



Little Angels Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	126986
Inspection date	12 July 2006
Inspector	Karen Scott
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Registered person	Little Angels
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Angels Playgroup opened in 1984 and operates from a hall above a church in Sittingbourne. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday, term time only, from 09:30 to 12:00 and on occasions from 12:30 to 15:00 to meet the demand for spaces.

There are currently 39 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 33 receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding

areas. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs eight staff. Of these six hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a further qualification.

The playgroup receives support from a teacher from the Local Authority. It is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from playing in a clean environment. The playgroup follows good hygiene practices and explains to children the importance of washing their hands after visiting the toilet and before preparing and eating food. Children are escorted to the bathroom as it is outside the main room. In order for staff to watch children in the bathroom and in the hall doors are kept open which means that children are not always afforded privacy when using the toilet. Nappy changing is spasmodic which may result in children becoming sore although they are protected from cross infection as the process is hygienic. Children enjoy a snack bar. They are able to help themselves from healthy snacks such as fruit and cereal, encouraging them to develop healthy eating habits. Food complies with dietary and religious needs as all staff are made aware of these. At the snack bar children independently pour their own drinks which they select from fruit juice, milk, or water. Children do not become dehydrated as water is available throughout the session. Children participate in daily physical exercise such as climbing, balancing and riding on tricycles. This helps them understand the need for regular exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Children who are infectious do not attend thus preventing the spread of contagious ailments. Staff hold current first aid certificates and are able to administer first aid in the event of an accident. They would seek emergency advice or treatment if needed and have written permission from parents to do so.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from playing in a spacious, well-organised environment, allowing them to move around safely and with ease. Staff regularly clean and check toys and resources for broken parts, in order to protect children from harm. Furniture is child sized. Children can access toys and resources with ease enabling them to make choices about what they play with. The environment is secure, as all necessary steps have been taken to minimise risks. For example, visitors sign themselves in and out, all staff hold current Criminal Record Bureau checks, the gate at the entrance has an alarm fitted and regular risk assessments are undertaken. Staff ensure that children use the large apparatus correctly and position themselves next to the play to add

further protection from accidents. A thorough fire evacuation procedure, which includes alternative shelter, is practiced regularly, helping to protect children if there is an emergency. The staff have undertaken training in child protection and have an awareness of the signs and symptoms of child abuse. They understand the procedure that they would follow if it were suspected. A thorough policy detailing this means that parents and carers are aware of the process too. This contributes to a safe outcome for children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, relaxed and confident. They approach the staff for support indicating that good relationships have been built. Staff are warm and affectionate making children feel comfortable and valued. Children relate well to the staff and each other and have formed close relationships with their peers. Children make independent choices from the activities that are selected for them and some resources that they are able to access for themselves. Other resources are out of the reach of children although they may ask for them. The adults encourage children to do things for themselves and give support when it is needed. The setting is using the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage to plan activities. Practitioners are not always aware of children's starting points and at the time of the inspection, children were working within their limits.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The setting has worked very hard to understand Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage, and have attended training in both. They use their knowledge to plan a range of activities and experiences to develop all areas of children's learning. Children's progress is observed and recorded by practitioners and the setting is starting to use the observations to inform their plans in order to meet the needs of the children.

Children's independence is promoted through a snack bar where they make choices and manage all tasks themselves. Children share resources and understand turn taking. For example, children understand that only four children may play in the water tray at a time. Children are able to extend their play as resources can be moved around the room.

Children chat with one another and staff as they play. Their vocabulary is increased through regular story telling. They show good concentration when listening to stories and enjoy participating in story and singing sessions. The adults and the children gleefully join together to act out stories such as 'The Enormous Turnip'. The book corner is welcoming with comfortable seating and a range of books to read. Children enjoy one-to-one stories with adults and looking at books alone. Children benefit from the written word being displayed around the setting in the form of labels and open and close signs. They recognise their own names, self-registering at the beginning of the session and when they have a snack. Children sound out the letters of the alphabet. The opportunities to practice emergent writing whilst they play are limited. The home corner is sometimes turned into a post office giving children the

opportunity to practise their mark making skills although children do not practise writing for a purpose on a regular basis.

Children use mathematical language in their play such as big and small, for example, when acting out 'The Enormous Turnip' book and more and less when pouring out drinks. Mathematical toys such as shapes and calculators are available for the children to play with freely but practitioners miss opportunities to extend children's mathematical learning at these times. Most children know their colours as staff regularly find opportunities to make reference to them as children play and undertake tasks. The children worked together to make a colourful number display for the wall.

Children enjoy and benefit from visitors to the setting such as fire-fighters, postal workers and unusual animals. Parents are encouraged to share their skills and knowledge with the children. At the beginning of each session, children and adults come together and talk about the days of the week and the weather. Children make trips to the local shops and play with working traffic lights, learning about the outside world. They enjoy planting seeds and watching things grow but they do not have opportunities to identify and observe natural objects on a regular basis. Currently the computer is not working and children lack opportunities to play with programmable toys. Children have access to a variety of construction toys and work together in small groups to make their chosen projects. Staff play alongside children as they build but miss opportunities to extend children's development as they construct.

Children use their imaginations to play effectively. Art and craft tends to be an adult led activity but children are able to direct their projects themselves and all artwork is individual. For example, the children were making animals but one child turned hers into one of the practitioners. Although this was not the aim of the activity, her finished work was praised. Anything that the children have made during the session is put out ready to be taken home, making children feel that their work, whatever it is, is valued. Song time is enjoyed with children joining in enthusiastically.

The setting does not have an outside area but have set aside a large space for children to participate in activities that promote their gross motor development such as climbing, riding tricycles and balancing. The use of this area is limited to specific times and is not freely available throughout the session. For example children were queuing to use the apparatus and therefore had a short amount of time on each piece of equipment. Children control their bodies to make movements and show an awareness of space and others. Opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills happen throughout the session. They are very competent at using scissors, cutting with precision. Children show an awareness of their own needs as regards eating and drinking. They understand that after physical exercise they may need a drink and that when in the sun they need to protect themselves with sun lotion.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The playgroup has a good understanding of equality of opportunity and a positive attitude towards diversity. They treat children with equal respect but acknowledge their differences as positive. Consequently, children are made to feel good about

themselves. Children have access to some resources that reflect positive images of gender, disability and culture such as small world toys. They enjoy talking about their family and pets and adults show interest in what they say. Staff have a lot of experience and a good understanding of caring for children with special needs. Any developmental concerns are raised quickly and discussed with parents resulting in consistency of care for the child. Children are well behaved, being highly engaged in their play. They benefit from lots of praise and encouragement. Parents are involved in devising strategies to support children so that children learn acceptable behaviour and self-discipline. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Before children are placed in their care staff gather relevant information to ensure that they are cared for appropriately. Children and parents fill in an 'All About Me' booklet, which has details about siblings, pets and favourite toys for example. This helps staff to settle children when they are new to the setting. However, staff are not aware of all children's starting points and parents do not have regular opportunities to review their children's portfolios or to contribute to them. Children and parents are welcomed warmly. Parents are kept informed of the settings practice through comprehensive policies and procedures and informal chats at the end of each session. Parents are happy with the care that their children receive and feel that they are progressing well.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

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

Children benefit from well-organised space, time and resources and they receive sufficient adult support to help them feel secure and confident. The day is timetabled and children are aware of the routine. Children benefit from the practitioners attending many courses and keeping themselves well informed of current childcare practices. All relevant and mandatory documentation is in place and is well maintained. Records are stored confidentially but are easily accessible. Parents are kept informed of the playgroup's conditions of registration as the certificate is on display. Detailed policies and procedures are available; keeping parents informed of the care that the playgroup offers.

Leadership and management is good. The supervisor is aware of the setting's strengths and weaknesses and continuously looks at ways to improve the playgroup. An action plan to improve teaching and children's learning is in place and the setting is beginning to make progress through it. The practitioners have worked hard to understand and implement the Birth to three matters framework and are looking at ways to improve their use of the Foundation Stage. When planning activities the setting takes into account children's individual interests. All areas of learning are planned for but insufficient challenge is provided in some areas resulting in opportunities to extend children's learning being missed. Children receive support as they play, as the committed staff are aware of their teaching role throughout the session.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was recommended that the playgroup ensure that there are effective procedures in place for appointing and vetting staff. A staff recruitment and vetting policy has been produced. Posts are advertised locally. All applicants are required to fill in an application form and must provide two references and either hold or be willing to apply for a Criminal Records Bureau check. Applicants are required to attend an interview and produce two forms of identification. Posts are offered subject to references and Criminal Records Bureau checks. This thorough recruitment procedure helps to protect children.

It was also recommended that the playgroup request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. This has been done, helping to safeguard children should an emergency occur.

The final recommendation was to devise a system for planning and implementing a suitable range of activities for children, which is appropriate for their stage of development and based on their individual needs, using all the space available effectively. A comprehensive system for planning and implementing activities for the Foundation Stage and the Birth to three matters framework is in place. This helps to meet the individual developmental and learning needs of all children.

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.

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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):

- consider children's privacy when they use the toilet
- establish a daily routine for changing nappies

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to play with programmable toys
- continue to improve staff knowledge of how to use children's assessment records effectively to plan appropriate activities that take account of children's individual needs and extend their learning
- provide opportunities for information to be shared so that parents can become more involved in their children's learning.

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