



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 220201

DfES Number: 547023

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 13/07/2004
Inspector Name Christina Downey

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Saxon Playgroup
Setting Address Church Rooms
High Street
Earls Barton
Northamptonshire
NN6 0JG

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Saxon Playgroup

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Saxon Playgroup
Address Church Rooms
High Street, Earls Barton
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN6 0JG

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

Saxon Playgroup was registered in 2000. It is situated in the centre of the village of Earls Barton and operates from the parish church hall. The accommodation consists of a large central hall and two smaller rooms, a kitchen, toilets and reception area. The playgroup opens on Monday to Thursday during school term times. Sessions last from 09.15 to 11.45.

There are currently 43 children on roll. This includes 15 funded three-year-olds and 13 funded four-year-olds. Children attend a variety of sessions each week, and several attend other settings as well. They are representative of a range of family backgrounds and mainly come from the village of Earls Barton itself. The playgroup supports children with special needs but there are no children attending whose first language is not English.

Six members of staff work with the children over the week. Two of them already have appropriate early years qualifications and two other members of staff are working towards Level 3 qualifications. The setting is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives regular support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

How good is the Day Care?

Saxon Playgroup offers a good standard of care for children overall.

The premises are used well to create a welcoming environment and provide children with a good amount of play space. Relationships throughout the group are very positive; children feel happy and secure and staff have a sound understanding of caring for those who may have special needs. Children are supervised well and overall, their good behaviour is promoted successfully. An interesting range of resources is used to support various planned activities each day. However, these are sometimes rather limited in scope and do not always maintain older children's interest throughout the session. Children are able to be active every day despite the lack of outdoor play space.

High priority is given to ensuring children are cared for safely. The premises are secure and the children can play safely in all areas. There are very clear arrangements to control access and to monitor children's safe arrival and departure. Regular risk assessment helps to ensure all hazards are minimised. Children's records are comprehensive and up-to-date, and this also makes a positive contribution to the safe level of care provided. Staff have identified for themselves that their knowledge of child protection procedures needs updating. Children's good health is successfully promoted through careful attention to hygiene routines and correct procedures concerning accidents and medication. Varied and nutritious snacks are provided daily, children have a choice of drinks and information about any special dietary needs is readily available.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. They are provided with useful introductory information and have access to all policies and procedures. They are involved well in the settling-in routines when their children first start. Notes on day-to-day activities are displayed, and consistently good information about children's development is provided.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the playgroup agreed to two actions, both of which have been satisfactorily addressed and promote the overall welfare of the children. The playgroup has improved the partnership with parents and carers by implementing a revised admissions policy and staff and parents are also now better informed about Northamptonshire Child Protection Committee procedures although the level of staff knowledge and understanding of child protection issues could be further developed.

What is being done well?

- Much useful information is provided for parents. Policies and procedures are shared effectively and there are clear and informative notice boards. Parents are involved well in the observation and assessment process and have a good overview of their children's progress.
- Children's introduction to the group is carefully and sensitively managed. They settle in confidently and their sense of security and self-esteem is promoted well.
- Good attention is given to ensuring children are cared for safely. High adult:child ratios are consistently maintained and the children are carefully supervised at all times. Well-organised records, such as those concerning medication and special dietary requirements, ensure that details necessary for children's safe care are readily accessible

What needs to be improved?

- provision of a wider range of play opportunities and first-hand experiences to further enhance older children's overall development and natural curiosity as learners

- level of staff knowledge and understanding of child protection issues.

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
3	Continue to develop the planning to ensure that a wider range of play opportunities and first-hand experiences that promotes older children's overall development and natural curiosity is provided each day.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Saxon Playgroup provides a welcoming atmosphere where children feel happy and secure. Overall they are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff are acquiring a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage, and place good emphasis on promoting learning through practical, play activities. Planning successfully incorporates the stepping stones and is developing into a useful tool for supporting learning of three-year-olds and providing a balanced curriculum overall. However, it is not yet effective in providing activities that offer sufficient challenge to older children. Staff ratios are high and enable good relationships to be established. Appropriate support is given to children with special needs. Staff work directly with children at all times but organisation of time and resources is not always effective in providing children with sufficient opportunity to make choices, operate independently or maintain good involvement levels. Staff manage children's behaviour well and help them understand what is expected of them. Regular observations are made to record each child's progress and a system for using this information to inform future planning is under development.

