



Adeyfield Adventure Playground

Inspection report for early years provision

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Registered person	Dacorum Borough Council
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School 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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Adeyfield Adventure Playground is an open access play facility and one of four adventure playgrounds run in the Hemel Hempstead area by Dacorum Borough Council. It has been open for many years and was registered in 1993. It operates from a single storey building with a games and activity area, an art and craft area, a kitchen and toilets. There is also an office, first aid room and storage facilities. The outside area is fully enclosed and includes grassed and hard surface areas, various climbing structures and a wooden play area.

The scheme is registered for 100 children between 6 and 8 years of age and accepts

children up to the age of 14 years. In term time, the adventure playground is open between 15:30 and 18:30, Monday to Friday. On Saturdays and Sundays it opens between 13.00 and 17:00. During the school holidays it is open from 09:30 to 17:30, Monday to Friday and a breakfast club is available from 08:30 to 09:30. During the school holidays the playground is not open at week-ends.

There are currently 1,932 children aged from 6 to under 14 years on roll. Children attend from a very wide catchment area. The premises are suitable for children and adults with disabilities and the scheme currently supports children with special educational needs.

The scheme employs 6 staff who work on a rota system. Of the staff, 5, including the manager, hold appropriate play-work or early years qualifications to level 3 or above.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have extensive opportunities to play in the fresh air and enjoy physical activity and this contributes towards a healthy lifestyle. For example, they play team games and explore the range of large apparatus outside, balancing, climbing, running and swinging. Children use a small comfortable area set aside for them to relax and enjoy quiet activities.

Children have very few opportunities to learn about personal hygiene because they are not encouraged to wash their hands before meals. Although signs are displayed to remind children to wash their hands after handling pets, these procedures are not reinforced with the children. Arrangements to ensure that children have appropriate first-aid treatment are in place. For example, there is a designated first-aid room with appropriate requisites and all staff hold a first-aid qualification. Where technical knowledge is needed to support individual children, parents are asked to accompany them. Procedures to protect children from unnecessary exposure to contagious illnesses work in practice and individual children are sent home when an outbreak is suspected. There are procedures to establish if children take medication although no formal parental permissions or recording procedures are in place. In addition, appropriate storage of medication is not always consistently managed with children in line with the written policy and accident records are not always shared with parents. These oversights do not fully protect children's health.

Children access the water fountain throughout the day and this ensures that they have plenty of fluids especially when they are active. An attractive wall chart provides children with information to make choices of the range of snacks and fast food that is available. Some of these offer healthy choices such as tuna pasta and beans on toast. While picnic tables are available outside for the children to eat socially, children are not encouraged to do this indoors and tend to eat 'on the move' rather than in a relaxed social environment. Children's allergies and special dietary requirements are sought and summarised for staff covering catering duties; this enables them to meet children's individual needs. Most staff have completed a food hygiene course and

this ensures that they have the appropriate knowledge to prepare children's meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy an extensive stimulating outdoor area and a clean, bright and welcoming indoor environment. For example, the premises are brightly decorated and practitioners display children's work, posters, photographs, and notices. However, some facilities such as the provision of coat hooks and toilets are limited for the numbers attending. The availability of a pay phone for children's use is particularly reassuring for parents.

All children attending the scheme have plenty of choice from the wide range of challenging physical outdoor fixed apparatus and the craft materials and games indoors. A supply of books has been introduced and children sometimes borrow these to take home. However, the range is limited and the organisation not fully developed therefore books are not widely used by the children.

Due to the nature of this 'open access' scheme some activities are physically challenging, especially outside and, as a result, carry with them a limited degree of risk. Children are generally kept safe because most hazards are identified and managed through risk assessments that include regular daily checks. However, these are not comprehensive or reviewed to monitor seasonal hazards that pose a danger to children, such as children holding ice-lollies while using outdoor apparatus. Children are reminded of some procedures set in place to keep them safe and that the kitchen is 'out of bounds'. However, they are not always given strategies to help them manage their own safety such as when they climb ladders and step on trailing blankets. Children and visiting parents often alert staff to incidents and accidents that have already occurred and staff are responsive. However, because of the high volume of children who may attend the scheme at any one time, supervision arrangements are not robust. As a result, the staff are not always available to directly supervise the children or help them take responsibility for their own safety. For example, when children throw sticks at each other outside or play fight indoors that goes unnoticed by staff. In addition, there are no procedures in place to ensure young children's safety when they visit the toilets that have two entrances and are shared between younger and older children and visitors to the playground. As a result, on occasions, children are exposed to unnecessary risk.

Staff are aware of the playground's child protection procedures and their overall responsibilities to protect the children's welfare but some daily operating procedures are not robust. Many have attended a 4 hour training course in child protection and this is given a high priority by the management. Appropriate procedures are followed where a concern is identified and this ensures that the children's welfare is protected and safeguarded. A total of 4 child protection policies are available to users and staff of the scheme that, between them, provide all the relevant required information but are not consistent. Induction for new staff includes an element of child protection but this is not documented.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy taking part in a wide range of planned and unplanned activities that are challenging and motivating. For example, they explore the outdoor environment and large apparatus as they negotiate high walkways, ladders, rope bridges and run in the woods or play imaginatively with blankets on apparatus. Children willingly contribute towards the organisation and help staff to litter-pick and take care of the environment. This, in turn, helps them to feel a sense of belonging and self-worth.

