



Helsby Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305100
Inspection date	24 November 2006
Inspector	Ron Goldsmith
Setting Address	Chester Road, Helsby, Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 0AQ
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Registered person	Helsby Playgroup Committee
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?

Helsby Playgroup operates within the church hall. The provision has operated for 35 years. The setting provides care and education for children from the local area and surrounding villages.

There are currently 30 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 23 funded three and four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are no children attending with learning difficulties or who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup provides five morning sessions a week and one afternoon session during term time only. The hours of opening are Monday 09.30 to 12.00 for rising fives, Tuesday to Friday 09.30 to 12.00. The afternoon sessions take place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 12.45-15.00 hrs.

Three part time staff work directly with the children, of these, two hold a relevant qualification in child care. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

In the indoor environment children move confidently and with good control. They show a very good awareness of space, themselves and others. They move around obstacles skilfully and climb confidently, using the climbing frame, which is closely supervised. Children do not enjoy a good range of energetic or physical activities because access to the outdoor environment is restricted by the lack of outdoor provision.

Children understand the importance of personal hygiene and staying healthy through daily routines, as they consistently and independently wash their hands before eating and after visiting the toilet or after messy play. Children are protected from infection because staff are well informed of healthcare matters and explain the need to wash hands to the children. All documentation is in place and is up to date and records for individual children are maintained confidentially. All staff have a current first aid certificate to deal with emergencies and parents are well informed of the sickness policy to prevent the spread of infection.

Children benefit from a healthy diet and choose when they wish to have snack. Healthy eating is promoted through the availability of fresh fruit and snacks. However, children are not able to access drinks freely when they need them and this limits their opportunities to rehydrate during their time at the setting. Snack times are social occasions as children sit together and talk, enjoying each other's company.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in warm and secure environment. Children play in premises that are well maintained and safe. Good use is made of display tables, notice boards and layout of equipment to create a welcoming environment. The facilities and resources are well used so that optimum advantage is taken of the space available. Evidence of children's play and activities, for example, in displays of their work, help make the environment bright and attractive. Children are able to move around the environment with confidence. There is adequate space for them to play and move around freely as they independently access resources from tables, trays and boxes at child height.

The environment is welcoming and the room is attractively set out into areas of learning, which are well equipped. Children enjoy being imaginative in the home corner and being able to make choices about which activities they can participate in. Wall displays are colourful and reflect some of the topics children have covered. All equipment is accessible and children have a very good range of choices to select from. Children are safe because adults assess potential risks to children and put procedures and practice to minimise these at all times, such as ensuring there are finger traps on doors to prevent children accidentally trapping fingers. Children are protected

by the staff having a very good understanding of safeguarding issues. All staff have recently attended child protection training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children attend the setting eagerly. They take part in a good range of activities throughout the session. Children are gaining confidence as they build relationships with each other and the staff. They are becoming more confident communicators as they initiate conversations, use songs and rhymes and join in discussions at circle time. Learning and skills are consolidated through daily routines and there is good access to varied resources. Staff record what children do and note their responses to help with regular assessments of progress.

Staff create a positive environment where most activities are child-led. Children respond positively to the very approachable staff who listen to them well and create a calm and friendly atmosphere in which children can thrive. Children chat confidently to staff who understand their different personalities and interests well. Children happily make their own choices as they move around the different areas.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing well towards the early learning goals. They are given good support by staff who have a sound understanding of the early learning goals and of the foundation stage. They plan an interesting and stimulating range of activities which cover all the areas of the children's learning. Staff are deployed effectively to support continuous learning as children select their own resources to play with. While children are playing staff make detailed observations of the learning that is taking place, which is recorded. Staff skilfully set different children challenges according to their capabilities through appropriate questioning and suggestions. For example, some children are very skilled at completing number jigsaws and can complete them with minimum staff intervention but other children need the additional support which staff give.

Children make a good start in learning skills for reading and writing. They respond to the expert questioning of staff with enthusiasm and imagination, as they share books together. Children begin to identify the letters of their name and to say the letter sound in helping them to read. They use the resources on the writing table to draw and mark make. Staff join children in the reading corner to share books, looking at the pictures and telling the stories. Some children have remembered the story so well that they confidently retell aspects and give explanations about why things happen. In a stimulating story about owls, staff use the branches of a tree and ask children what is the likely consequence if the big fat owl sits on the thin branch. Children are able to predict what might happen next and they use language to connect ideas and explain what is happening. As a whole group they confidently say the owl is too heavy for some branches.

