



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 306507

DfES Number: 530521

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 05/10/2004
Inspector Name Sheila May Price

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Thornton Hough Playgroup
Setting Address Village Hall
Manor Road
Thornton Hough
Wirral
CH63 1JA

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Thornton Hough Playgroup 1096958

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Thornton Hough Playgroup
Address Village Hall
Manor Road, Thornton Hough
Wirral
Merseyside
CH63 1JA

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Thornton Hough Playgroup is run by a voluntary committee and has been operating for over thirty years. It is situated in the Village Hall Community Centre at Thornton Hough and serves the local community and surrounding district. The playgroup is self contained and has an entrance area, a large main playroom, a smaller room for messy activities, its own toilets and a kitchen. There is a safely enclosed outdoor play area and access to the hall if needed in wet weather. The playgroup operates term time only from Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 11:45. It caters for a maximum of 24 children aged from two and a half years to five years. There are currently 21 children on roll of whom 13 three year olds and one four year old are in receipt of funding for Foundation Stage nursery education. There are five staff working at the playgroup of whom four are qualified in childcare or education. The playgroup has completed a self assessment programme called the Effective Early Learning Project which is an accredited quality assurance scheme.

How good is the Day Care?

The quality and standard of day care at Thornton Hough Playgroup is good

The playgroup is run by experienced and well qualified staff. The committee gives good support for staff but is not yet fully conversant with its regulatory roles and responsibilities. The premises has been recently decorated and although still undergoing improvements offers a welcoming environment for parents and children. Staff use both indoor and outdoor space and resources well. Written policies are generally effective. Records are well maintained.

The staff are vigilant in the supervision of children and take appropriate measures when hazards are identified. The manager who has attended recent health and safety training is still in the process of completing written risk assessments. Staff follow good hygiene practices. There are good procedures for dealing with accidents and illness. Staff understand issues relating to child protection but the policy lacks sufficient detail regarding how the committee would act if an allegation was made against a member of staff.

Staff plan a good educational programme. There are some very good resources provided which are easy for children to access and promote equality of opportunity. Staff interact skilfully with the children to encourage language and physical development, learn concepts and explore their environment. The special needs policy is adequate but lacks some detail and is not yet shared fully with staff. Positive methods are used to encourage good behaviour developing children's social skills, confidence and self esteem.

There is a good understanding of the need to work in partnership with parents. Good relationships are fostered. Settling in policies work well and there are some good systems for exchanging information and enabling records to be shared. Information about the National Standards to which the service is registered and regulated is not so well shared.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable

What is being done well?

- There is good management of behaviour. Written policies, which are understood by staff and shared with parents, support consistency. Children are involved in discussing basic rules so that they understand the boundaries and photographs depicting these are displayed as a reminder. Positive methods are used to encourage good behaviour with staff understanding children's emotional needs and giving them praise for effort and achievements.
- The playgroup has good resources which are used effectively to support children's care and learning. The rooms are well laid out into areas of learning with a selection of resources either set out or accessible nearby. Areas and resources are linked so that children's ideas can be expanded. There are a good number of resources which reflect diversity and positive images of all kinds of people including posters, a good selection of books, dressing up clothes, jigsaws, musical instruments and role play equipment.
- The staff are well qualified to act swiftly in an emergency with all having certificates in first aid. The accident and emergency procedures are backed up with authorisations from parents or statements of their wishes. Hygiene practices are good with cleaning routines and safe preparation of food. Children learn to wash their hands and know the reasons why. Snacks are healthily balanced and account taken of any individual dietary needs.
- There is a high level of experienced staff with childcare qualifications which contributes to the good practices observed in the care and education of the children. The ratio of staff to children is also good being above the minimum required enabling staff to keep children well supervised, give individual attention when needed, and carry out a broad daily programme of activities.

What needs to be improved?

- the completion of written assessments of risks with the corresponding action taken for the safety of children, staff and visitors
- time scales on the action plan for making adaptations for inclusion so this can be appropriately reviewed and identification of the stages in the graduated response process of the special educational needs policy to share with the staff
- the information given to parents about the National Standards and regulations and methods to ensure that all committee members are familiar with these so that they can participate in any review of the playgroup's policies and understand their roles and responsibilities
- the child protection policy so that it is personalised to the setting and ensures that the committee is clear about procedures should an allegation of abuse or lack of suitability be made against a member of staff.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
6	Complete the written assessments of risks with the corresponding action taken for the safety of children, staff and visitors, and continually review.
10	Include a time scale on the action plan for making adaptations for inclusion so this can be appropriately reviewed and identify the stages in the graduated response process of the special educational needs policy more clearly to share with the staff.
12	Improve information given to parents about the National Standards and regulations and ensure that all committee members are familiar with these so that they can participate in any review of the playgroup's policies and understand their roles and responsibilities.

13	Improve the child protection policy by making the necessary adaptations to personalise it to the setting and ensure that the committee is clear about procedures should an allegation of abuse or lack of suitability be made against a member of staff.
----	--

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

The nursery education provided at Thornton Hough Playgroup is acceptable and of good quality. Children make generally good progress towards early learning goals in communication language and literacy, mathematics and creative development. Particular strengths are in personal, social, emotional, and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world where children make very good progress.

Teaching is generally good. There is good use of time and resources and the management of children's behaviour is very good. Planning systems ensure that staff know what they are expected to do and include assessment opportunities, but learning aims are not always clearly linked to stepping stones. The key workers effectively track children's access to activities and their progress through observations. Not all staff are secure enough yet in their knowledge of some stepping stones so miss opportunities to provide the right challenges in some areas of learning.

Leadership and management is generally good. The playgroup conducts a self evaluation identifying areas for improvement. The manager provides effective leadership and the staff work well as a team. The monitoring of the planning, teaching and assessment processes brings about constant re evaluation of recording systems and addresses most of the improvements recommended at the last inspection.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Information about the Foundation Stage is given in the brochure and displayed in the foyer. Parents are invited at regular intervals to look at their child's assessment profile as well as having opportunities to discuss progress informally. They receive newsletters about the topic and both medium term and weekly plans are displayed. There is some general advice on things they can do at home to promote learning.

What is being done well?

- The staff promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Children learn to have respect for others when the staff act courteously and develop good relationships with the children, parents and visitors alike. Children are able to explore their feelings within secure boundaries so that they can express emotions such as joy and excitement as well as sadness or fear. They are acknowledged as they talk about their families and experiences at home and gradually learn about the wider world through topics.
- Staff find very good ways to encourage children to explore and investigate their world using all their senses. They take them on trips such as visiting the Blue Planet Aquarium to see all kinds of sea life for their topic. Children

experience the feel of soggy paper as they make a papier mache head for a scarecrow. They smell and taste different foods. They explore the sounds of all kinds of musical instruments.

- Sessions are well organised with a good balance of child led to staff led activities. This allows children to chose their own activities and develop their own interests gaining confidence and independence. Staff build their teaching around the way children of this age approach learning so that children are active rather than passive learners. Children are learning by having fun and doing exciting things.

What needs to be improved?

- the confidence of staff in finding teaching strategies to match all clusters and stages of learning within communication, language and literacy, mathematics and creative development.
- the identification of learning aims within each of the six areas of learning in the weekly plans and making reference to the topic plan to record what developed in practice for monitoring purposes.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Improvement is generally good. There were four key issues arising from the last inspection. These related to: incorporating in plans how staff will cater for different children's abilities; grouping children more to match activities better to children's ages and abilities, improving assessment procedures to demonstrate how children are making progress and for planning next steps; retaining evidence of children's achievements in addition to worksheets.

Plans now identify activities aimed specifically for funded children and one key worker takes responsibility overall for children under three. There is some loose grouping to identify ranges of ability but this is used flexibly to reflect that children have strengths in different curriculum areas and are constantly progressing. The Wirral Foundation Record is now used to chart children's progress and to identify next steps. A scrap book is kept with evidence to back this up as well as a number of observation sheets. Staff make a note under each area of learning for their key children as to what they are aiming for the children to achieve next. This strategy works well when staff have a good knowledge of the different clusters within each area of learning. Where staff are unsure of these and of the stepping stones they concentrate on areas where they have the most confidence in teaching and avoid aspects of learning they are unsure of how to develop.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are developing confidence supported by staff who listen to them, acknowledging and respecting what they have to say. All the children are now able to sit quietly when needed and some remain engrossed in an activity of their own choosing for some time. Children are very motivated to learn due to the expertise of the staff who make learning fun. They are gaining independence when using toilet facilities on their own. They learn to share and take turns during games and behave well.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children listen and respond well to the story and also enjoy sharing books with each other looking at pictures as they make up their own narrative. They enjoy using the pencils and crayons at the writing table and talk about reasons for writing such as making lists. All are now able to find their name with help for self registration. Some children make circular movements for forming letters at the chalk board. Interest in playing with the sounds of words and letters is not so well promoted.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children enjoy the many good counting activities and counting rhymes counting up to five or ten and beyond as they match one to one. Some children begin to find the numeral to match the quantity with the carrot game. At registration some can say what number comes next. Children are not learning early steps in calculating so well when this is not identified in learning aims. Children learn to describe shapes and compare sizes with some very good resources.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children make vegetable soup which encourages use of all the senses and noticing how things change when cooked. They construct rooms for the dolls with building sets. They practice sticking things together with glue. They use computer technology to play games. Children know where things are kept in their own environment and see signs of the changing seasons when outside. They learn about varied customs during the scarecrow festival and when exploring music and patterns for Divali.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children move with confidence and increasing co-ordination as they negotiate pathways indoors and ride bikes outside, learning not to bump into others. They learn to balance as they walk along the constructed circle. When playing games they hop, jump and skip moving fast and slow and stopping. They play with balls, skittles and hoops learning to aim, roll and catch. Children use a range of tools and small equipment developing hand and eye co-ordination. They learn about how their bodies work.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children enjoy exploring the different colours they can mix when painting. They take pride in selecting work for display. Music sessions help children explore the sound effects of different instruments as they make music to accompany a story. They sing with enthusiasm and are developing a good sense of rhythm. They play imaginatively with the animals and figures and adopting different roles in the home corner. Craft activities are too adult led for the more able child to be fully creative.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- help staff gain more confidence in identifying teaching strategies to match all clusters of learning within communication language and literacy, mathematics and creative development through better links to the curriculum guidance in planning
- Identify learning aims within each of the six areas of learning in the weekly plans and refer back to the topic plan regularly to record what developed in practice to build on the good monitoring of how well the curriculum is being covered overall.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.