

# Taunton Opportunity Group

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	143087
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 November 2007
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Taunton Opportunity Group, also known as TOG, is a pre-school for children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. The group operates from a purpose-built premises situated on the site of Wellsprings Primary School Taunton. The building offers playrooms, a conservatory and enclosed outside area. There is also a multi-sensory unit for children with sensory impairments, a parents room, physiotherapy area and two small rooms for visiting professionals such as the speech therapist. Taunton Opportunity Group may provide care for a maximum of 26 children at any one time. Currently there are 28 children on roll, of whom 12 receive funding for nursery education. The group is open for six sessions a week: Mondays from 09.30 to 12:00 and 13.10 to 15.00 and on Tuesdays to Fridays from 09.15 to 12:00. A lunch club runs from 12:00 to 13.10 each day. From January 2008 the Friday sessions will run until 12.15. Additional sessions are run for parents and carers to attend with younger children. There are six members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is undertaking further training.

The group has a voluntary management committee and is partly funded by Education, Health and Social Services. The group have pet goldfish in an indoor tank.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive at the group because of the highly effective procedures and practices which are in place to meet their physical, nutritional and health needs. Staff follow individual medical care plans and give the highest priority to implementing excellent health and hygiene routines. Children attending have a variety of specific health needs owing to the diversity of their learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Staff endeavour to ensure that each child is introduced to the fundamentals for keeping healthy via effective hand washing and toileting routines which promote dignity in personal hygiene and correct procedures. All children wash their hands before eating and after messy play or using the toilet, potty or having their nappy changed. Pictures are used as visual prompts for children when using the sinks and they indicate that they are familiar with routines as they readily move to wash their hands before snack and lunch times. Those who have difficulty in reaching the wash hand basins have individual bowls of clean water brought to them in order for them to follow the procedure of using liquid soap and paper towels to dry hands hygienically and avoid cross infection. Children having nappies changed are protected from the risk of cross contamination as staff wear disposable gloves and clean the mats after each use. All staff adhere to the policy for intimate care which promotes children's privacy and health needs extremely well. Staff ensure that all information regarding children's health needs is kept up-to-date and this is reinforced by the highly effective multi-agency working at the group. Information is communicated between support agencies and families ensuring that children's health needs are paramount. Staff exchange verbal information routinely during sessions to ensure that everyone is aware of children's current needs. Excellent practice is supported by comprehensive information and guidelines on an extensive list of health issues which include common childhood infections, resuscitation procedures, asthma and meningitis as well as other conditions and illnesses. All staff hold first aid qualifications which indicates that minor injuries would be dealt with appropriately. In addition, they are trained in the use of medical equipment and specific procedures to follow for children's individual health needs. Children are protected as staff have devised procedures in the case of a sudden accident or medical emergency not only at the setting but also if being transported home by the volunteer drivers. All care escorts are trained in these procedures and supplied with mobile phones to ensure swift assistance from the emergency services. Written permission to seek emergency medical advice and treatment is obtained from parents. All administration of medication is recorded in full and the accident book is maintained correctly. Children are protected when playing indoors and out by staff who are aware of the need to clothe them appropriately according to the weather, especially as many of the children attending are unable to communicate that they are too cold or hot. A Sunsense tent is used to provide shade during outdoor play in sunny weather. Plans are in place to introduce more shaded areas when sharing the garden of the local authority nursery class which adjoins the Taunton Opportunity Group garden.

Drinking water is available for children during sessions as needed. As many children are unable to access water independently staff are vigilant in ensuring that thirst needs are met, especially in hot weather and after energetic play. Children's dietary needs are closely linked to their medical needs,

therefore, snacks and drinks provided by the group adhere to individual children's requirements. At snack time children may be offered breadsticks, banana slices, biscuits or fruit as appropriate. Some children require high calorie foods and others need to experience tastes and textures.

Children enjoy the social opportunities of sitting together to enjoy snack and each child has appropriate assistance or is enabled to feed themselves independently. Staff have received specific training to assist children with personal care plans, for example, for a Gastrostomy. Children attending lunch club bring their own packed lunch which is stored appropriately and parents are requested to provide chill packs.