Children are developing an interest in mathematics and problem solving. They enjoy learning about weighing, measuring and counting. They gain an awareness of pattern and shape as they build with bricks or construct railway sections on the floor. They learn to count during every day activities, such as putting out the cups and plates and they learn number recognition as

they 'fish' in number pool or play a game with dice. Staff set children challenging questions, such as asking 'How many more' or 'less' and 'How many altogether' to encourage them to think and calculate.

Children love to explore the world around them and respond to good staff questioning about aspects of their play. Children learn to use technical equipment such as the computer mouse and key board. Children explore colour and texture through a range of activities, and move expressively to nursery rhymes and songs, imitating the owl with wide eyes, flapping wings and owl noises. Sometimes staff direct children's art and craft work too much to allow scope for individuality. All children play imaginatively in the role play area and explore materials creatively. A number of children decide they are going on a holiday and talk vigorously about what needs to be done, packing the luggage, before setting off on a car journey.

Individual developmental check lists linked to the stepping stones are completed and staff use this information to ensure that all the children are challenged appropriately. Staff support, encourage and challenge children's learning and thinking using good questioning techniques and good intervention. Staff are very good at reinforcing the children's listening skills, encouraging them to listen at circle and story time and use resources effectively. This helps them to meet the needs of all the funded children who attend.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's have good self-esteem due to the staff team's realistic expectations of the children and the positive reinforcement they receive. The individual needs of all the children who attend are well met. The setting has effective arrangements to care for children who have learning difficulties. Children's behaviour is excellent and they are learning to understand the difference between right and wrong. Children make a good contribution to what goes on at the playgroup. They make decisions about what they play with and when they eat. They keep the place tidy by hanging up their coats, helping to put things away at clearing up time or independently clearing spilt sand from the floor. They take pride in their achievements, proudly showing others the pictures they have created. Through this they gain confidence and self-esteem. In this way, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriately fostered.

Children successfully develop social skills, such as sharing and taking turns and learn to appreciate the effect of their behaviour on others. This is because staff act as good role models by being positive, calm and friendly and set clear boundaries by discussing with children the behaviour that is expected. They develop a positive attitude to others and gain a good understanding of the wider world and the community through celebrating and participating in festivals. This is enhanced by access to a good range of play resources that show positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability.

Partnership with parents is good. Very good relationships are fostered and this helps parents feel confident to share information about their child with the staff. Parents are given good information about the playgroups operational plan and the playgroup's policies and procedures. Information about the early learning goals is initially given through an introductory leaflet and the stepping stones individually explained to parents at a later stage. Records of progress are

shared at appropriate intervals during the year but parents are comfortable and encouraged by staff, to discuss their child's progress at any time they wish. A news letter about the topics being covered and any special events is sent out on a regular basis. Parents make very positive comments about the quality of information they are given, the friendliness and flexibility of the staff and how their children have made good progress and enjoyed themselves at the playgroup.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The staff are experienced and suitably qualified for providing care and education. There are written policies and procedures and the manager ensures these are followed well by staff for children's safety and welfare. Systems for progressing checks on new staff and committee members for children's protection are satisfactory. All regulatory documents are maintained to safeguard children. Good ratios of staff to children are maintained, which enables the individual needs of children to be met.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is good. All staff work very well together as a team to promote children's learning and development. Space, resources, time and grouping are effectively organised to contribute to children's enjoyment and achievement. The educational programme is monitored through regular meetings with staff, evaluations of activity plans, and checks against medium term plans, to ensure that learning areas are fully covered. However, the quality of staff interaction with children is not fully evaluated to check whether they help children make as much progress as possible. The providers are eager to develop their service and make improvements. They take good action where recommendations are made and operate an effective staff development programme.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations arising from the last inspection of care and two points for consideration from the inspection of nursery education. The recommendations related to registers, parental consent and supervision for the use of the climbing frame.

The daily register now records when children leave the premises as well as when they arrive, written parental permission is sought for emergency medical treatment should it be needed and the setting have devised clear rules for the climbing apparatus and a suitable supervision policy for its use. As a result children's safety has been improved.

The points for improvement were to develop children's independence at snack time and to provide adult labelling in some areas. The setting have encouraged children to be involved at snack time. They help to give out utensils and snack. There is some adult labelling around the room which encourages children begin to understand the that words carrying meaning. As a result children have more practice in developing their letter recognition and have opportunities to further develop their independence.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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.

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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):

- provide drinking water for children at all times
- improve children's health by providing regular access to fresh air and vigorous exercise

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):

- further develop monitoring systems to observe staff in practice so that the quality of teaching and learning can be fully evaluated for continual improvement (also applies to care).

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk