

Easton-on-the-Hill Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220297
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Inspector	Carly Mooney
Setting Address	New Road, Easton on the Hill, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 3NN
Telephone number	0779 1191584
E-mail	
Registered person	Easton-on-the-Hill Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Easton-on-the-Hill Playgroup has been registered since 1986. It operates from a building within the grounds of Easton Garfords Charity School in Easton on the Hill in Northamptonshire. There is a fully enclosed outdoor area attached to the premises. The provision is open each week day from 09:00 to 12:30 and on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon from 12:30 to 15:15, including lunch. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The playgroup is registered to care for a maximum of 20 children aged from two to under five years at any one time. There are currently 14 children on roll. This includes 11 funded children. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

Three staff work with the children, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment that is well maintained, clean and warm. Good standards of cleanliness and effective hygiene practices help to minimise the risk of cross contamination. For example, staff wash their hands before serving food or when coming in from the garden. Children are gaining a good understanding of personal hygiene through discussions with staff regarding germs. They need little reminding to wash their hands prior to meal times or after using the toilet. Pictorial clues in the bathroom help to further support this good practice. Children's individual health needs are adhered to, as staff discuss these with parents on admission and maintain appropriate ongoing records. Most staff have undertaken first aid training which enables them to deal effectively with any accidents. Clear records of accidents are kept and parents are informed to ensure that they are aware of when their child has sustained an injury. Children are able to rest and relax on comfortable sofas in all the indoor play areas.

Children are well nourished and enjoy a variety of snacks which are healthy and promote their growth and development. For example, fresh fruit and yoghurts. In cold weather children eat hot foods, such as toast, sausages and beans. Snack time is used positively as a social time, staff eat with the children and everyone is encouraged to share their news. Drinks are available throughout the session for children to decide themselves when they are thirsty. Parents provide meals for children who stay for lunch and staff encourage them to provide healthy options, helping to reinforce children's good health.

All children enjoy regular opportunities to experience fresh air and to engage in physical activities. They have access to a very good range of outdoor play equipment to support their whole body movements. For example, children enjoy using ride on toys and are developing good hand and eye co-ordination. They have opportunities to climb and balance on a large climbing frame and slide and enjoy role play as they pretend to have a picnic in the garden. Children use a wide range of tools and equipment to promote their small hands skills, such as scissors, paint brushes, threading with cotton reels and construction toys. As a result, children are making good progress in all aspects of physical development and their skills are challenged appropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Staff provide a bright and stimulating atmosphere and warmly welcome children and their families. The space is used well to allow children to play freely, be active or engage in quieter activities, such as looking at books. Children have independent access to good quality equipment and play materials and demonstrate that they can ask for anything else from the store cupboard. There are sound systems in place to check that resources remain safe for children to use and staff pay good attention to safety issues when presenting toys and activities, ensuring that they are appropriate for the ages of children using them and allowing adequate space between activities to minimise the risk of trips and falls. Children are beginning to learn about how to keep themselves safe through topics, such as road safety, and by regularly practising the emergency evacuation procedures. They are able to take calculated risks under good adult supervision, such as cutting up vegetables and their sausages at snack time. Staff consistently reinforce safe practices, for example, children are reminded not to run inside.

Security systems and procedures ensure that children are not able to leave the premises unsupervised and staff closely monitor access. Children are protected from the risk of accidental injury as staff supervise them vigilantly and carry out daily visual checks to minimise potential hazards. Children are kept safe on outings as staff implement carefully considered safety procedures.

Children's welfare is effectively promoted as staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities regarding child protection. They are fully familiar with the setting's policies and procedures and the roles and responsibilities of all staff within this. However, the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer are not sufficiently robust. Clear procedures for the collection of children by a named adult are in place to ensure that children's well-being is protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the provision and arrive happily and eager to participate. Staff create a nurturing and stimulating environment. They know the children well and are sensitive to their needs, greeting them personally and making a gentle fuss as they arrive. Staff are warm, kind and caring and show appropriate physical affection towards the children. They have developed tender relationships and children feel safe, secure and valued and develop a strong sense of their own self-worth. Younger children are developing their confidence and independence as they easily and spontaneously move around their play areas. They freely explore a broad and varied range of activities which are well matched to their needs and individual stages of development. There is a very effective key person system in place which provides a valuable link between the setting and home and ensures staff have a secure understanding of each child. Staff then use this knowledge well to support individual children's learning requirements which enables them to make good progress in their development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Staff have a solid understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff ensure learning is fun and exciting as they are all extremely enthusiastic and ask good questions to make children think. For example, 'What do we need to sleep in if we went camping?' Planning covers all six areas of learning and provides a good balance over time. An effective mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities ensures children have enough time to consolidate their learning in their own way and at their own pace. Children's learning is promoted through outdoor play as well as indoor using the resources provided, although at present children are not able to flow freely between the two areas and choose where they would like to play. Staff continually assess children's progress and assessment records are regularly updated by a child's key person. Staff record clear information about children's achievements and use assessment information effectively to plan for the next steps in children's learning and tracking their progress through the stepping stones.

In general children's personal, social and emotional development is fostered well. Children are confident to attend the setting and leave their parents and carers with ease. They have formed good relationships with each other and staff, and learn to play co-operatively during group activities. Children learn to take turns when speaking and listening and are beginning to sustain their concentration during whole group activities, such as ring games and story time. Children

are independent in their self-care, as they take themselves to the toilet and learn to put on and fasten their own coats.

