



Hauxton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221800
Inspection date	27 February 2006
Inspector	Heidi Falconer
Setting Address	VILLAGE HALL, HAUXTON, CAMBRIDGE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, CB2
Telephone number	
E-mail	
Registered person	The Committee of Hauxton 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?

Hauxton Playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the group. It opened in 1977 and operates from a village hall. It is situated in the village of Hauxton on the outskirts of Cambridge. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 09:15 to 12:30 during school term times. All children have access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 17 children from 2 to 4 years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The playgroup employs three staff. The manager holds an appropriate early years qualification. Two staff are currently working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted soundly because staff take positive steps to promote their good health through appropriate hygiene practices. For example, tables are cleaned before snack time to ensure that surfaces are hygienic. Children are beginning to take responsibility for meeting their own health needs. Regular reminders from staff help them to understand the importance of washing their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Parents are kept well informed of illness at the group through discussions with staff and clearly visible notices. This is helping to prevent the spread of infections such as sickness bugs and head lice. Suitable measures are taken when children are ill so that health needs are met. For example, appropriate procedures for recording accidents are in place and the group have obtained consent from parents to seek emergency medical advice or treatment.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. They enjoy fresh and dried fruits at snack time which help to encourage healthy eating practices. Staff are fully aware of all children's special dietary requirements. These are respected and complied with which ensures children remain healthy. Children have a choice of what to drink, but there are limited opportunities for children to access drinks other than at snack time, so that they can learn and respond to their bodies needs.

Children move confidently and with good co-ordination as they ride on bikes and wheeled vehicles. They are able to negotiate space well, manoeuvre around obstacles and steer in and out of cones with increasing skill. Children have adequate opportunities to develop skills such as climbing and balancing indoors and outdoors. A satisfactory range of small equipment enables children to develop their manipulative skills. For example, children handle a variety of small tools such as scissors with competence as they cut out triangles to make rockets.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are safe and well cared for in premises that are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. Staff set out the hall on a daily basis ensuring that the children use a suitable range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate resources. However, due to limited storage, there are few opportunities for children to select resources other than those which have been set out for them. This limits their ability to make independent choices about how they spend their time at the group.

Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised because staff take positive steps to promote safety within the setting. For example, staff carry out daily risk assessments of the premises to identify hazards. Appropriate action has been taken where hazards have been identified. For example, all plug sockets have safety covers fitted and staff ensure that the store room is kept locked at all times to prevent children accessing it unsupervised. To promote children's safety effective procedures are in place to ensure that the premises are kept secure during the session. A bolt is used to keep an interior door locked which prevents unauthorised people entering the premises and children leaving unescorted. To promote children's safety in the event of a fire, suitable fire equipment is in place and is checked regularly. However, accurate logs of fire practises are not kept. This compromises children's safety in the event of a fire.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Most staff have a secure understanding of child protection procedures and would be able to protect children if they had concerns about a child's welfare. Their knowledge is in line with those set out by the local Area Child Protection Committee.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled in the warm, friendly environment. They form good relationships with staff and each other and are developing good social skills. Children receive a great deal of warm and positive attention from staff and which helps them to develop a strong sense of belonging. Staff spend the majority of their time engaged in activities with children, supporting their play.

Children are interested in the wide range of activities which are set out for them each day. They enjoy participating in opportunities to explore and investigate a range of materials such as shaving foam, playdough and pasta. These experiences allow them to develop new ideas and concepts. For example, when playing with playdough and shells they talk about the shapes and patterns the shell prints have made.

Staff have some knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. However, they are not using it effectively to plan and provide a range of activities to improve young children's achievements. As a result, activities are not always sufficiently challenging for children, to help them make progress and take the next step in their learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children separate from their carers happily and are confident in activities. They enjoy the company of others and often seek out other children to share their experiences, such as driving in the car to go to sunny beaches. Children's independence is being fostered in their management of self care. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to develop independence skills in everyday activities. For example, such as pouring drinks at snack times, or selecting free play activities.

Children are learning about number, weight, length and size through planned

activities and through the equipment staff provide in play situations such as calculators and weighing scales. They use mathematical language such as 'big' and 'bigger' to describe and compare different sized bears as they recreate simple patterns. However, children do not have regular opportunities to extend their understanding of mathematical concepts or write numbers in everyday situations such as snack time.

Each day children are able to access a suitable range of mark making and art and craft resources, allowing them to develop their creativity, communicate their ideas and develop early writing skills. However, there are missed opportunities for children to recognise their names or write for a purpose such as writing their name on their artwork. Children's language skills are developing well. Children enjoy stories and show an interest in books as they re-tell favourite stories in the book area to their friends. Children join in with songs enthusiastically, joining in with appropriate actions and using their imagination well to act out roles such as the baker in the song 'five currant buns'.

Children show an interest in how and why things work. For example, they show great excitement at the group's new computer and eagerly ask staff to show them how to turn it on and ask questions about how it works. Children are developing a sense of time and place through topics and activities involving visits from people in the local community such as the dentist. However, there are fewer opportunities for them to learn about diversity and the wider community.

Although staff are currently attending training they are not all sound in their knowledge of the early learning goals and stepping stones. As a result they do not have sufficient knowledge of how the activities they provide contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. This limits their ability to provide sufficient challenge in everyday activities for older and more able children. The manager of the group has recently completed a level three qualification. This has given her suitable knowledge of the Foundation Stage which enables her to plan a balanced range of activities that promotes development in all areas of learning. Assessments are in place, however, they do not currently contain enough detail to enable them to be used effectively to inform future planning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show a good sense of belonging as they greet staff and each other upon arrival. Staff encourage children to work together co-operatively in small group activities during 'free play' and give careful explanations that young children can understand to help them learn to share. For example, they are asked to consider how they may feel if something was taken away from them and given to another child.

There are suitable procedures in place to support children with special educational needs. Staff are proactive in supporting all children and they work effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that the children's needs can be identified and met. Children have acceptable opportunities to learn about the world they live in. They play with small world figures and look at books. However, there are limited

opportunities for children to take part in and develop their understanding of cultural and religious celebrations. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents for children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Children benefit from the positive relationships and regular discussions between staff and their parents. Parents speak positively about the setting and express confidence in the staff. Parents receive sufficient information about the setting through daily discussions with staff, new letters and the group's brochure. However, parents do not receive regular, detailed information about their children's progress and there are no formal opportunities for them to share their observations of what their children achieve outside the group. As a result staff do not always have enough information to make sure activities are appropriately challenging and build on what children already know and can do.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are warmly welcomed into the setting, which is prepared each day before they arrive, thus creating a caring, stimulating environment. As a result, children are happy, settled and enjoy the activities provided. Children are cared for by suitably qualified and experienced staff who have an appropriate understanding of their roles and responsibilities, helping the provision to meet the needs of the children attending. Staff generally work well together and are deployed effectively to promote children's health, enjoyment and safety.

All of the required policies and procedures are in place to protect children and promote their all round development. These are generally well implemented to promote all the outcomes for children. However, some policies are out of date and do not reflect their practice. These policies are currently being evaluated by the staff and committee to ensure that they are a true reflection of the group's practice. Recruitment and vetting procedures generally ensure that children are protected and that staff have an appropriate understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, they are not sufficiently rigorous enough to ensure that staff working with children are suitable to do so. This comprises children safety and welfare.

The leadership and management of nursery education are satisfactory. A voluntary management committee made up of parents are keen to support the staff team and improve the nursery education provision. The management committee supports the staff through daily informal contact, formal half termly meetings and with some administration tasks. There is a commitment to the on-going improvement of the setting. In addition two members of staff have just started training for professional qualifications in childcare. The knowledge that they will gain will help them to continue to develop the provision for all of the children who attend. However, there is no formal system in place to take account of existing knowledge and skills, evaluate practice or to effectively identify staff's individual training needs. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection staff have improved children's safety at the setting. They have altered the lock on the main door, ensuring that the premises are secure and that children are unable to leave them unsupervised. They have also updated their policy for lost and uncollected children and devised a written procedure for outings. In addition, they have also ensured that the locks on the toilet doors can be opened from the outside.

To promote children's welfare at the setting, staff have updated their policy on child protection to ensure that it includes procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The staff are also in the process of updating their complaints policy to ensure that it is in line with current guidelines. However, the group failed to update their policy with the recommendations made at the last inspection.

At the last inspection under Nursery Education the setting was asked to increase staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure the delivery of the curriculum is effective and that children benefit from the breadth of activities offered. The group are continuing to make progress with this. The manager has recently completed a level three qualification and the two other staff members have just started their level two qualifications. The knowledge and skills that they have got from these courses is helping them to develop and improve the nursery education provision for the children who attend.

The setting was also asked to improve the provision of practical maths activities for children, including involving mathematics as part of the daily routine. Staff now plan a range of activities to cover most areas of mathematics sufficiently and they sometimes use everyday routines for children to count and add numbers.

The group agreed to develop the system of assessment in order to plan for further challenge of the older and more able children, ensuring that parents have opportunities to contribute towards their child's assessment. The group have developed a system for assessment. Staff observe children at everyday activities and then these observations are used to show how children are making progress towards the stepping stones and plan for their next steps in learning. However, due to staff and committee changes these are not up to date. The group are currently considering ways in which these assessments can be shared with parents.

The group have not ensured that the provision for nursery education is monitored and evaluated so that identified areas for improvement are effectively addressed. This has been mainly down to changes in the committee. The setting now has a supportive committee who are currently discussing how this can be achieved.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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):

- improve outcomes for children under three by using an approach in line with 'Birth to three matters' and ensure that planning is appropriate to their age
- ensure that the fire evacuation plan is practised regularly and that accurate logs of these practises are recorded
- ensure that children have appropriate opportunities to learn about different cultures. (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):

- improve staff's use of everyday routines and activities to enable children to extend their learning across all areas of the curriculum spontaneously, and in meaningful contexts, such as writing their names on artwork, counting and calculating at circle time or selecting additional resources independently
- improve opportunities for parents, to be informed about their child's progress and any identified next steps for learning, to make formal comments about their child's learning and develop the information which is given to parents about the groups aims
- improve recruitment, vetting and induction procedures so that they are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all staff and committee members are suitable to do so and that they have suitable knowledge and skills to promote children's safety and welfare. (also applies to care)

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