

# Bright Sparks Playgroup at Empingham

Inspection report for early years provision

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| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 254363                                                                             |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 13 November 2007                                                                   |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Alexandra Brouder                                                                  |
| <b>Setting Address</b>         | Empingham C of E Primary School, School Lane, Empingham, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 8PQ |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01572 812124                                                                       |
| <b>E-mail</b>                  |                                                                                    |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | Gail Healey                                                                        |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Integrated                                                                         |
| <b>Type of care</b>            | Full day 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 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?

Bright Sparks Playgroup was established in 1998 and is situated in the village of Empingham. It caters for children from both the village and surrounding areas. It is privately owned and operates from a classroom in the village school. The playgroup have the use of the school hall as well as the school playground.

The playgroup is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings during term time only from 09:00 until 12:00 and on Wednesdays from 09:00 until 15:30.

There are currently 25 children on roll and of these 11 are in receipt of government funding. At present none of the children are learning English as an additional language. The playgroup supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are three staff currently working at the playgroup, one of whom holds a child care qualification. The playgroup is part of the Early Years Partnership and has access to support from a curriculum advisor and an Area Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO).

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children begin to develop their skills in personal hygiene as they wash their hands after using the toilet, messy play and before snack. They do so independently and older, more able children talk to staff about why they do this, particularly before snack, stating 'I need to wash the germs away with the soap'. Their risk of cross-infection is minimised as good procedures are in place and followed within the setting, for example, the use of anti-bacterial spray on all surfaces before snacks and hygienic nappy changing procedures. A range of appropriate documentation supports children's welfare and needs, for example, what to do should a child become ill during the session. In addition to this, all staff have a first aid qualification and consent are in place to enable staff to seek emergency medical advice or treatment should the need arise, protecting children's health and enabling staff to take immediate action if required.

Children's physical skills are good. They handle a range of small and large apparatus well and with growing confidence. Their large muscle skills are developing as they explore a range of movements, such as, balancing, hopping, running and skipping. They have access to glue sticks, paintbrushes and role-play equipment such as hairbrushes, on a regular basis, develop their small muscle skills as they hold these, and use them correctly. They are beginning to recognise the changes that take place in their bodies as they run and learn to negotiate space, carefully avoiding each other. Children listen to their changing heartbeat with stethoscopes before and after exercise, enabling them to learn about their bodies.

Food and drink provided for children is nutritionally balanced and in adequate quantities. Children develop an awareness of the importance of healthy eating as they enjoy a suitable variety of snacks, which includes fresh fruit. Children freely access water throughout the session, increasing their independence and enabling them to remain hydrated. Snack times are social occasions in which children sit together, sometimes with staff, to discuss their morning. Their dietary needs are well met as staff ensure that information regarding what children can and cannot have is obtained before they begin and shared with all staff.

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

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed into the bright and well-organised environment, enabling them to settle quickly. They gain a sense of belonging and feel valued, as they view their work, which is displayed on the walls. Toys and resources are used well, to support the varied age groups and changing needs of children. Low-level tables and chairs enable children to take part in the full range of activities on offer. They are able to make choices in their free play increasing their decision-making skills and independent choice.

Children remain safe at the setting as toys and resources provided are suited to the needs and age ranges present and are regularly checked for damage. Children learn about keeping safe as staff talk to them about using equipment safely, both indoors and outdoors. Children handle and use equipment and resources in safety, for example, plastic hockey sticks. In addition to this, children take part in the fire evacuation procedure on a regular basis enabling them to take responsibility for their own safety. A useful risk assessment is in place that covers both indoors and outdoors, so children's safety is maintained at all times.

Staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures is sound enabling them to act appropriately should they have a concern for a child's welfare. A policy is in place outlining procedures to be followed, however this is not current with the Local Area Safeguarding Board and may delay appropriate action being taken should the group have a concern for a child's welfare.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and content in the well-organised, welcoming environment. They engage easily in play and enjoy their time at the setting. Opportunities are provided to enable children to play independently as they make choices from the good range of stimulating activities to enhance their development. However, the needs of younger children are sometimes not identified appropriately, as guidance, for example, the 'Birth to three matters' framework, is not used to plan for their individual needs.

Good relationships exist between staff and other children which helps children gain confidence and self-esteem as they play and learn. Staff know children well and, in the main, provide appropriately for their needs. Ratios are kept to a minimum enabling staff to spend quality time with children and increase their learning opportunities, although this is not always consistent due to lack of training and knowledge for some staff.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Staff know children well and endeavour to support the changing needs of all. Although all staff deliver the Foundation Stage curriculum, they are not yet secure in their knowledge and understanding of this to enable them to further support and promote appropriate challenges for the mixed abilities present.

Staff use good questioning skills to increase children's thinking and ideas as they play, for example in the cornflour gloop staff were observed to ask children 'what does it feel like' and 'what happens if you pick it up'. As numbers of children are low, staff are able to offer good support, helping children gain knowledge as they play and promote the next steps in their learning. However, this is not consistent due to lack of training and understanding of the stepping-stones towards the Foundation Stage for some staff. Observation and assessment opportunities are developing well. However, assessments of children's progress are not yet used to best effect to ensure that learning outcomes identified in short-term planning offer optimal levels of challenge and progression for individual children.

