



Derwent Road Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY269075
Inspection date	09 May 2006
Inspector	Wendy Brooks

Setting Address	United Reformed Church, Derwent Road, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA11 9AT
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Telephone number

E-mail

Registered person	Derwent Road Playgroup
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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 good. 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?

Derwent Road Playgroup was registered in 2003. It operates from two rooms in the United Reformed Church hall in Haresfinch, St Helens. It serves the local area.

There are currently 60 children from 2 to 5 years on roll, of which there are 25 funded 3 and 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Currently 2 children have been identified as having special educational needs and there are currently no children with English as a second language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 9.30am to 11.45am Tuesday, Thursday and Friday for children aged 2 and 3 years. Funded education sessions operate from 12.45 to 15.15 each weekday.

Seven staff work with the children. Three members of staff, including the manager, are working towards NVQ Level 3 and three members of staff are working towards NVQ Level 2. There are also regular opportunities for students to attend on placements. The setting receives support from a teaching advisor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn the importance of good hygiene by following daily routines, such as washing hands after visiting the toilet, before eating and before baking activities. Younger children are supported to wash hands effectively and dispose of paper towels appropriately, while older children visit the toilet independently and gentle reminders help them to learn about personal hygiene. Regular routines for the cleaning of toys, equipment and premises ensure children's good health is considered at all times.

An appropriate sick child policy and procedure ensures staff are alert to children who might be feeling unwell, and that any necessary arrangements and communication with parents and carers is made. This ensures that children are cared for within an environment which is as free from infection as possible. Children's medical needs are discussed with parents and carers during the admissions procedure and staff have a good understanding of individual needs. Medication and accident records are completed accurately by staff, although parental acknowledgement is not always obtained at the end of the session.

Planned themes and activities enable the children to think about healthy eating as they examine and taste various fruits that they have purchased with their parents and brought to the playgroup. Healthy snacks are offered to children during their time at the session to include cereal, toast, fruit and plain biscuits. Children are provided with drinks during snack time and children are encouraged to bring a beaker or bottle from home each day. This means that children develop independence as they select their own beakers whenever they want a drink.

Children's physical development is promoted through the provision of appropriate opportunities both inside and outdoors. Children have opportunities to play outdoors on most days and enjoy riding on tricycles and other wheeled toys, using bats and balls and practise their catching and throwing skills with the bean bags. Children also have the opportunity to use a small indoor climbing frame and slide on a daily basis which means that children of all ages that attend can develop their physical skills. Children also enjoy taking part in singing and action rhymes where they can further develop coordination and control of their movements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well cared for within areas that are appropriately organised according to their age and level of development. Rooms are prepared prior to children's arrival each day ensuring they have play opportunities as soon as they arrive. Children are able to enjoy a good range of activities and experiences using both indoor and outdoor play space which contributes to their learning, development and enjoyment. Staff make use of indoor space to provide physical play when outdoor play is not possible.

Children access a variety of activities and opportunities on a daily basis which are supported by good resources and equipment. Resources are regularly rotated and are well used to support activities and children's enjoyment. Children develop skills of independence as they self select toys and equipment from that on offer. Staff plan regular opportunities throughout the day for children to make choices about their free play, enabling children to self select toys and activities. Toys and equipment are checked regularly for safety and are routinely cleaned to ensure children's safety at all times.

Children's safety is well promoted. Staff have a good understanding of the need to ensure children's safety at all times as they have effective policies and procedures in place. The premises are kept secure and children are well supervised at all times. Access to the outdoor area presents some risks to children's safety, although due to continuous supervision and organisation of staff these risks are minimised, ensuring that children can make use of the outdoor area safely. Regular risk assessments on the premises and before outings take place are undertaken by the manager and she ensures that electrical equipment is checked regularly. The premises are maintained by the connecting Church and are safe for children's use. The regular conducting of fire drills ensures staff responses are effective in ensuring children's safety in the event of this occurring.

Children's welfare is given a high priority. Staff have a good understanding of child protection policies and procedures and are clear about their responsibilities in this area. Their knowledge is supported by clear policies and procedures which are shared with all staff, parents and carers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's enjoyment and achievement is well addressed. They are learning and developing well through the provision of planned activities and opportunities which helps to promote their learning, overall development and enjoyment. Staff are aware of both the Birth to three framework and the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and use these to provide all children with effective learning opportunities.

Children are cared for by identified key workers who have responsibility of ensuring children in their identified group are settled and happy at the playgroup. The key

workers also observe children in their care on a daily basis and discuss any development needs with parents and carers. For example, key workers will work in partnership with parents and carers to assist children in toilet training and other areas of development.

All children enjoy planned activities which are supported by a good range of resources covering a variety of play experiences, for example, younger children enjoy a range of play experiences, such as craft, construction, music and movement. Pre-school children join in with activities, such as exploring shapes, textures and tastes of fruits to link with the theme of keeping healthy.

Children are greeted warmly by staff as they arrive which enables them to quickly settle and participate in the activities on offer with enthusiasm. Where children are unsettled, staff give good support and comfort. Children are becoming competent learners through good staff communication and interaction and the provision of good activities.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are developing their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are becoming more familiar with the curriculum guidance when planning activities for children. The manager takes responsibility for the planning of activities and discusses them with all staff who work with pre-school children. All staff are committed to their role and the continued development of their knowledge of the Foundation Stage. However, they presently lack the experience to fully stretch children's learning through more challenging questions and by making full use of the resources and opportunities available.

Weekly plans are formulated, giving equal emphasis to the six areas of learning within the Foundation Stage. However, opportunities for children to further develop their skills in mathematical development, literacy and Information Communication Technology are not provided to the extent possible in everyday activities. Children's development and progress is observed and recorded spontaneously and is used to assess children's progress at the end of term. There are no planned opportunities for staff to observe children's progress during identified activities. This means that staff are unable to use such information to target specific children in future planned one to one or small group activities.

Children enjoy a wide variety of activities and experiences which help to develop their learning across the six areas within the Foundation Stage curriculum. All children are settled at the provision and arrive happy and eager to participate. Children's confidence and self-esteem are well promoted as they are praised for their achievements. Children show good levels of independence, for example, a group of children choose to sit together in the book corner relaxing on floor cushions and wicker chairs. Each child selects a book and they enjoy sharing their stories and chatting amongst themselves. Children build positive relationships with staff and peers. They take turns and share resources and behave well.

Children are confident speakers and communicate well with each other, members of staff and visitors to the setting. Opportunities are provided for children to develop

their reading skills through free access to the book corner and by selecting their own names at self-registration. Some resources and display work is labelled although opportunities for practising these skills is not extensive. Children develop their mark making skills when using the chalkboard, drawing activities and using paintbrushes. These skills are not fully promoted as children do not have access to writing materials within play situations in order to recreate everyday experiences. Children begin to use language for thinking. While exploring the texture of a star fruit children are able to describe it as 'soft' and that it feels 'like an orange'.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of mathematics through access to varied mathematical equipment, written materials and activities, for example, children count the number of cherries made from play dough with a member of staff. However, spontaneous everyday opportunities to enhance children's understanding of numbers and number operations are not built upon. Children develop knowledge and understanding of the world around them through a wide selection of planned activities. Children are developing an understanding of early science as they are involved in activities, such as making hand prints and painting marks from water on the wall then watching what happens as the sun dries up the water. Festivals and special events from around the world are celebrated in the playgroup such as Divali, Chinese New Year and Easter. Visitors from the local community, such as Fire Officers and the Dentist come to the playgroup to talk to the children about their jobs and how they help others. Children also take part in outings within the local area, for example to the library and the hairdressing salon, to learn more about the wider community.

