staff are consistent in their approach to behaviour management. They praise children for their efforts which in turn helps to build their self-esteem. Children take part in organised activities that encourage them to think about their behaviour and helping others, for example, making the 'Helpful tree.'

The pre-school has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which includes 'Valuing Diversity in Families.' Children learn about the wider world through planned activities and resources such as books on Diwali, Hanukah and Easter. Children with special educational needs are fully included through appropriate adult support. This enables them to progress at their own pace, giving them confidence to learn. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. Staff work well with the parents to support the children, by welcoming them into the setting and valuing their contribution. An effective settling-in policy in addition to taster sessions allows new children to settle-in with ease. An effective parent rota ensures that parents are kept involved in their children's learning. Staff keep parents fully informed in a number of ways including a 2-way postal system, regular newsletters, open days and sharing records of achievements. New parents are provided with detailed information about the pre-school and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. A strong partnership with parents contributes to the children's well-being.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled at the pre-school. The layout of the main hall allows children to access a variety of different activities simultaneously, giving them freedom of choice. However, some aspects of the organisation of the setting limits children's sense of independence. The snack table is situated away from all the main activities. Staff do not always sit with children at snack time and as a result children are not continuously monitored with regards to how much they eat or whether they wash their hands. There are missed opportunities for children to socialise with the adults or to prepare their own snacks. The premises are safe but there are no systems in place to alert staff of any visitors or new parents.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The committee is very supportive of staff and regularly meets with them to discuss the aims and objectives of the pre-school. Staff work well as a team. The supervisor knows them well and offers them support when needed. Appraisals and periodic reviews for all staff are in place. The supervisor has identified future training needs for staff to help them to encourage children's development through play.

All necessary regulatory documentation is in place and is well organised to promote the welfare and care of children. Comprehensive induction packs are given to all new staff to inform them about the pre-school. Rota parents and helpers have access to a 'Helping Hands' booklet with details of 'Birth to three' and the Foundation Stage, as well as routines and safety information.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting received 1 action in relation to organisation for the care inspection and 4 recommendations for the nursery education.

In respect of the nursery education the setting was asked to introduce a system of formal appraisals for staff. These are now in place and the manager is able to identify staff's training needs to enable them to help children to develop and learn effectively. The setting was also asked to include planned activities for large physical play on a regular basis and to provide children with the opportunity to link sounds to letters and engage in simple calculation. Children now take part in planned outdoor play that encourages their physical development. They also have opportunities to participate in activities that further encourage their mathematical and communication, language and literacy skills. These improvements have had a positive impact on the nursery education of the children.

The setting also received one action to ensure that all staff and committee members complete the appropriate vetting procedures. All staff are cleared and children are safe from persons who have not been vetted.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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):

- review the organisation of snack time to allow children further opportunities to develop their independence and social skills
- review and monitor hygiene procedures during snack time in order to prevent the spread of infection.

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):

- increase opportunities for children to understand that print conveys meaning
- improve opportunities for children to develop their independence when selecting resources to encourage them to begin to ascribe meaning to marks, particularly in the mark making area.

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