Children have good opportunities to make marks during their play, as this is provided through a good range of practical experiences which are very well supported by staff. For example, children 'write' down a food order in role play. Children enjoy listening to stories and often select books to read independently. Staff are very animated when they tell stories, they make excellent use of props and encourage children to become involved in interactive story sessions, such as turning the play room into the setting for the story, 'We're going on a bear hunt'. This ensures that children are interested, motivated to learn and increases their confidence as they are well supported. Children can identify initial sounds in their own names and familiar words. Their early reading skills are benefiting from the setting being rich in print in a wide range of meaningful situations. For example, children are provided with real menus in the restaurant home corner.

Children have good opportunities on a daily basis to see numbers in their environment. For example, on numbered chairs and as stepping stones on the floor. They learn about shape, space and measurement through a range of activities, such as a topic about growth, where they are introduced to mathematical language, for example big, medium and little. Children confidently demonstrate that they can count from 1-10 and sometimes beyond. Children explore and investigate the world around them through interesting and stimulating practical activities. For example, they grow runner beans in clear jars so they can observe the roots as they grow. They explore the natural environment through digging in the mud, moving with streamers in the wind and on trips, such as a visit to Burghley Park, where they have good opportunities to feel, see and hear natural resources. There are regular opportunities for children to use technology in their play, such as a computer which underpins learning in other areas.

Children use their imagination in a range of situations and delight in engaging in a varied range of stimulating role play situations both indoors and outdoors. For example, they go camping in a tent, prepare a picnic in the garden and serve food at McDonalds. They squeal with excitement as they become stuck in the sticky mud and brave the snow storm when acting out, 'We're going on a bear hunt' story. Children enjoy a wide range of craft activities in which they are able to express their creativity as they are able to make choices about the types of materials they use. They enjoy singing and moving to familiar songs as they participate in ring games on the playground with the reception children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected. Their work is displayed attractively around the room, which helps to foster a sense of belonging and promote positive self-esteem. Children confidently express their own needs and feelings, for example, when they want to take part in an activity or need the toilet. They are developing their awareness of the local community as they spend time with children and teachers at the local primary school and enjoy visits from members of the community, such as a policeman. They are also beginning to develop an awareness of the wider world by accessing a sufficient range of play resources that reflect positive images of race, gender and disability. Staff have very good links with parents and other professionals to ensure they are able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

On the whole children are generally well behaved. They are kept busy and occupied at all times by the stimulating activities which contributes to their good behaviour. Most children display

kindness and consideration towards others and learn to respect their environment. They play co-operatively alongside their peers and learn to take turns and share resources. Staff manage unwanted behaviour appropriately and skilfully, taking into consideration their knowledge of individual children. They give clear explanations, such as 'please do not run or you may slip and fall', which helps children understand right from wrong. Staff make effective use of praise and encouragement to promote children's self-esteem. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff develop very good relationships with parents. They gather appropriate information on admission to ensure consistency of care for children. Parents are welcomed into the setting, staff greet them warmly and make themselves available to exchange information. Parents have access to a good range of information about the setting, including relevant policies and procedures. They receive regular newsletters, keeping them well informed about learning intentions for the children and current issues within the setting. The partnership with parents and carers is good. This contributes positively to the well-being of children in receipt of funding for early education. Children benefit from their parents being actively involved in their learning. For example, they read stories to the group and contribute items to topic work. Detailed and useful information is available to inform parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff keep parents updated of their child's progress through regular discussions and a written report in the summer term, when they are given the opportunity to contribute to their records. They liaise closely with parents when a child first starts at the setting to gather information regarding what children already know and can do. This enables staff to effectively plan activities to build on children's previous knowledge and skills.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The effective organisation of the setting enhances children's care. The premises are well organised and space is effectively used to create a stimulating environment. Children freely and safely move around and make independent choices, those wishing to play quietly or rest are able to do so. Staff make good and regular use of the outdoor area and the session is well paced. Clear policies and procedures are in place to support children's well-being, safety and care. Mandatory records and documentation is generally well maintained, although the registers, on odd occasions, do not consistently record children's and staff's arrival and departure times. Therefore, this does not always protect children's welfare. All staff and committee members are vetted and recruitment procedures are in place, although at present they do not include procedures to determine staff's suitability regarding health.

Staff are very positive in their approach to children and clear in their roles and responsibilities. They work very well together, recognising each other's strengths and using these appropriately to support the care of the children and ensure the smooth running of the setting. Staff are positively encouraged to undertake further training to build on their existing skills and knowledge which is then cascaded to other staff to allow them all to work together for the benefit of the children. Effective deployment of staff ensures that children are well supervised and supported during activities. Overall, children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. Staff work well together as a team to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum and ensure children achieve well. Staff are well supported by the manager who has a clear vision for the setting which promotes good outcomes for children. She is well supported by a hard working and dedicated staff team who contribute to evaluating the provision and identifying areas for improvement. Effective systems are in

place to monitor the provision such as a staff appraisal system, evaluations of activities and regular staff meetings.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection staff received two recommendations. These related to reviewing policies and procedures so that they related to the playgroup and to ensure all staff were familiar with the procedures to follow when a child is lost or uncollected. These issues have been effectively addressed and have a positive impact on the care, learning and welfare of children.

At the last nursery education inspection staff received three key issues. These related to planning, observing and recording children's progress and staff deployment. Clear written plans are now in place which identify learning intentions and provide a balance of activities across the six areas of learning. There is an effective system in place for observing children regularly and recording their progress in their record folders. Next steps for learning are identified and information is shared with parents. Staff are deployed effectively around the setting to provide good support for children during activities. Staff are clear in the roles and responsibilities at all times. This has a positive impact on children's learning.

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.

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 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):

- improve procedures to ensure records show children's and staff's hours of attendance
- further enhance recruitment procedures to ensure staff are suitable to work with children
- review the child protection policy to ensure that clear procedures are in place in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff.

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):

- improve the provision to provide children with a good balance of indoor and outdoor play throughout the session.

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