Children enjoy taking part in organised outdoor games such as the parachute and rounders that are facilitated by staff. Planned craft activities sustain their interest and stimulate their enjoyment and imagination, particularly for girls. For example, activities include paper weaving, glass painting and decorating felt mobiles. Staff announce when group activities begin and this enables children to make decisions about their play. They are also made aware of available activities through a written programme that is displayed. These activities give children the opportunity to learn new skills such as threading a needle while enjoying the social occasion as they sit together around the table chatting with each other and a member of staff.

Children enjoy teaming up to play air hockey, snooker or table tennis indoors and they use the resources responsibly and appropriately. The computers are popular with boys who play in small and large groups showing high levels of skill and concentration. Staff monitor the length of time children spend on computers and remind children after they have exceeded the agreed time. This ensures that IT does not dominate children's experiences at the scheme and they can try other, equally stimulating pursuits. For example, sharing and swapping trading cards from home, in quieter moments.

Children are very confident and approach staff to bring matters to their attention. They communicate effectively with each other and the staff who show genuine interest in their conversations, value their contributions and comfort them when they are feeling troubled. As a result, children talk openly about their feelings or home experiences and share their drawings or materials that are important to them. Children take pleasure in stroking and sitting quietly with the resident pet rabbit and guinea-pig and this enables them to handle domestic animals which they may not otherwise experience.

Sometimes staff offer one to one interaction, for example, playing chess but this is not routinely achieved because staff are often engaged in essential designated tasks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel a sense of belonging as they confidently use all available areas and move around freely. Children from a variety of backgrounds are welcomed into the scheme. Staff take time to find out about their backgrounds and this enables them to be aware of home circumstances and support their emotional development. Children

develop a positive attitude towards people's similarities, differences, and cultures as they take part in craft activities such as Chinese New Year, Eid, Hanukah and those that depict people from around the world. They can select from a small range of books that are provided to reflect diversity. Children's work is valued and attractively displayed around the play area. Children with special needs are welcome to attend. Their needs are discussed with parents at the outset and strategies agreed to support them.

Rules are displayed for children to observe and most children behave well and play harmoniously together. They make friends at the club and enjoy playing socially together staff who have developed trusting relationships and mutual respect. When staff identify boisterous or inappropriate behaviour this is challenged or dealt with through appropriate strategies that include warnings and exclusion but incidents are not always recorded in a timely manner. During supervised group activities, the staff skilfully stand back to allow children to find their own solutions before intervening. This enables children to begin to take some responsibility for their own behaviour.

The scheme provides a valuable service for families who come from a wide catchment area. A comment sheet that is always available enables parents to share their views. Remarks such as 'great place for kids and peace of mind for parents' highlight their positive feedback and their appreciation for the excellent facilities that children enjoy. Parents share initial information on their child through the registration process and this forms the basis of meeting children's individual needs. While most parents have little involvement in this open access scheme, on occasions they are contacted by staff to share immediate issues such as sickness or behaviour. However, procedures to inform parents of routine health matters are not fully established. Notices, brochures and policies are readily available and provide valuable information to reassure and inform parents about their children's care. Complaints procedures are in place should they be necessary, including recording concerns. But recording is not linked to National Standards or rigorous when issues are raised verbally. Those parents who collect their children are welcomed into the scheme and share relaxed conversation with staff while children get ready to go home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Recruitment and vetting procedures are comprehensive and protect and safeguard the children's welfare and ensure that practitioners working with children are safe to do so. This includes medical screening, vetting and regular staff appraisals. Staff have a conscientious approach towards their roles and prioritise their professional development. For example, the majority of staff have completed a level 3 qualification in play work, and short courses such as first aid, food hygiene and child protection. This improves experiences for children. Regular team meetings enable staff to review procedures and practices that support children.

The registration system is understood by children who sign themselves in and out of the scheme independently. Staff ensure registration procedures are followed when

new families and children visit by identifying unfamiliar faces and explaining the system to them; inviting them to register. Levels of staffing are set by the organisation and the adult : child ratios and staff deployment does not always support children effectively when attendance is high. As a result, supervision is limited and some boisterous behaviour goes unchecked. Some services such as the shop, are withdrawn without notice and this affects the children's enjoyment because they are not alerted and miss out on snacks that they have looked forward to. The organisation of the environment is child centred and enables children to take part in activities in small and large groups although space indoors is limited for the numbers attending.

There is a broad range of generic policies and procedures that are understood and mostly followed by staff to support the management of children. However, health procedures are not sufficiently robust and the organisation of some documentation such as a number of child protection policies, leads to inconsistencies in information. Some documentation such as training records, staff vetting and a complaints log is not kept on site therefore systems that protect and support the children's welfare cannot be thoroughly verified. Overall the range of children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection made four recommendations to improve space so that children can participate in quieter activities, provide children with sufficient games, puzzles and books including play materials to reflect culture and disability and to ensure that staff are aware of and can implement relevant child protection guidance.

Space has been re-organised indoors to provide children with a small comfortable screened area for them to relax and enjoy quiet activities such as looking at books that have been provided. Children can select from a variety of games that interest them such as 'Who's Who' or 'Monkey Balance'. Children are helped to appreciate diversity through a small range of books and focussed craft activities. Appropriate guidance has been sought and is understood by staff so that they can follow recognised child protection reporting procedures to protect children.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets

the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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 for administering medication including storage, recording and parental permissions and ensure that accident records are signed by parents
- improve children's awareness of personal hygiene such as hand washing before meals and after handling pets
- ensure all children are safe when visiting the toilets and there is an effective system for managing access to the rear entrance
- ensure that there are always sufficient staff available on site to effectively manage the numbers of children attending the scheme
- ensure that a complaints log and staff records such as vetting and training are always available for inspection.

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