Children experience daily opportunities to develop their physical skills according to their specific needs. For example, children who crawl may be encouraged to remember to use their legs alternately when moving along. All children's care plans are drawn up with health and educational professionals such as the occupational therapist and physiotherapist in order to meet children's individual needs. Daily routines established at the group provide core activities which enable children to push, pull and manipulate. Extra resources to support these skills are provided. Photographs of the 2007 obstacle course indicate that all children were taking part and enjoyed walking under the bridge, getting through the tunnel, kicking balls and sliding down the slide. The special needs of all children are supported by the use of specific equipment such as standing frames, adjustable chairs and, buggies and trays which attach to these. Children of all abilities enjoy painting on and washing the windows, reaching up to paint, catching balls, balancing on a beam and manipulating objects of different sizes. Children's additional needs never stand in the way of them experiencing a full and exciting variety of activities. They are supported by staff who extend children's learning and development and do not limit or compromise opportunities.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in purpose built premises which has been designed with the safety needs of a specific group of children, and their families, in mind. It provides a highly suitable environment, both indoors and out, where they can play, rest and have therapy sessions. Floor coverings are safe and cleaned regularly to promote hygienic and safe areas for all children. Staff use resources such as mats, cushions and foam supports to ensure that children can access resources safely and easily. Many toys and games are set up for children before the sessions start and staff are aware of the need to allow plenty of room for walking frames and chairs. The outdoor area is safely enclosed and allows for shared use of the adjoining local authority play area via low fences and gates. Staff maintain an impressive record of very thorough written assessments for all areas and equipment. These are reviewed regularly and children benefit from the excellent routines which are in place to safeguard them. It is evident that staff are vigilant at all times to promote children's wellbeing and safety. They deploy well around the play areas and are watchful and highly efficient, for example, moving objects out of reach accordingly when potential hazards arise. Door security is very good and all visitors are recorded with details of time of arrival and departure. Extra measures are in place to ensure children's safety at all times and these include covers for electrical sockets, cool touch radiators, safe floor coverings, the fenced off swing area and notices to remind staff about keeping certain windows and doors closed when children are attending. Extra policies and procedures protect children and include documents regarding movement and handling and use of oxygen cylinders in the setting. Current risk assessment reviews include checking the fixed play equipment in the local authority outside area, as this is also used by the Opportunity Group children. Children regularly practise the emergency evacuation procedure to ensure that the building is cleared swiftly and safely. Staff have reviewed the storage of the emergency medical box for easier access. All fire drills are recorded in full with specific detail relating to difficulties according to the children present at the time. The high ratio of staff maintained at all times ensures children's

safety and close supervision. All fire safety equipment is checked annually and all procedures are in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Staff are aware that children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities need extra supervision to ensure that they do remain safe, however, they are also aware of the importance of giving them a safe balance between risk and opportunity. Children are enabled to explore and play happily in a suitable environment. Full permissions are obtained from parents regarding outings and use of volunteer drivers for children who are collected from and delivered home. All drivers have undergone appropriate checks and vetting and hold Criminal Records Bureau clearance.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as all staff have attended training in child protection procedures. The policy is comprehensive and in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. It is reviewed annually to ensure that all contact details are up-to-date. New staff undergo a thorough introduction to the policy and procedures as part of their induction. The flowchart for procedures to follow in case of a child protection concern is displayed on the staff and parents notice boards.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy their time at Taunton Opportunity Group and demonstrate that they have established strong and affectionate bonds with the staff. They are comfortable with the friendly staff team who offer a very warm welcome as each child arrives. The care for each child focuses on their individual needs and this is gathered from a variety of sources including parents, carers and support agencies as well as from ongoing observations.

All children attending the Taunton Opportunity group have a learning difficulty, a physical disability or a combination of both of these. Children respond well to a 'hands on' learning approach where they experience things first hand. Staff will reduce the use of language in order to simplify the message and support this with signing, objects of reference, photos, body language and gestures. Children of all abilities enjoy the communication that eye contact can bring. Staff demonstrate high levels of skill and expertise as they adjust and adapt their approach for each child accordingly. It is evident that children quickly become familiar with everyday routines and are able to join in with tidy up time, story time, snack time and singing the hello and goodbye songs in a group situation. Children under three years of age have activities planned for them which relate to their Birth to three matters framework. Assessments relate to their progress in the four aspects towards them becoming a strong and healthy child as well as competent learners and confident communicators. Staff use their knowledge of child development and children's individual ages and stages to inform the planning for this age group. All children benefit from very high levels of one to one attention from the enthusiastic staff team. They use their specialist skills and outstanding knowledge of the National Standards, Birth to three matters framework and Foundation Stage to provide an excellent quality of care and early years education for all children.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children have very good opportunities to progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. It is evident that many children at the group are operating below the yellow stepping stones of the Foundation Stage yet it is also evident that their progress is very good in relation to their starting points. Children benefit from the inclusive approach of the staff team who plan across all six areas of learning and offer appropriate and meaningful experiences for all children. All planning is thorough and

