



Northleach Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101531
Inspection date	19 October 2005
Inspector	Ruth Tharme
Setting Address	School House, Mill End, Northleach, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL54 3HJ
Telephone number	01451 860019
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Registered person	Northleach 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Northleach Playgroup was established in 1992. It operates from the Old School House within the village school site. A maximum of 13 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group is open each weekday morning, except Thursdays, between 09.00 and 12.00 during term times. Children have access to an

enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 12 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on the roll. Of these 10 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the village and the surrounding area.

The playgroup employs 2 staff who work with the children. The playleader holds an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Some positive steps are taken to promote children's health. There are sound hand-washing procedures and tables are thoroughly cleaned before food is served. A clear record is maintained of any accidents that occur and first aid arrangements ensure that children are treated appropriately. The exclusion policy and procedures for dealing with sick children minimise the spread of infection.

The mid-morning break ensures that children have reasonable access to drinks of milk or water. They enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks such as carrot sticks, apple slices and toast. There are basic arrangements in place to manage the needs of those with particular dietary requirements.

A physical activity, such as music and movement or outdoor play, is organised at each session to ensure that children take part in regular exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The premises provide a generally appropriate environment for young children. They are suitably cleaned and maintained. Equipment is stored appropriately so children can access it safely but the use of space is not well considered so it is difficult for children to move around freely.

There are some sound precautions in place to minimise the risk from fire. Smoke alarms and a fire blanket are available and fire drills are held regularly. There is no programme of risk assessment in place so potential hazards go unrecognised. The premises are not consistently secure. Uncleared staff work alone, giving them unsupervised access to children. Staff deployment is poor so children are sometimes left by themselves in the playrooms.

Staff have a clear knowledge of the indicators of abuse and know what to do if they have any concerns so children are suitably protected. The written policy does not reflect current practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

There is a good range of equipment available to support children's all-round development but it is often poorly presented so children make little use of it. There is a variety of activities on offer but children are given little time to experience them. Much of the session is taken up with adult-directed activity so children do not have time to explore, investigate or make decisions for themselves.

The basic system for monitoring progress is not sufficiently evaluated so staff cannot plan effectively for the next stages in children's development. Some children are developing warm friendships. They demonstrate a caring attitude towards each other. Temporary staff do not know the children well and have been given little information about those in their care so they do not easily form good relationships and are unable to support children effectively.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Staff have an incomplete knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are not clear about what children are expected to learn. Plans lack detail and do not identify the next steps for children's learning. Assessment records are not evaluated sufficiently and are not used as the basis for future plans so activities do not meet the needs of all the children. The use of time is not well planned. Children have little time to spend on activities of their own choosing. Resources are poorly presented so children make little use of them.

Children are not supported to leave their parents. Staff and activities do not attract their attention so children are reluctant to leave their carers. Some children express their own needs and contribute to their own well being, taking themselves to the toilet and blowing their own noses. They have a strong awareness of the boundaries set but staff fail to explain them clearly so children are not aware of the reasons behind them. Children show some level of independence, pouring their own drinks, but they are given few opportunities to tackle and solve their own problems.

Children respond to simple instructions and listen carefully to adults. Staff ask closed questions and direct most activities so children do not develop conversation or language for thinking. The book corner is poorly presented and books are not used to support other activities so children make little use of books in their play. Some children recognise the initial sound in some words and can recognise their name on a place mat. Mark-making equipment is poorly presented and children are given little time to make use of it. They make some use of one-handed tools, such as spoons, and some more able children use their finger to trace over their name.

Children use positional language such as top, middle and bottom and relate numbers to numerals on a number line. More able children can find the total number of children in the group by adding the number of boys to the number of girls. Staff have high expectations so some challenges are inappropriate for younger children.

Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are few but some children do

show a limited awareness of changes in the world around them. They are able to discuss the weather and the changing seasons. They realise that tools can be used for a purpose, cutting and rolling dough. Children are developing a sense of time. They can recount experiences from the past, such as a Halloween party. They make little use of information and communication technology as there is limited time made available for this.

Children correctly use a range of small and large equipment. They ride bikes, use push-along toys and a variety of small tools. They can manage their bodies to create intended movements as they pretend to be elephants, giraffes and snakes in time to music. Children engage in some activities requiring hand/eye co-ordination and show some understanding of good practice with regard to hygiene.

