

The Children's Centre at Romsey Mill

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221864
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting Address	Hemingford Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 3BZ
Telephone number	01223 566 102 (open til 4pm)
E-mail	u5s@romseymill.org.uk
Registered person	Romsey Mill Trust
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Crèche

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?

The Children's Centre at Romsey Mill was initially established as a voluntary playgroup in 1980 and changed its current status to a children's centre in September 2007. The group operates from one of the main halls at Romsey Mill in Cambridge and serves the local area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time whilst a maximum of 15 children aged under the age of five years may attend the crèche facility currently operating on a Thursday afternoon. The centre is open five days a week for 52 weeks of the year and provides a range of services for children and families within the local community. These include under fives programmes such as parent and toddler groups, parent and baby support groups, sleep and toddler clinics connecting closely with health care practitioners, a young parents programme, social inclusion programme, 'transitions', a support programme with the main focus aim to aid year six to year seven children in making the transfer from primary to secondary school, and 'aspire', a group for children with autistic spectrum disorders aged between nine to 14 years. Playgroup sessions within the centre are Tuesday through to Friday during term time between the hours of 09:15 until 11:45. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 32 children aged from two years to five years on roll, although the centre itself offers services to a wider number of children and families with approximal numbers around the 200 users a week. Of the playgroup children, four receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Most live locally. The centre have systems in place to support children with learning disabilities and/or difficulties and for whom English is an additional language.

The centre employ 12 full-time staff, 15 part-time and sessional staff, 12 students on degree placements, 140 volunteers and patrons, trustees and others. Of these, the playgroup has a total of seven paid staff, of whom, five including the under fives coordinator hold an appropriate early years qualification. The centre also value experienced specialist staff, especially one to one support workers. The early years coordinator is a qualified teacher and has acquired the newly implemented 'Early Years Professional Status'. The setting receives support from an Early Years Foundation Stage Advisor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA). They hold the 'Aiming For Quality' accreditation status by the PLA and are in the process of being reaccredited. The under fives also hold the 'Promoting Health in Pre-Schools' status.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill as staff rigorously adhere to environmental health guidance. For example, the premises is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness, food is stored and prepared appropriately, children who are unwell are discouraged from attending and staff consistently wear protective gloves when managing bodily fluids. This means that the potential for cross-contamination is effectively minimised. A vast majority of staff hold a valid first aid qualification and there are sufficient medical supplies to administer emergency aid. Accidental injuries and medication administered are documented in line with National Standard requirements.

Children learn to understand simple good health and hygiene practices as they adhere to the daily routine. They know, for example, to wash their hands after messy craft activities, following use of the toilet and prior to eating. However, they do not benefit in developing a sound awareness of the reasons behind this process as discussions about germs and the affects on their bodies are infrequent.

Children benefit from a nutritious and healthy diet. The playgroup provides them with a varied choice of snacks. These comply with all special dietary requirements to ensure children remain healthy. Snack-time is an effective integrated social learning experience for the children. They independently pour drinks, share the snack and chat with staff and peers whilst gaining refreshment. Drinking water is freely available at all times.

Children enjoy a good range of physical activities including indoor and outdoor play. Whilst the setting has limited outdoor space this does not restrict the range of activities provided. For example, access to the large gym and adaptation of the main play area allows for variance in the programme such as soft play, bats and balls, music to movement and many other activities. Although children benefit in the variety of physical activities they are presently restricted in

developing an awareness of how to prepare their bodies and to recover it, following physical challenge.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety and welfare is given due attention. Staff help keep children safe inside and outside because they understand and comply with written health and safety procedures. All necessary precautionary safety measures are in place and risk assessments are undertaken frequently. Access to the premises is monitored through the supervision and management of the entrance area. Visitors to the playgroup are requested to provide identification and to record their presence on site in the visitors log book.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they adhere to the group's rules and the direction of adults. For example, they know not to run inside or to throw equipment as they may hurt themselves or another person, to sit down to eat as there is a potential to choke on undigested food and to sit on all four legs of a chair and not tilt back as they may fall backwards and either bang their heads or hurt their backs. Children stay safe in the event of a fire as staff ensure regular drills are undertaken throughout the term in compliance with fire department requirements.