grounded in the staff having an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They emphasise the importance of children achieving well and celebrate this in displaying photos entitled, 'Look at what we can do.' Staff follow their curriculum policy and have designed a seamless transition between the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage. In this way they are extremely well prepared for the new Early Years Foundation Stage which will be introduced in September 2008. Further evidence of their proficiency in delivering a high quality curriculum is available in the written core learning intentions for each half term, weekly planning meetings and basic curriculum provision sheets which relate to the stepping stones. Plans are displayed for parents and staff. They include detail relating to the supported learning intention with adult roles clearly defined, the key learning intention and an extended learning intention. In this way generic planning can be adapted for individual children and allows for simplification and extension of activities. All work is evaluated and staff record next steps for each child. In this way the observations and assessments inform future planning and the cycle is complete. Children benefit from activities which build on their previous experiences and build in new challenges or return to previous activities to work on establishing their skills and learning. The weekly focus sheets demonstrate that staff are providing meaningful activities, for example, in September children returning after the summer break are settled back into the group and new children are given time to become familiar and comfortable with their new environment. Staff focus on getting them to separate happily from their main carer and work hard to find out the child's preferred communication style. As a result of the programme children are able to form good relationships with staff, to attend happily as they feel welcomed and valued, to communicate their feelings and needs, to grow in confidence and social skills and to make very good progress in relation to their starting points.

There is significant emphasis given to children achieving well in personal, social and emotional development. Children are enabled to grow in self esteem and to develop good levels of independence. They carry out their own self-registration by placing their name cards on the wall display and are able to choose during free play time. They communicate which activity they would like to do or toy they would like to play with by means of a set of photographs of activities currently on offer. Staff will enable them to move to the chosen activity with appropriate assistance if needed. Staff put very good emphasis on praise and encouragement throughout play and reward children by noting, 'good listening', 'good looking' for those who use their eyes to communicate and, 'good sitting' or, 'good standing' for those with targets for improved posture and mobility. Each child enjoys hearing their own name during the group singing. Displays of individual art work and photographs help each child to feel a valued member of the group. Children are encouraged to develop their communication skills by a variety of methods according to their abilities. They are introduced to phonics and children are able to link sounds to letters, for example, when using wooden shapes to feel the S shape and to say 's' when looking at the toy snake during story time. Children are able to identify familiar words and their own names, and have daily opportunities for mark making and labelling their own drawings. They use talking books as prompts for discussion and these are filled with photographs of people and objects which are relevant to each child. Children with speech and language difficulties receive teaching which is targeted at their particular needs. Children's vocabulary is extended and reinforced by staff who encourage simple verbalisation during play, for example, when throwing leaves in the air and repeating, 'again' and 'more'. There is an attractive book corner which is well stocked with a range of books to support children's interests. These are supplemented by books made by the group as records of events, visits and outings, for example, going to Crealy Park and Sholford Farm and the leavers party at the end of July 2007. Mathematics is integrated into everyday routines and children are encouraged to count and use maths language. They are able to sort and compare, for example, when playing with the

Maxi-Coloredo game and large foam dice. They are able to find the same object during story time by matching a picture of an animal to the toy in the story sack. Children enjoy expressing their creativity through working with a variety of art and craft media, making sounds using instruments and objects such as saucepan lids and listening and moving to music. Children have enjoyed flicking paint on to large sheets of paper, making paint footprints and painting on the lower windows. They have a wonderful selection of resources to support imaginative and role play which include dressing up clothes and small world play figures. Children have access to a multi-sensory room and can enjoy experiencing sound, movement and lights. Many of the children have time-tabled access to this facility as part of their planned therapy. Children explore their locality and have access to meaningful experiences such as planting seeds and going for walks. They are learning to care for the pet goldfish and take turns to feed them. The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world is well resourced and use of special occasions allows children to learn about the seasons and events such as harvest and fireworks night. The group has an excellent selection of resources to support the activities provided and maintains a wish list for new equipment, as well as keeping note of which toys will need replacing in the near future.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children's needs are met extremely well as staff plan an appropriate and relevant programme for each one using comprehensive information gathered from parents and other allied agencies as part of MAISEY, the multi-agency consultation meetings. This forms the basis for each child's programme and is informed by regular observations and assessments of children's progress and needs. It is evident that staff implement the equal opportunities policy in full. They offer flexible settling in periods to suit individual children and their families. The group has a very good range of resources which reflect positive images of multi-cultural backgrounds and social diversity. Sensitive management of children's behaviour is fundamental to the group with regular use of praise and reward. Children beam and smile in response to staff who use their tone of voice well to express their delight at children's efforts. Children are encouraged to say please and thank you and to learn to behave well. Music is used as a prompt for tidy up time and children are encouraged to help to put toys away ready for snack. All children attending TOG have additional needs and these are taken into account when managing behaviour. The teacher in charge is also the area special needs coordinator or SENCO. She coordinates the care and education offered at the group. Multi-agency working is key to the success of the group and genuine communication is well established between professionals including speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, the educational psychology service, social care and the Paediatric departments at local hospitals. The group liaise with other pre-schools and nurseries that the children may also attend and key workers attend meetings. Comprehensive documentation is maintained to support the success of this co-working. The SENCO also coordinates school entry planning for the children. Children with Individual Educational Plans, or IEPs, have regular reviews and planned work takes their specific needs into account.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Staff encourage all parents and carers to become actively involved in children's progress at the group by implementing the 'Working together with families' policy. They operate an open door policy and welcome parents in at any time. The family room is well equipped for parents to stay and chat together or to meet with staff or other professionals. There is a very good verbal exchange of information established at drop off and collection times. For those parents whose children are escorted by volunteer drivers the group send home diary books which record valuable information regarding their

