



Mitchell Walk Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY258757
Inspection date 15 May 2006
Inspector Ann Hilary Guy

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Registered person Mitchell Walk 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

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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Mitchell Walk Playgroup is run by a voluntary committee. It registered in 1999 and operates from a room in the Henry Allen Nursery School in Amersham.

A maximum of 14 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open each weekday from 13.30 to 16.00 school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 28 children aged from two to five years on roll. Children come from the local area. The group can support children who speak English as an additional language or have special needs.

The playgroup employs four staff. One of the staff, holds an appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a qualification. A new manager has been appointed and will be joining the group in June 2006. She holds a suitable early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities, within their daily routine and curriculum, which contribute to their good health. They have regular access to a large outside play area, giving excellent opportunities for fresh air and exercise. These range from riding tricycles, climbing on age appropriate climbing frames and slides, imaginative play, water play and opportunities to mark make on a large white board. They also have opportunities for movement to music and action rhymes within the building.

Children are developing an understanding of good personal hygiene, through the clear daily routines. Staff support the children when using the toilet, encouraging the more able to become independent. They are always close by to offer assistance if required. Children are beginning to understand the reason for washing their hands before snack time. Suitable nappy changing procedures are in place that prevent cross infection and ensure as much privacy as possible.

Children develop an understanding of healthy foods as they enjoy snacks of fresh fruit or vegetable pieces. This is a social time when the children sit in small groups with an adult, learning patience and manners. They wait until the plate is offered before taking a piece of fruit and sit at the table until everyone has finished. Although many of the children are quite young they all use a cup and are given a small amount of water or milk to drink, which is topped up on request. Children can request a drink of water from a staff member at any time during the session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The secure and child-friendly environment, both indoors and outdoors, ensures children are safe and well looked after at all times. The premises are well organised to enable children sufficient space to play safely at all times. Children enter a pre-prepared environment with a good range of toys and equipment available from which they can self-select. The playgroup uses some of the schools equipment to supplement their equipment, enabling them to provide a stimulating age appropriate environment for the children. Visual risk assessments are carried out daily, both in the room and the outside area.

Children's safety is paramount and staff ensure all possible risks are minimised, using material to cover some of the school resources. Fire practices take place each term with the school, however, as all the children in the playgroup are part time, this results in not all of them experiencing a fire practice. Clear policies and procedures are in place for both health and safety and child protection, ensuring the welfare, protection and safety of the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The majority of children attending this group are under the age of three years. Very good use has been made of integrating the Birth to Three Matters Framework and the Foundation Stage to ensure all children are able to develop their knowledge and skills in all areas. The children develop their skills of independence as soon as they enter the group. They are encouraged to put on aprons unaided for artwork or water play, to put on their coats before going outside, and to wash and dry their hands at snack time. Children are always busy; they have many varied opportunities for exploratory play, using shaving foam, corn flour and pasta, discovering the properties and texture changes. Their manipulative skills are developed using construction toys, crayons, pencils and paint, with staff skilfully developing the individual children's potential and fully integrating all aspects of learning through conversation. Children are confident, settled and secure, they enter the sessions happily and have a very good relationship with the staff team.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children progress at their own pace through the foundation stage. Observations and assessment records clearly plot their progress against the stepping-stones. Practitioners have a good understanding of the foundation stage curriculum and stepping-stones but only show it within their planning for focus activities. It is therefore difficult to determine whether all areas of the curriculum have been covered. The focus activities clearly identify the stepping-stones to be covered, as well as the attributes from the Birth to three matters framework, and include an evaluation of the activity.

Children learn through guided free-play activities, enabling them freely to explore all curriculum areas. Adult intervention supports the children's learning very effectively and enables them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, children's attention was drawn to a visiting cat who was having a drink of water in the outdoor play area. A member of staff talked to children about what they could see and fully integrated all aspects of learning into their conversation, counting his legs, observing his whiskers, describing his colour and considering where he may live. The children's language skills are well supported and developed, assisting them to communicate in meaningful ways, either using words or a combination of words and signs. The children are happy and confident and benefit from the small size of the group, as they have much individual adult assistance. They are beginning to mark make, some giving definite meaning to their marks, and benefit from the integration of subject areas. They have many opportunities to learn about nature and

science, with their topics giving a good balance to the year. Staff know the children extremely well and skilfully adapt activities to meet the needs of the individual child. The good use made of the outdoor area enables children to extend their physical skills and abilities in a positive way. Their imagination is developed through good use of small world activities, the 'home' corner becoming many different places, and the use of dressing up clothes. Children skilfully use the computer, which has a good variety of programmes suitable for their age, and they greatly enjoy listening to stories, singing songs and playing musical instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of other cultures and disabilities as they play with the wide variety of equipment and develop an awareness of each others needs. They make choices and decisions, supported by the staff team that know them well and treat them as individuals. Children with special needs are well supported and fully included in all activities. Children's behaviour is generally good, and they understand the basic rules of the playgroup. Staff use positive behaviour management strategies and assist the children to resolve conflicts. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the positive relationships staff have with the parents and carers, together with good communication links, which ensure consistent and supportive care at all times. Parents have limited access to information relating to the foundation stage curriculum, although all other aspects of the information given to them clearly outlines the practices of the playgroup. The policies are available for parents to see on request, as is all the information and assessments on their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are well supported by a staff team who give high regard to their welfare. In the absence of a manager, the deputy oversees all aspects of the group together with the chairperson. The registration system is clear and includes both staff and visitors, but contains no times of arrival or departure.

Leadership and management is good. The committee and deputy are clear about their aims for the group and have a sound set of policies and procedures to underpin the care offered. Although in transition between managers, the staff and committee have worked diligently to ensure standards are maintained and children are given the best possible care. An appraisal system has recently been introduced. Ofsted have not been kept fully informed of the management changes for this group, due to a change in committee at the same time.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were asked to provide suitable hand drying facilities for the children. These are now in place, ensuring children are able to independently dry their hands.

This is the first inspection of funded nursery education for this group.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 children experience at least one fire practice a year and the regular risk assessments are documented
- ensure the register shows times of arrival and departure for all staff and children and that Ofsted is notified of all changes to senior staff or committee.

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):

- develop the planning system to clearly show how all aspects of learning are covered
- provide written information for parents to inform them about the foundation stage curriculum.

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