Staff protect children well. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well organised and managed setting. Staff are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. The playgroup leader is the designated person for liaison and has a sound knowledge of how, where and when to refer concerns in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. They are making sound progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners continue to develop their understanding of good quality childcare practice. Staff provide positive role models and give sensitive support to all children. They demonstrate a genuine affection for children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Staff follow a set routine which promotes children's feelings of security and stability. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's confidence and vocabulary through constant praise and recognition. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development and level of understanding. This helps them meet the needs of all children. The mature staff team are suitably qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes positive outcomes for children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are engaged and motivated by a varied range of stimulating, practical activities related to their needs. They access an extended range of good quality resources, which support their learning across the Foundation Stage. All children

are keen to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen with considerable levels of concentration to stories and are able to re-tell familiar books. Children make marks for a purpose such as when forming shapes to replicate the letters of their names. Children are highly imaginative. They use their creativity of design in role play, construction, drama, story and music. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. Children gain confidence in using number in their play and respond well to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and some daily routines. Children gain opportunities to develop their physical skills such as through daily access to the garden and regular music and movement sessions. Staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and try to build on this information to help children achieve their full potential. Planning and assessment systems are appropriately detailed and provide a clear tool to guide staff in the delivery of a balanced curriculum. A flexible approach to the session and a balance between energetic play and quiet spells allows children to learn at their own pace.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with special needs are warmly welcomed in the playgroup. Practitioners ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. Children are extremely well behaved, and very polite in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. The playgroup leader ensures that a warm welcoming and homely environment is provided, prioritising the welfare of the children in attendance. Children take turns and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. There is a wealth of information which is easily accessible which includes general care and educational literature. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute towards individual assessment records. Therefore, children benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and practitioners to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the setting and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A committed and dedicated staff team, sound and detailed documentation and positive working relationships with external childcare practitioners ensures that children benefit and enjoy their time at this provision. Senior staff are exceptionally skilled and competent in their childcare practice and provide a good role model for those less experienced individuals within the team who are presently in the process of training. Staff demonstrate a real affinity with children. They use their wealth of experience as parents or carers and their childcare training to provide a wide range of practical and stimulating learning opportunities.

The playgroup has clear self-evaluation procedures and works closely with external agencies to develop and enhance their practice. They are receptive to improvement. For example, they

have met all previous recommendations set from both the care and education inspection and are already actively working to correlate the Early Years Foundation Stage with their current educational structures. Whilst the group retain a good level of quality overall, an area which can and does cause disruption to the fluidity of the session is that of the change over periods between activities. Occasional poor staff deployment hinders the seamless transition between activities. Minor disputes occur and some children receive injury. This compromises their well-being.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff are dedicated to the concept of continued improvement and enhancement in quality of their educational curriculum. They have worked hard as a team with support from the advisory teaching services and external childcare practitioners, both on their current planning structures and their future systems, incorporating the Early Years Foundation Stage. Planning is sound, sufficiently detailed and draws on what children know and can do and what they need to learn. Assessment is individual and reflective of each child's educational journey. However, whilst formal planning and assessment structures depict variation for the older more able and younger less able children this does not transfer in practice. Children are very reliant on the nominated key person to enable appropriate development and progression. This, therefore, is not always maintained when staff patterns change or leave of absence is taken unexpectedly, placing an inconsistency within the key person role. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were required to ensure the child protection policy includes clear procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation made against a member of staff. Children are safeguarded as procedures have been revised to include the relevant data.

At the last nursery education inspection the group were required to consider ways to further opportunities for children to link letters and sounds to extend their emerging skills and to continue to develop the system of assessment to ensure it is complete. Children make good progress in their educational learning, as greater emphasis is given to communication, language and literacy. Children are actively encouraged to make phonetic links such as when finding their name cards. This is translated in assessment structures as staff plan the next stage drawn from what children already can do.

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):

- ensure children benefit in developing a sound awareness of health and hygiene practices, this refers to preparing their bodies in readiness prior to physical exertion and extension of discussion about germs
- review the management of staff deployment and the organisation of the daily routine to ensure seamless transition between change over periods so that children's safety and welfare is not compromised.

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):

- review the role of the key person to ensure children are consistently provided with sufficient challenge.

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