Children's physical skills are developed through a selection of activities both indoors and outside. Children are provided with opportunities to ride bikes, use the slide and climbing equipment, and play with bats and balls. Regular activities involving music and movement help children to develop an understanding of control of their bodies and a sense of space. Children's fine motor skills are developed through activities such as, using the toy hammer to knock blocks into the shape sorter and manoeuvring small world characters in the garage and play house. Children are provided with numerous activities to explore their creative development through a range of textures and materials such as, baking, painting, gloop, sand and water play. Children have access to art and craft materials and enjoy cutting various shapes from coloured paper before sticking down to make their own patterns. Role play areas are changed regularly and children enjoy selecting costumes in which to dress up.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are included in all the activities provided; their individual needs and circumstances are known and provided for by staff. Children are developing a good understanding and awareness of the wider world as they are involved in celebrating a variety of festivals throughout the year, for example, Chinese New Year and Christmas. Children access good resources that promote their understanding of diversity, for example, a good range of books is available which reflects positive

images and encourages children's understanding of other cultures. Children also have access to small world characters that reflect diversity in race and disability.

Staff are aware of all the children's individual needs and circumstances, and are able to demonstrate how they are able to support all children. A special educational needs policy supports children's placements and addresses children's individual needs where necessary. Children's behaviour is good. Children receive praise and encouragement from staff for their efforts, attempts and achievements which has a positive impact on their self confidence and self-esteem. Children are happy and are engaged in activities. A clear behaviour management strategy and programme of activities and opportunities ensures children's enjoyment and good behaviour. Children are polite, share, take turns and are learning to cooperate with and show consideration for one another. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the effective partnership with parents and carers. Parents and carers have access to, and receive plenty of information about the setting and what it has to offer in terms of care. An admission pack is provided before each new child attends the playgroup, which summarises all policies and procedures. Staff are available for verbal discussions whenever required. Weekly newsletters are sent home which remind parents of approaching visits or special events and of current themes that are being focussed on within the playgroup's activities. Parents do not, however, receive a great deal of information about the education offered to their child. No details of the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning are shared with parents before their child attends the playgroup. Parents are invited to meet with staff as their child prepares to leave the playgroup when children's progress is discussed and their developmental records are shared. These files are not readily available for parents to access while their child is attending. Parents and carers spoken to were positive and supportive of the provision and what it offers their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

Children's learning and development benefit from the effective leadership and management of the playgroup. The manager meets with all staff every few weeks to discuss the activities provided and the general management of the playgroup. The manager takes opportunities to observe the overall running of the playgroup on a regular basis and uses these observations to inform staff of progress during meetings. Staff performance is monitored and discussed informally and training and development needs are recognised. Formal monitoring and staff appraisals have not been undertaken to date.

Children are cared for safely as all necessary clearances on staff have been completed and suitable recruitment and selection procedures are in place. An

operational plan, policies and procedures are in place. Suitable induction and regular staff meetings are used to evaluate staff performance and ensure that they are kept up to date with policies, procedures and changes in regulations and childcare initiatives.

The manager and five members of staff are currently undertaking training in order to hold a qualification in Early Years and Childcare. All staff have relevant experience and a sound knowledge of child care to ensure that children's safety, learning and development are promoted. Staff have opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge through further training, such as the Birth to three matters framework and a course in Makaton. This has a positive impact on children's learning, development and welfare.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the manager has taken several steps to improve the safety, welfare and learning of the children who attend. Recommendations were made at the last inspection to ensure there is a named deputy who is able to take charge in the absence of the manager, ensure information is given to parents which includes basic written information about the setting including details of policies and procedures which are available, update documentation to ensure children's attendance is recorded and written parental permission is obtained for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. All the above recommendations have been met, which contributes the overall organisation of the provision.

In addition, recommendations were made to improve children's health and safety by devising a procedure to ensure all staff are made aware of children's dietary needs, ensure fire drills are carried out in accordance with the fire safety officer's recommendations, conduct a risk assessment on the outside play area, take steps to minimise risks on premises, and develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. These recommendations have been met.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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.

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 good. 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 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 all accident and medication records are acknowledged by parental signatures and stored appropriately

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):

- ensure opportunities are provided for children to further develop their mathematical, literacy and Information Communication Technology skills on a daily basis
- ensure written plans include specific opportunities for staff to monitor and assess children's progress and development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk