



Spring Willows Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	316426
Inspection date	17 October 2005
Inspector	Maria Keane
Setting Address	St. Annes House, Ryecroft Avenue, Heywood, Lancashire, OL10 1QB
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Registered person	Jayne Carmichael Greenwood
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?

Spring Willows Playgroup opened in 1997. It operates from fully converted offices attached to a private house. It is situated in a residential area of Heywood, a suburb of Rochdale. The playgroup comprises of one large room, a smaller area used for imaginative play, kitchen, office and toilet facilities. There is also a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The playgroup serves the local community and has links with the local primary school.

The group is registered for 26 children aged from 0 to 5 years. Currently there are 21 children on roll; This includes five children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. There are no children currently attending who have identified special needs or speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week from 09.15 to 13.15 term time only.

There are five staff who work directly with the children, two of the staff are qualified and one member of staff intends to undertake training in care and education. The playgroup receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

All children benefit from a variety of opportunities to engage in physical activity. They use the outdoor play area daily to enjoy fresh air and exercise. Children participate well in spontaneous games such as, 'what time is it Mr Wolf', where they run, laugh and get out of breath. They discuss how they feel after physical exercise and what happens to their bodies when they are active. Children are beginning to gain good control of their bodies and develop good co-ordination skills, for example, when taking part in a challenging assault course.

Children are gaining a good awareness of healthy foods and staying healthy which is extended through themes, planned activities and daily routines. Children are beginning to understand the difference between 'good' and 'bad' foods and are able to identify with these through posters and interactive display tables. Parents involvement in healthy eating projects such as, the 'Golden Grin Award' contributes well to children's understanding of healthy living. Children are offered nutritious snacks and help themselves to drinks from the water dispenser.

Children have a good understanding of the importance of hygiene and know, for example, how germs are spread. They independently wash their hands after using the toilet and freely access tissues to blow their noses. They learn about caring for themselves through the 'all about me' theme and related activities such as, caring for your teeth. Children's health needs are met well through the providers clear health and hygiene policies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well planned, child-centred environment, which is organised to allow children to freely access a good range of resources and activities. The staff have recently introduced low level storage units and 'work shop' style play areas to promote children's independent learning, which contributes well to their all round development. Children learn to care for the resources and help to put them back in the appropriate place after use.

Children are beginning to learn about keeping themselves safe and understand for example, that soft mats need to be placed under the climbing frame/slide to prevent them from hurting themselves. They follow simple rules such as, informing staff when they go to the toilet or outside to play. The children are kept generally safe because staff follow satisfactory guidelines, policies and procedures. Children can, however, gain access to the adjacent house which does pose a risk to their safety.

Children are protected because the staff have a sound understanding of the child protection procedures. There is an appointed child protection officer who takes overall responsibility for ensuring that the procedures are up to date and that staff understand their responsibility.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy attending the pre-school, they enter happy and settle well. They confidently access activities of their choice and are enthusiastic learners. The relationships between children and staff are good and the newly implemented key person system enables children to receive consistent care from familiar staff. The children work well together and make good use of the well organised play areas. They freely write, draw and paint. The younger children particularly enjoy the creative, small world and role play areas. Children have fun when playing organised games outdoors, singing and sharing stories. However, the ineffective organisation of large group sessions makes it difficult for children who are at different stages in their development, to get the best out of the activity and participate fully. Recently, the staff have started to use the Birth to three matters framework to guide their practice. Therefore, children are beginning to enjoy a balance of activities, which develops their individual interests and provides them with sufficient challenges. The staff are in the very early stages of developing systems for observing, monitoring and recording children's progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals because they enjoy a suitable range of activities linked to the six areas of learning. The staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and provide well organised continuous provision. The planning and assessment systems currently used, are weak. The staff have however, recently implemented systems for observing children and are intending to use these to plan for their next steps in learning. Individual profiles are completed on each child and passed on to their next educational setting. Good quality resources supports children's learning, although, the staff do not always make good use of the opportunities to teach and question children in all six areas of learning. Consequently, children's thinking and learning are not fully challenged. The staff are already beginning to address the identified gaps in the provision and have agreed future action plans.