child and that days activities. Extensive information is provided on the parents notice boards and in the parents room regarding the provision at TOG and other local sources of support and help. Parents receive helpful information when their child starts at the group in the form of written tips and newsletters twice a term. Information regarding the funded nursery education is clear and comprehensive and illustrated by photographs of children involved in play. Staff update and change these photos regularly to show children who are attending the group currently. Staff seek to understand each family's home customs, beliefs and values via face to face meetings. Children benefit from staff having high levels of awareness of the diverse needs of each child and their family. This, together with an excellent commitment to inclusion and a well balanced curriculum, ensures that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of each child is fostered. All formal written assessments are available to parents and carers. Weekly activities are displayed on the playroom door to enable parents to be familiar with current key words and all activities and resources in use. Parents are able to become further involved if they wish by joining the committee or helping with fund raising. All policies and procedures are shared with parents in order to ensure that they have a good understanding of the processes that underpin the care of their children. The documentation includes a complaints policy and parents are provided with full contact details for Ofsted.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Exceptionally good organisation of routines, activities and documentation underpin the success of the excellent practice at this setting. The teacher in charge together with her staff team demonstrate continued suitability as they have an excellent record of training, genuine multi-agency working and a commitment to updating knowledge. The staff to child ratio is excellent with high levels of one to one care and a minimum of a one to three ratio. There is highly effective deployment of all staff, both experienced and newly appointed, and as a result children have safe and easy access to the indoors and outdoor play areas throughout sessions. All policies and procedures required by regulation are maintained and reviewed regularly. In addition the group provides extra written policies, for example, risk assessment, confidentiality, curriculum planning, intimate care and fire safety. All documentation is of excellent quality and reviewed regularly.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The group is lead by a management committee of volunteers which is run in accordance with it's charitable status. They have defined specific responsibilities for issues such as health and safety, and the appraisal of the teacher in charge. She manages the team effectively by setting clear directions by means of her strong focus and clear written aims and ethos for the group. She ensures that all staff, including team leaders, play leaders, the multi-sensory specialist, administration staff, driver escorts, the cleaner and students are aware of their roles and responsibilities. There are established annual staff appraisals, ongoing discussion before, during and after each session which demonstrates excellent team working. The teacher in charge demonstrates an exemplary commitment to continuous improvement via her excellent capacity for monitoring and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the group which leads to improvements. For example, recent use of the self evaluation questions in the 'Safe and sound' document from Ofsted has resulted in a perceptive evaluation of practice and action plans for the future. It is common practise at the group for action plans to be devised as the result of meetings, shared ideas, a training workshop or an article in an early years journal and these result in improvements to care and education for the children attending. The teacher in charge implements the staff management policy and has recently re-written and reviewed the induction procedures for new staff on a recent new

appointment at the group. She is also reviewing this with the new appointee as the induction programme evolves. There is a very good record of professional development for all staff and they have all recently updated their first aid and are booked on Safeguarding children courses this year. The teacher in charge is leading the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in advance of it's formal introduction in September 2008.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the group was asked to address one issue relating to documentation. As a result of action taken the complaints procedure is now complete and includes contact details for Ofsted.

At the last nursery education inspection the group was asked to consider strategies to enable children to enjoy joint play experiences with children from the adjoining nursery, the Wellsprings Foundation Unit. An action plan was drawn up with the nursery staff team and steps taken have resulted in extended play opportunities for all the children. A section of the wall has been removed and replaced with a low metal fence. Gates allow for children to move between the two areas. Future meetings are planned with staff from the Wellsprings Foundation Unit regarding shared play.

As a result of the effective action taken since the last inspection the provision has successfully improved outcomes for children in organisation and enjoying and achieving.

### **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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?**

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)