Leadership and management is generally good. Staff development is given high priority and team members have clearly defined roles. So far, monitoring of the educational provision has not been fully effective in identifying areas for development but the playgroup is now working closely with the local advisory team and staff have a strong commitment to improvement.

Partnership with parents and carers is generally good. They are given much clear and useful information about the education provision and several become active committee members. They are made aware of current topics and contribute resources and items of interest. They are kept well-informed about their child's progress

What is being done well?

- The stepping stones are used well as a basis for promoting learning. The plans show clearly which stepping stones are being promoted through activities provided and all staff are aware of what the children are expected to learn. Each area of learning is addressed over the course of the week and all children have access to a balanced curriculum.
- The good attention given to ensuring younger children settle in happily and to promoting their self-esteem has a positive effect on their view of themselves as learners. They approach new activities confidently and from a secure base, knowing that their efforts and achievements will be valued.

What needs to be improved?

- the level of challenge for older children so that they remain enthusiastic about taking part in practical activities and continue to make progress in all areas
- attention given to planning a wider range of activities each day and which include more first-hand opportunities for children to investigate, explore, question and experiment
- management of time and resources to provide children with more scope to operate independently, make choices and use a wider range of tools, natural and man-made materials, mechanisms and ICT equipment
- the quality of children's role play in well-resourced and organised scenarios which are based on children's own actual experiences and promote their awareness of the purposes of writing.

What has improved since the last inspection?

not applicable

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children settle happily into the group and develop friendly relationships with each other and the staff. They generally behave well and approach new experiences confidently. They are able to choose between activities during free play but overall have too little scope to operate independently, select their own resources or maintain high involvement levels. They are developing an awareness of the cultural diversity of modern society.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children talk confidently about everyday events with each other and the staff. They listen with interest to stories presented at the end of each session and enjoy sharing books with familiar adults in smaller groups. They learn a range of songs and rhymes, and have a growing awareness of the initial letter sounds of common words. They use writing materials competently but have less scope to become aware of the various purposes of writing.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children have some useful opportunities to develop their counting skills and they use number names accurately during their play. Older children are introduced to simple calculation with commercial sorting sets but learning is not always consolidated or extended through practical experiences. All children begin to describe and compare shape, size and capacity as they work with sand and water. They use positional language well during their model making.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children operate remote control cars enthusiastically and use tape recorders confidently. They use tools such as scissors whilst making models to their own design and examine the properties of magnets, soap flakes, fruit and bark chippings. Overall, however they have too few opportunities to explore and experiment with objects and materials, find out how things work or how changes occur. They talk about past events but have relatively little scope to explore their local environment at present.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children make good progress with their manipulative skills. They use mark-making tools, small-world items, play dough and construction sets with increasing control. Physical activities are provided each day and children develop confidence in throwing, balancing and moving imaginatively. They use the large soft play equipment with great interest and develop a good sense of space. They have a sound awareness of health and hygiene issues and increase their skills with clothing and fastenings.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children engage in a satisfactory amount of imaginative play with small world resources, although their role play lacks depth. They listen to a variety of music and learn a range of songs, sometimes accompanying themselves with simple instruments. They work freely, exploring colour and texture whilst painting and making collages, but the relatively narrow range of sensory experiences and materials to work with reduces their scope to express their own ideas.

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

- improve the level of challenge for older children so that they remain enthusiastic about taking part in practical activities and continue to make progress in all areas of learning.
- give more attention to planning a wider range of activities each day which include more first-hand opportunities for children to investigate, explore, question, experiment and take part in role-play.
- develop the management of time and resources to provide children with more scope to operate independently, make choices and use a wider range of tools, natural and man-made materials, mechanisms and ICT equipment.

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.