Children are happy and confident. They separate well from their main carer, are greeted well by staff and form good relationships with their peers. They help and support the needs of one another, for example, more able children assist younger, less able children to reach paper towels in the toilet area. They are well mannered and thank each other and staff with little prompting. Children gain independence as they give out the biscuits, pour out their own drinks and access the toilet. They begin to explore the world in which they live through planned activities, books and visits from others. Their language develops well and they are confident speakers in both large and small groups. Children, whose language is not yet secure, are supported well and set targets to increase their vocalisation and communication with others. Children introduce narratives into their play and use their imagination well or recall past experiences. For example, children were observed to talk about animals that they had seen out in the fields as they were

playing with the farm. Children listen well to stories and enjoy handling books. They begin to recognise print as they self-register each day and view labels on familiar resources and objects throughout the room. However, opportunities to increase children's mark making skills are limited as children are not encouraged to practice their skills in every day activities. Children make good progress in sounding out letters, for example, as they sound the initial letter for each day of the week.

Children begin to use number in a variety of ways. For example, as they count how many children are present each day, how many animals are in the 'shed', and how many biscuits are needed each day. They use simple calculation techniques as they compare the number of boys and girls present and use appropriate language such as more and less, to describe this. However, opportunities for more able children to view number in its written form are minimal which hinders their progress in this area. They explore shape, space and measure in a variety of planned and child initiated activities and begin to use a range of positional language as they play, for example, top and bottom. They enjoy investigating and exploring as they use equipment such as magnifying glasses and magnets. Children eagerly use the magnets to find objects around the room that will 'stick' to them, showing glee as they are successful. Children learn about growth as they plant seeds and explore wild life as they go out on walks in the locality. They are able to construct with a purpose in mind as they use a range of construction, such as blocks and interlinks and have some access to the computer to extend their awareness of technology.

Children's physical skills are good. They explore a range of body movements on a variety of well planned activities, for example, bat and ball, running games and using the climbing frame. They learn how their bodies respond to movement and discuss together how this makes them feel. Their creative skills are developing well as they have many opportunities to extend their imagination through the use of well planned role play areas, such as the vets, hairdressers and the shop as well as a good range of small world toys. Children enjoy painting using various methods, for example, hands, string and vegetable printing and take part in an assortment of adult-led craft activities to enable them to explore colour change and various textures. Opportunities for children to create freely with their own purpose in mind is limited.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's behaviour is good. They begin to understand the rules for working together and respond to clear expectations, for example, as they stop and listen when the tambourine is shaken. Children share well and take turns and begin to show concern for others; a child was observed to ask another child to share their cornflour gloop and more able children assist younger children in reaching paper towels. Staff are consistent in handling children's behaviour and use praise and encouragement regularly, which enables children to behave positively and increases their self-worth.

Children begin to develop an understanding of different communities as they take part in interesting activities linked to a variety of festivals and belief systems, such as Chinese New Year. They have access to some resources, such as books and dolls that reflect different cultures and lifestyles, although these can be limited. A range of information is gathered regarding children's individual needs before they begin enabling staff to plan effectively for their needs. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is fostered.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive a good service because staff ensure they work closely with parents and other agencies to ensure their individual needs are met.

Staff make sure that all children are able to take part in the full range of activities, adapting these as required. Appropriate training has been completed to ensure that the groups Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) can plan effectively for individuals.

Children are treated as individuals and their needs are met well. The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents speak favourably of the caring environment which helps them feel confident in the care offered to children. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that information required to enable them to meet children's needs, preferences and to gain an insight into their stage of development, is obtained before they attend. Children are given time to settle into the group and staff and parents work together to ensure that this happens easily and meets the child's individual needs. A range of information is available to parents through the use of a prospectus, policies and regular letters. However, this information is not up to date as it does not contain information on the registered body regarding the management of complaints made by parents or of the curriculum offered to younger children. Information on the children's progress towards the early learning goals is offered to parents through informal and formal discussion, however, it is not always made clear to parents that this service is available.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The established staff team work well together to create a stable and secure environment where children are settled and confident and enjoy their time at pre-school. However, of the three staff that work at the setting, only one has a child care qualification. This impacts on consistent methods of teaching and learning offered to children. Good adult:child ratios enable staff to spend time working closely with children, so helping develop relationships and learning. The effective organisation of the setting ensures that children are able to make choices in their play which enables them to make progress. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the day to day practice is effective, however, some of this information lacks specific details. Information required to ensure that children's individual care and healthy needs are supported are in place and updated on a regular basis.

The leadership and management of the nursery education programme is satisfactory. The leader has a clear vision of how she wishes the pre-school to progress and ensures that the curriculum offered to children is monitored, although this does not always reflect appropriate challenge for more able children. Staff work together to ensure that the needs of the children are met. However, the lack of staff appraisals means there are no formal systems to ensure they are monitored consistently or offered appropriate training. This impacts on the delivery of the curriculum.

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 provider was asked to provide further opportunities for children to develop independence. Children are able to take themselves to the toilet, to make choices in the activities they access, pour their own drinks and give out the biscuits at snack time. All of these contribute to children gaining independence each day.

At the last funded nursery education inspection the provider was given one point for consideration, which was to provide more opportunities for children to access Information

Communication Technology resources independently and on a regular basis. Children have access to a computer to gain knowledge of mouse control and work simple programmes and they frequently use battery operated equipment to enable their skills in this area to increase.

### **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 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 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):

- continue to develop the range of activities offered to children under three using supportive guidance, for example, the 'Birth to three matters' framework, to ensure that the needs of children are supported effectively enabling them to make appropriate progress in their learning
- ensure that children have access to a variety of experiences and resources that promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a level 2 qualification in childcare and ensure that the policies and information available to parents are regularly reviewed to ensure that any changes are implemented as needed.

#### **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):

- further develop the current planning system so that learning outcomes identified in short-term planning offer optimal levels of challenge and progression for individual children
- ensure that children have regular opportunities to practice their mark making skills and to create freely with their own purpose in mind
- increase staff's knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones towards the Foundation Stage of learning and ensure that appraisals are in place so the delivery of

nursery education is effectively monitored for all staff and to ensure that their learning needs are identified and met appropriately.

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)