



St Helens Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 251649
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Inspector Mary Gilbert

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Registered person St Helens 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

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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?

St Helens Playgroup has been registered since July 1999 and is managed by a committee. The playgroup operates from the St Helens Church Hall, situated in Ipswich, Suffolk. The children have access to a large hall and there are toilet and kitchen facilities. There is no outside play area available.

The group are registered to care for 22 children aged from 2 to 5 years. Currently there are 21 children on roll of whom 12 are funded 3 and 4 year olds. Sessions are

held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 09:30. to 12:00 during term time.

The playgroup employs 7 members of staff of whom 2 hold appropriate early years qualifications and 3 who are currently training. The playgroup supports a number of children who have English as an additional language.

The playgroup is a member of the PLA.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children remain healthy because staff promote healthy practices throughout the setting. Surfaces in the kitchen and playroom are wiped down before food preparation and eating. Should a child have an accident whilst in the care of the playgroup there are effective procedures to deal with it and record the accident, although the way this is recorded could compromise confidentiality. Children learn that it is important to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

Children have some access to physical activities as part of the session plan. However, this is sometimes limited by the way sessions are organised.

Children are provided with healthy snacks which include fruit, savoury biscuits and cheese. Children share these in small groups. Water is available for them to access independently through the session. However, the cups they use are not always replaced and children's health could be compromised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe environment. Daily risk assessments take place which ensures the premises are safe for children. Procedures for the safe arrival and departure of children are in place. Fire evacuation procedures are on display. However, the log of drills taking place lacks detail.

The playroom is organised into identified areas, for example, role play, graphics and creative areas. However, there is little display to enhance the areas and make them welcoming to children. The temperature in the play room is usually adequate, although the temperature in the role play area is sometimes inadequate, and there is no heating in the toilets which makes it uncomfortable for children when nappy changing takes place.

Children have access to a range of resources. These are limited in some areas. For example, there are few to promote diversity or to enable children to gain an understanding of information technology. Resources are checked regularly by staff to ensure they are safe to use.

Children are protected from abuse by staff who have an awareness of child protection issues, and can follow the clear procedures of the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled in the playgroup. Children develop their confidence as they make choices from the provided activities and resources available to them. Children relate well to each other, learning to share their games and toys. Staff support them in their play and ask open ended questions which develops their thinking skills. However, there are no specific planned activities or focused observations for children under three.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals. Staff have some knowledge of the early learning goals and the stepping stones to reach them. However, the lack of long and medium term planning makes it difficult for staff to monitor the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Short term plans identify some learning outcomes, but these are not linked to assessment opportunities and do not clearly identify challenges for the older or more able children. Some adult focused activities take place, but there is no evaluation of these. Observations of children take place, but these are not clearly linked to assessment records or used to plan for next steps of learning.

Children develop a sense of belonging as they are given a bag identifying them as members of the playgroup. Circle times give children the opportunity to speak to each other and share any news. Role play opportunities enable children to learn to share and develop their imagination. Children are given some opportunities to develop their independence as they make choices from the provided activities. However, they have few opportunities to develop their independence through the routines, for example, in tidying up or the preparation of snack time.

Children recognise and use their names for self registration, although their use of name cards is limited at other times. They have few opportunities to see writing in the environment as there is little stimulating display. Children choose and handle books confidently, and listen well to stories. Children use a range of materials to develop their mark making skills. There are no planned activities to enable children to learn to link sounds to letters. Children have opportunities to develop their mathematical skills through a daily planned activity. However, there are few opportunities for them to develop their understanding of number as there are few opportunities to view this in the environment and opportunities for problem solving are not part of the daily routine.

Children learn to investigate through sand and water play. They have opportunities to participate in some outings which enables them to learn about the local environment. Visitors are welcomed into the sessions, for example, the dental nurse. Children have limited opportunities to develop their skills in information technology due to a lack of resources.