Children are beginning to recognise and name different colours. They respond to music with body movement when directed by adults but there are very limited opportunities for children to respond, express and communicate their own ideas. Poor organisation means that there is little time for children to explore different media or engage in imaginary play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Basic information is requested from parents with regard to individual needs but staff are not all well informed about those in their care so cannot support them effectively. A lack of positive images and activities to promote awareness means that children are not able to develop their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and beliefs. Staff fail to monitor progress effectively so children with special needs are not adequately supported. Staff have very high expectations of behaviour and manners which children fail to live up to when activities are prolonged and poorly organised.

The partnership with parents and carers is inadequate. The lack of a positive partnership has a detrimental effect on children's care. Staff provide some good quality information about the setting in the starter pack and on the notice board but parents are not given information about the curriculum the children are following. Progress reports are provided each half term but staff members do not all know the children in their care well enough to discuss their progress with parents. They have some involvement in their child's learning as they are encouraged to share library books at home but they are not encouraged to share what they know about their own child when they first join the setting. Visiting parents are not made welcome as staff fail to engage with them.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is not fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Written procedures for vetting staff have not been implemented so children are at

risk. The organisation of staff, time and resources is poor which has a detrimental effect on children's care. Arrangements for dealing with staff absence have not been implemented effectively. There are no induction procedures for staff who have returned after a long absence so they are not sufficiently well informed to provide appropriate care.

Minimum qualification levels are met and suitable ratios are maintained. The register provides an accurate record of children's attendance. The certificate of registration is appropriately displayed and is visible to parents. Records are routinely shared with, and are countersigned by, parents.

The leadership and management of the setting is inadequate. Staff are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. Volunteers are given little information to help them support children effectively. Staff do not take time to assess their practice and do not actively seek help or advice from other professionals. However there is some commitment to improvement. The group is keen to move forward and address issues raised at inspection.

The setting does not meet the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The group has made some progress but has not yet addressed some issues raised at the last inspection sufficiently. At the time of the last inspection they were asked to make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the procedures to be followed if they have a complaint. Procedures have been added to the policy file and a poster is displayed on the notice board so parents now have ready access to the information they need.

They were asked to review the organisation of resources to allow children to choose and select activities and resources for themselves, particularly mark-making equipment and resources to allow children to relate numbers to written numerals. Some re-organisation has taken place. A number line is clearly visible and mark-making equipment is on display but children are given very limited opportunities to use the equipment freely for themselves as much of the day's activity is adult directed.

A recommendation was made to ensure that the premises are maintained at an adequate temperature. The premises are suitably heated and ventilated. There is a thermometer on the wall so staff can ensure that the temperature is appropriate at all times.

Staff were asked to ensure that hand washing facilities are safe and do not present a hazard to children. Staff supervise children whilst they wash their hands. A step is in place so they can reach the sink safely. Soap and paper towels are provided to ensure that hygiene standards are maintained.

The group was asked to review and develop procedures for the assessment of all

children to enable the identification of special needs, and to inform future planning, and ensure that activities support individual children's learning and build on their prior knowledge. A new system of observation and assessment has been planned but has yet to be implemented. Information gathered from observations is not sufficiently evaluated. Consequently staff fail to identify children's specific needs and are unable to plan effectively for the next stages in their development.

A recommendation was also made that the group further develop the partnership with parents, to encourage them to share what they know about their child and be involved in ongoing assessments of their progress. Parents are asked to add their own comments to the written progress report received at the end of each half term. They are still not asked to provide information about their child when they first join the setting so staff are not able to use this information to plan for future progress.

Finally, the group was asked to develop procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for nursery education. Little progress has been made in this area. Staff do not seek advice or help from other professionals and activities are not evaluated. The group has not identified weaknesses in the provision and is therefore unable to take steps towards improvement.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted has received one complaint, relating to Standard 11: Behaviour. The complaint related to the use of discipline. The provider was asked to investigate and to report back within 7 days. The provider carried out an investigation and from the information received there was no evidence that the National Standards were not being met. We took no further action and 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- take positive steps to promote safety with particular regard to security, the identification and addressing of risk, supervision of children and ensuring that all adults having unsupervised access to children are suitable to do so
- develop procedures for the assessment of children's progress and use the information gathered to identify individual needs and to plan for the next stages in children's development
- ensure that children's behaviour is managed in a way which promotes their welfare and development
- review the organisation of time to ensure that children have more frequent opportunities to explore, investigate, make choices for themselves and build on their own interests.

These actions are set out in a ***notice of action to improve*** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and of individual roles and responsibilities so that staff are more aware of what children are expected to learn and can support them more effectively
- develop the partnership with parents to ensure that they are given clear information about the curriculum and are encouraged to share what they know about their child when they join the setting
- review the organisation and presentation of resources so children make better use of books, mark-making, creative and imaginary play equipment.

These actions are set out in a ***notice of action to improve*** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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