The children are beginning to demonstrate a positive approach to learning as they freely select resources from the well planned continuous play provision. They are

confident and eagerly share experiences with the staff and other children. They are kind and considerate, older children support younger ones well, for example, holding their hand and taking them to the toilet. Children benefit from some good opportunities to learn about their community through project related activities, such as, visits to homes for older people. They are generally well behaved, although, at whole group activities their interest is not always sustained, therefore causing some children to be distracted and agitated.

The children are developing good communication skills. They listen and respond eagerly at story time and during focused activities. They recite stories with friends, using repetitive rhyming phrases. Children recognise letters and practice letter sounds during circle time. They bring in an object from home associated with the letter of the week. They enjoy practicing their writing skills in the sufficiently equipped writing area. There are however, fewer opportunities for children to write with a purpose.

Children benefit from some good opportunities to learn about number and simple operations, such as, how many points they get when throwing the bean bag into the circle. They are learning to recognise numerals as they play with tape measures and check their height on the chart every term. They experiment with volume and capacity during water and sand play. Children learn positional language as they follow instructions to go under or over when taking on the challenges of the obstacle course. They develop a keen interest in the world around them. They watch seeds grow, go on regular nature walks and on trips to local farms. They investigate and explore programmable toys and learn about cause and effect, for example, they use the magnetic blocks to demonstrate how magnets can attract each other through paper.

The children use their imagination well in a variety of role play situations such as, the home area. They dress up, re-enact experiences, lead and organise their own play. Children have sufficient opportunities to explore colour and texture through materials, such as, paint, play dough and pasta. Their colourful work is displayed around the setting which places value on children's contribution and builds on their self-esteem. They explore music and creatively use their bodies during dance and exercise sessions, these sessions also contribute well to the children's physical development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are welcomed into the setting and their needs are met as staff discuss children's individual requirements with parents. They learn about diversity through books and project related activities, such as, the 'All about me' theme, where children bring in photographs of members of their family to discuss and display. They learn about other cultures through the celebration of significant festivals.

Children enjoy the positive response they get from staff for good behaviour and take pride in their displayed creative work. Children demonstrate a kind and caring approach to each other which is supported well by staff who give older children the responsibility to look after new children. This fosters children's spiritual, moral, social

and cultural development well.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the partnership staff have developed with parents. The staff get on well with parents and make time to greet them and share information about their child's day. Notice boards, policies and news letters are available. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning, for example, supporting children to choose items associated with the letter of the week and taking on new initiatives.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery environment is well organised to promote children's play and learning. The staff are well established and have worked together for many years. The manager and deputy take overall responsibility for supporting the staff and monitoring the provision. The staff usually discuss roles and responsibilities daily, although the manager is intending to develop systems for more formal meetings as part of the settings development plan. The manager is aware of the gaps in the provision and is working towards improvement.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager and deputy take overall responsibility for the Foundation Stage curriculum and have sufficient knowledge of the six areas of learning and how children learn. They have recently introduced a more child-led approach to learning through the implementation of continuous provision. It is also the managers intention to work more closely with staff to develop their knowledge of planning and assessment systems. They welcome the support from the Local Authority to develop their practice.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the playgroup develops a key person system, ensure that cleaning materials stored in the kitchen cupboard are made safe and that contact numbers for children and staff are available in the event of an emergency when children are off the premises. The previous education inspection recommended that the playgroup develops children's understanding of early addition and subtraction in practical activities and that staff implement a planned assessment system for children's achievements and progress.

The staff team have recently developed a keyworker system and are beginning to co-ordinate planning systems to include assessments for individual children, which promotes consistency of care for young children and allows staff to gain a greater understanding of children's individual personal and learning requirements. Children are developing a clear understanding of simple number operations through planned and unplanned activities. The cleaning cupboard is now safe and all emergency

contact numbers are kept in a book which the manager takes with her on all outings. These improvements have contributed well to children's care, development and well being.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are 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):

- ensure the door leading to the adjacent house is made safe
- review the current recruitment, induction and monitoring systems to ensure the suitability of all new and existing staff. In addition, review the complaints policy and procedures in line with the recent changes in legislation
- improve the organisation of whole group times to ensure the children are fully engaged and appropriately challenged (also applies to nursery education)
- develop systems for observing and assessing children and use these more effectively for planning the next steps in their learning (also applies to nursery education)

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):

- review current teaching methods to ensure that children's thinking and learning is sufficiently challenged in all the six areas of learning

- make improvements as indicated in the care section above.

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