

Saplings Pre School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221814
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Inspector	Caroline Wright
Setting Address	Beechwood Avenue, Bottisham, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB5 9BE
Telephone number	01223 813226
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Registered person	Saplings Pre School 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 satisfactory. 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?

Saplings Pre-school Playgroup is run by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the pre-school. It opened in its present location in 1995 and operates from a single storey building situated in the grounds of Bottisham Primary School in Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 17 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday, except Wednesdays, from 09:15 to 11:45 during term times only. The pre-school also opens for afternoon sessions between 12:45 and 15:15 when there are sufficient children on roll. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 39 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 10 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and or disabilities.

The pre-school employs five members of staff four of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications, one member of staff is working towards a relevant qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating, and they clearly understand the need to wash their hands 'because they're dirty'. Staff act as good role models, wiping down surfaces before serving snack and after children have eaten to help children to stay healthy. Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. They are able to run around and exert themselves in own outdoor play area so that they learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. They develop new physical skills such as climbing, balancing or jumping when they use the large equipment indoors and out. They are aware of changes that occur in their bodies due to physical exertion and comment 'I'm hot' when they have been running around outdoors.

In addition, children learn about healthy eating during discussions with staff at snack time. The healthy eating policy makes sure that children eat fresh fruit and cheese at snack time; children are provided with water or milk mid morning to help them to remain healthy. Staff plan activities, such as Hospital role play, which is effective in helping children to learn about their bodies and helps them to learn how to keep themselves healthy in the future.

The needs of children under three years old are well met by adults who have a sound understanding of their developmental needs. They are able to take a rest in the comfortable book corner when they want to. A good range of large and small equipment inside and out enables children to develop new physical skills according to their stage of development. They handle small items such as beads and puzzle pieces competently and expertly use scissors, glue sticks and other tools, developing co-ordination and manipulative dexterity.

If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the pre-school, up to date records are in place to make sure that good care is given.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move around safely under the supervision of the pre-school staff. Secure locks on the main entrance prevent children from leaving the premises without adult supervision. Staff are particularly vigilant when parents arrive with children in the morning and at the end of the session, to ensure that children do not leave the premises unescorted or with an unauthorised adult. Staff remind children about keeping themselves safe, they tell them not to run indoors because they will fall and remind them to 'be careful' when they play outdoors on the bikes. In addition, children learn about personal safety when the local Police Officer visits the setting to talk to them about road safety. Children show their understanding of these issues in their role play when they talk about how to 'dial 999' in an emergency.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a satisfactory understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The daily risk assessment of the premises, which adults carry out before each session begins, addresses any potential hazards to children's safety. A suitable range of written policies and appropriate procedures are in place, including a good procedure for making sure that children are well protected in the event of a fire or emergency evacuation of the premises. For example,

a comprehensive 'fire log' book maintains a record of regular fire drills, with a note being made of any areas for improvement, and makes sure that emergency lighting and fire alarms are checked frequently.

Children use resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development and these are checked regularly by the pre-school staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy at the pre-school and form good relationships with the staff. They freely access the chosen equipment and resources that staff provide at activities each day, such as dough or lentil play. They use a satisfactory range of construction materials and use tools, such as glue sticks and pastry cutters; children enjoy painting with brushes, making meaningful marks and exploring their creativity. Adults use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to organise activities for the younger children. However, they do not use assessment records effectively to plan activities that motivate and interest all of the children. This affects progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children express their creativity in art and craft, creating 'bead-rolling' paintings or making houses and boats with large cardboard boxes for their role play. They play together in groups and engage in conversations, listening to each other's ideas. For example, when playing with the duplo bricks they talk about their ideas for building a 'fire station...with a big door and a tower'. The clearly labelled toys and equipment enables children to learn that writing carries meaning and they recognise familiar words, such as their own name. They use number names and mathematical language such as 'more' and 'enough'; they talk about the 'little star' and the 'big star' as they play with the dough. Children enjoy using the digital camera and explore everyday technology such as the telephone and cooker in the role play house. They plant seeds in the garden and talk about the weather to learn about patterns and changes in the natural environment. They sing familiar songs at circle time, move their bodies to the music and clap their hands or experiment with the guitar to explore sound and rhythm.

Staff working with funded children are suitably qualified and have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They understand how activities contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. Planning for activities is linked to the stepping stones and the early learning goals; staff carry out observations of children and use these to monitor children's progress. However, they do not use assessment records effectively to identify children's skills and interests so that they can plan activities for individual children. As a result, activities such as snack time or story time, offer insufficient challenge or interest to children and this affects children's learning. Staff do not make effective use of everyday routines, such as counting the number of children at circle time, to extend children's learning beyond the planned learning intentions; they miss opportunities to develop early reading and writing or numeracy skills. For example, they write children's names on their artwork instead of encouraging children to attempt to do this for themselves. This limits progress.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet key-workers and each other upon arrival at the playgroup. Adults display children's own work on the wall to help children to develop a sense of pride in their achievements. Staff encourage children to respect each other's needs and to use conventions such as 'please' and 'thank-you', acting as positive role models themselves. Key-workers and one-to-one support staff work effectively with parents and other professionals to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, curriculum plans do not identify where activities, such as story time, will need additional resources to enable all children participate fully.

Staff are consistent in their approach to behaviour management to help children to understand what is expected of them. They work closely with other professionals to support children who have specific problems in this area when necessary. However, some children are not interested or challenged by the activities on offer and display challenging behaviour. This affects learning.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They have access to a suitable range of resources that reflect diversity and this helps them to learn about other members of society through their play. They talk with each other about their families and informal discussions with their key-workers enable them learn about each other's family cultures and traditions.

Children move around the room freely, choosing which of the activities provided that they will take part in. They are confident to initiate their own activities and are able to access additional resources if they want to.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Positive relationships effectively support children's care and early education. Parents receive regular information about pre-school activities in newsletters and notice boards. A key worker system enables parents to share information about children's progress on a daily basis. A highly effective parent rota system enables parents to be involved in their children's learning. However, they do not have enough information about the Foundation Stage Curriculum or the Early Learning Goals. They are not properly informed about the assessment procedure and their observations of what children achieve at home are not used to inform progress records. This limits key-workers ability to provide interesting activities that build on everything that children can do.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

All areas of the pre-school environment are attractive and provide adequate space for children to move around independently. The induction programme for new staff ensures that everyone is aware of procedures for child protection and knows about safeguarding children. All of the legally required documents, including a procedure to record complaints or concerns, which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being, are in place and regularly reviewed.

Staff engage in regular training to enable them to provide a balanced curriculum and they are secure in their knowledge of how young children learn. However, the organisation of 'tidy-up time' and snack do not encourage children's decision making or promote positive behaviour. Equipment that children are using is cleared away in the middle of the session and children are

kept waiting without purposeful occupation; snack is prepared and served by adults, missing opportunities for children to learn new skills: this hinders learning.

The Leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. The manager and staff have regular opportunities to meet as a team, share information and exchange practice ideas. In addition, the pre-school team access support from the teacher mentor from the local authority to identify areas for further development. A questionnaire to parents helps the pre-school staff to identify any areas for additional improvement and reflect upon their practice.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to review the organisation of snack time to ensure that the time is managed effectively and children's attention remains focused. Children are now in smaller groups and they are able to leave the table when they have finished snack rather than waiting at the table for everyone to finish. However, snack time is still not successful in meeting children's individual developmental needs or in providing suitable challenges for children. This will be carried forward in a recommendation for further improvement following this inspection.

At the last inspection of nursery education the pre-school agreed to continue to develop the planning so that key activity plans focus on meaningful, practical activities that build on what children already know and offer appropriate challenges to all individuals. They also agreed to improve the programme for mathematical development by providing children with practical opportunities to explore matching, sorting by function and shape, ordering and comparing groups of numbers. The staff have developed the system of planning since the last inspection, but the activities still do not offer adequate challenge for all children. Children now enjoy playing with shapes and spend time building 'volcanoes' with wooden shapes; they play with table top games such as 'Pairs' to enable them to learn about matching through meaningful activity. In addition they have regular opportunities to sort items by function when they help to tidy up resources. However, both of these recommendations will be carried forward for further improvement following this inspection.

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 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):

- improve the organisation of the pre-school session to ensure that large group activities, such as snack time, provide adequate challenge and promote positive behaviour in all children; ensure that 'tidy up time' does not affect children's decision making or lead to their being kept waiting without purposeful activity for extended periods of time (this also applies to nursery education).

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 curriculum planning: make sure that key-workers' regular observations of what children enjoy and can do are used to inform planning and provide adequate challenge and interest for each child; indicate on plans where activities need additional resources or adaptation to enable children with disabilities or learning difficulties to be able to participate fully (this also applies to care)
- improve the programmes for mathematics and communication, language and literacy: provide children with more opportunities to write for a purpose, learn about sounds and letters and to use numbers and calculations through everyday routines and play situations
- provide parents with clear information about the Foundation Stage Curriculum and early learning goals; encourage them to become actively involved in the observation and assessment procedure so that their comments can be used to inform curriculum plans that build on everything their children already know and can do.

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