Children have access to a range of tools and equipment which help them to develop their manipulative skills. They learn to use the indoor space well moving confidently around the room between activities. Children sing a range of simple songs from memory and use actions to accompany them. Children have access to a range of media and materials which they use to extend their creativity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who work with parents to ensure their individual needs are known and met. For example, children are encouraged to bring in a comforter. All children are welcomed and individual settling in procedures enable children to feel welcomed and develop their confidence. Children learn to work together, take turns and share resources. There are some planned activities to enable children to learn about the wider society. Children develop a sense of belonging and feel secure within the daily routine. They respond well to praise and encouragement.

The playgroup's positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. New parents are welcomed and provided with information as regards the care and education provided. Parents are invited in to meet with their child's keyworkers on a termly basis to discuss progress and share children's records with them. However, there is little information available to enable parents to be involved with children's learning on a regular basis. For example, no information is available to explain the topics which are to be covered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is promoted by staff who have an understanding of how children learn and develop. Staff training needs are identified. Staff working with children have been cleared to do so. An induction procedure ensures that new staff are aware of the policies and procedures of the playgroup. The number of staff working with children positively supports their care, learning and play.

The organisation of the sessions provides for the needs of children. However, children are not fully involved in the daily routines, for example, staff tidy up although children are reminded that it is tidy up time. Children are safeguarded by the policies and procedures which are in place. These are well stored to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The staff work together to identify areas of development. However, the appraisal system has not been fully implemented and there is no specific monitoring system to ensure the setting achieves high standards of care and education.

Overall, the needs of children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous combined inspection the group were required to implement a number of actions to improve the care provided as well as a recommendation to consider. There were also six key issues to consider to enable improvement in education.

Most of the actions have been implemented. These include the provision of drinking water, the organisation of the room, resources to cover all areas of development, implementing an induction procedure for new staff, developing knowledge and understanding of child protection issues, and the organisation of the room. Although children are now able to access drinking water, the cups they use are not always clean. The room has now been reorganised to provide identified areas for children to use. Staff have attended child protection training and procedures are shared. Resources have been reviewed and extended. However, there are still identified areas for further improvement. An induction procedure has been developed for new staff and a staff information folder provides information with regard to policies and procedures. The recommendation was to provide children with a signal before tidy up time. This has been developed and children are now involved in this process.

Most of the key issues have been addressed. However, there has been limited progress in some aspects. The first key issue was to develop staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. Unqualified staff have been attending NVQ training, although this has not really addressed this issue. Planning was also a key issue. Planning now covers all areas of learning. However, there are still some aspects of this which need to be addressed. Observation and assessment procedures were also included as a key issue. Some progress has been made in relation to this, but further development needs to be made to ensure this is an effective process. Key issues to develop parent involvement in children's learning, and enabling children to initiate some activities have shown reasonable progress. However, the key issue to monitor and evaluate teaching still needs to be addressed.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received a complaint which raised concerns about National Standard 1: Suitable person, National Standard 3: Play, learning and care, National Standard 4: Premises, Standard 7: Health, National Standard 11: Behaviour.

Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit to the provision on the 25 November 2005.

As a result of the investigation the provider was given 1 recommendation relating to National Standard 4: Premises-Rooms are maintained at an adequate temperature, this is with regard to the toilets. This recommendation will be checked at the next inspection.

During the visit the inspector found evidence that National Standard 14 was not being met and an action was given as follows:

Ensure records are always available for inspection by the Early Years Child care Inspector.

A satisfactory response to this action was received on 15 December 2005.

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 cups children use when accessing water are clean
- maintain confidentiality in the recording of accidents
- provide more detailed information within the fire log
- ensure rooms are maintained at an adequate temperature
- improve outcomes for children under 3 by using Birth to 3 matters as a framework for planning
- involve children in daily routines

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):

- develop stimulating supply and provide sufficient resources to meet needs of children in all areas of the curriculum (also applies to care)
- develop planning procedures to ensure they identify all aspects of each area of learning, clearly identify assessment opportunities and provide challenges for older or more able children
- develop observation and assessment procedures to ensure they are effective in planning for next steps of learning

- provide information for parents to enable them to be involved in children's learning on a regular basis
- develop an effective system to monitor the quality of care and education provided (also applies to care)

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