



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 251691

DfES Number: 515578

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 08/03/2004
Inspector Name Susan Christine McGuire

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name The Playbox
Setting Address St Johns Church Community Centre
York Road
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 1ND

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of The Playbox

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name The Playbox
Address St Johns Church Community Centre
York Road
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 1ND

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

The Playbox Pre-school opened in 1995. It operates from a hall in St. John's Church Community Centre in Sudbury. The Playbox serves Sudbury and surrounding villages.

There are currently 37 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. This includes 24 funded 3 year olds and 7 funded 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and none who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens four days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45 Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 12:30 until 15:00 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Four full-time staff and a part-time volunteer work with the children. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. Two staff are currently updating their early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Child Care partnership (EYDCP).

How good is the Day Care?

The Playbox provides good care for children.

The staff work very well together as a team. Training is given a high priority and staff continually update their skills by taking part in relevant courses. The premises is prepared on a daily basis to provide a welcoming environment for both children and their carers, and the resources provided are varied and well-maintained. The day-to-day running of the group is underpinned by good documentation and policies.

Procedures are in place to ensure the safety of the children when on the premises and during outings. Staff have a very good awareness of child protection issues. They update training in this area and take appropriate action in the event of

concerns. Staff make sure that their first aid certificates are kept up-to-date. Snacks provided are nutritious and are taken in a way which gives staff and children a social time together. Children have little involvement in the preparation and serving of this, however.

Sessions are well-planned and resourced, and give children a very good balance of adult-led and free-choice activities which fosters their independence and learning. Staff ensure that activities are adapted to meet the needs of children of different stages of development. Resources include posters, puzzles and books which show positive images of disability and the multi-cultural nature of society, so children can learn about equality through their play. Staff have good relationships with the children and behaviour is managed well.

There is a good partnership with parents. They are provided with an informative and welcoming handbook and regular newsletters, and are kept informed about their child's progress through daily, informal discussions and annual parent's evenings.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the group agreed to improve documentation by clarifying the written procedures for fire-evacuation, by ensuring that parents sign to acknowledge administration of medicines, and by amending the behaviour policy to include reference to bullying. All these amendments have been made and the new policies have been made available to parents. They also agreed to ensure that the contents of the first aid box complied with regulations, which has also been done and is checked regularly. In addition, they agreed to make fresh drinking water available to children during sessions. A tray containing a covered jug of water and mugs is now set out daily, and children freely access this for themselves.

What is being done well?

- Staff are proactive in identifying and helping children who have special needs, and in supporting their families.
- The structure of sessions gives a very good balance of adult and child-led activities, which encourages children to make choices about how they spend their time at pre-school. Staff ensure that activities are adapted to meet the needs of the younger children in attendance.
- An excellent range of well-maintained resources are provided which support children's play and learning very well.

An aspect of outstanding practice:

Staff put a great deal of effort and imagination into daily converting a bare hall into a welcoming and stimulating environment for children. This is done by the clever use of portable displays and the effective arrangement of resources so that children find them attractive, interesting, and can access them easily.

What needs to be improved?

- children's involvement and independence in the preparation and serving of the daily snack.

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
8	Further develop children's independence skills by giving them more responsibility at snack time.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for nursery education at The Playbox is of high quality. It enables children to make very good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is excellent. Staff create a relaxed atmosphere and stimulating environment where children find learning enjoyable. They operate a key-working system and have good knowledge of the children. They are good role models and manage behaviour well. Their understanding of the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals is very good, and they are skilled in taking unplanned opportunities to extend children's learning. Planning is clear and covers all six areas of learning. Staff are currently reviewing their methods of using assessment to inform short-term planning for individuals, so that this is more effectively recorded.

Staff show good teamwork, each being clear in their role and carrying it out well. They meet regularly and are all involved in planning and assessment of the setting. They show a high commitment to the care and education of the children. The management committee benefit from consistency of membership and the experience of the setting this provides. They see their role as one of support and help in practical matters, devolving the responsibility for the day-to-day running of sessions, and monitoring of the children, to the staff whom they value highly.

Parents express great confidence in The Playbox and its staff. Some travel a distance so their children can attend. They are kept well-informed about the setting through newsletters, a handbook, parents evenings, and daily informal discussions. The handbook contains full details of the Foundation Stage and explains the learning intentions of activities. Staff encourage parents to be partners in their children's learning by inviting them to give written details about their child on joining, and by operating a shared book scheme and providing activities which support topic work, to do at home.

What is being done well?

- The programme for communication, language and literacy is excellent. Children are learning that print carries meaning and show their understanding of this in role-play. They also enjoy stories and freely access the attractive book corner to enjoy a book quietly by themselves.
- Children's creativity is being fostered very well. They participate in a wide variety of activities which enable them to express themselves in role-play, by using a variety of media and materials, and by using all their senses.
- Frequent opportunities are given to children to explore methods of design and construction. Staff extend this by asking questions about the results and praising the effort taken.

- Partnership with parents is outstanding and parents are keen to express their confidence in the group. Staff acknowledge the importance of parents in their children's learning by giving them good information about the learning intentions of activities and providing them with opportunities to share in this at home.

What needs to be improved?

- frequency of opportunity for children to participate in activities which foster physical development

What has improved since the last inspection?

Very good progress has been made in addressing the key issues identified at the last inspection.

Weekly plans are directly linked to the six areas of learning so staff can see that each one is covered appropriately.

The role play area has been developed and now provides a stimulating range of scenarios which enables all children to develop their imagination well.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are highly motivated and confident to move around the setting and make choices about their play and learning. They show persistence with challenging activities. They are learning to share and take turns, and are encouraged to consider the feelings of others. Their self-esteem is being fostered well by staff who value their efforts and give plenty of appropriate praise. Children are independent in their self-care, and enjoy having responsibilities e.g. feeding the gerbil and tidying-up.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children use language well to express ideas and to negotiate in role-play. They show enjoyment of group stories and freely access books for pleasure. Older children are learning to recognise letters and their sounds, and rhyming words, and can write their names and that of friends. They use simple labels correctly e.g. 'open' and 'closed' in the role-play shop. Staff provide opportunities for different ways of mark-making, and children write for a purpose in role-play e.g. receipts in the shop.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are beginning to apply mathematical thought to everyday situations e.g. sorting objects by size or colour, and are using mathematical language in context their play. They count forwards and backwards confidently, and more able children recognise numerals displayed in the room. Most children recognise shape and colour well and can recreate and continue simple patterns. Staff take unplanned opportunities for problem-solving e.g. 'how many are left if I take these away?'

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children are being given a sense of time and place through daily activities e.g. charting the weather and day of the week, and topics which explore the local environment. Knowledge of the wider world is given through festivals and map-work. Skills in I.T. are being fostered by operating programmable toys and cassette-players, and children enjoy taking part in frequent activities which develop skills in modelling and construction. Children are keen to investigate items on the interest table.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are handling a range of tools such as scissors, pencils, dough moulds and woodworking tools, with increasing confidence and skill. They manipulate train-tracks and bricks. Planned topic work explores health and body awareness, and staff take opportunities to discuss body changes after exercise. Equipment is provided indoors which enables children to climb, crawl, balance and develop hand-eye co-ordination, but children have limited opportunities to engage in this.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children's imagination is being well-developed through role-play. The area for this is well-resourced and changed regularly. Children show enthusiasm for singing and have a repertoire of favourite songs. Planned activities encourage movement to music. Staff enable children to explore a wide range of media and textures e.g. bubbles and soapflakes, and plan activities which help children to use all their senses. They are particularly encouraged to be sensitive to the meaning of facial expressions.

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

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very 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

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:

- there are no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to the following;
- Further develop the programme for physical development so that children have increased opportunities to move and 'let off steam.'

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.