



Little Bears Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	315244
Inspection date	06 February 2007
Inspector	Jane Shaw
Setting Address	St. Margarets Church Hall,, School Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA2 8ND
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Registered person	Wendy Green
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Bears Playgroup and Breakfast Club is organised and managed by a voluntary committee of parents, carers and staff. It first opened as a playgroup in 2000 and added the additional breakfast club to the registration in 2004. The provision operates from two rooms within St Margaret's Church Hall in Orford, Warrington in Cheshire.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The provision is open each weekday from 08.00 to 14.45, for 41 weeks of the year.

There are currently 64 children aged from two to under five years on roll within the playgroup, and 25 children attend the breakfast club. The provision serves the immediate locality, and children attending the breakfast part of the provision attend St Margaret's C of E Junior School.

The registered provider employs five members of staff to work within both provisions. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The setting receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is satisfactory overall, because staff have suitable routines and procedures in place to promote this aspect of children's care. For example, staff ensure that areas used by the children are clean and tidy before use. This includes the regular checking of the toilet areas and changing of towels throughout the day, the sanitising of tables prior to mealtimes and the regular cleaning of toys, equipment and premises, ensuring children's health. Children are aware of the need to wash their hands before, and after certain activities, such as after using the toilet, and use wet wipes to wipe their hands before meals. A written sick child policy was not available at the time of the inspection.

Children enjoy a range of healthy meals and snacks throughout their day. For example, children attending the breakfast club are offered healthy cereals, breads and fruits, and warm drinks during cold weather. Children attending during the day, enjoy a variety of fresh fruits at snack times, and a choice of milk or water. Children staying for lunch, bring a packed lunch from home. Staff try to encourage parents and carers to include healthy options in these, they also offer children fruit at this time. Children's independent access to drinking water throughout the day is not offered. Children both within the playgroup and those attending the breakfast club, are learning about the importance of healthy eating, through discussion, and activities where they consider what is good for them. Children enjoy snack and mealtimes, which are made into socially interactive occasions with staff sitting with children, encouraging and supporting them where necessary. Appropriate crockery is used, however, plates are not always made available at these times.

Although there is no access to a designated outdoor play space, staff provide a variety of opportunities to satisfactorily promote children's physical health. For example, children access a range of large play equipment to promote a variety of physical skills, such as climbing and balancing. Children also enjoy short walks within the locality, such as nature walks where they collect leaves, acorns and conkers for their work. During good weather children enjoy picnics and outdoor activities within the adjacent school grounds.

Staff have an awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, having access to written information and attendance on training. They understand the value of this when working with children of this age and plan to implement this in the very near future.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff make appropriate use of the available space, enabling children to experience a range of activities and opportunities. For example, children have access to areas that offer them access to, construction, role play, experimental play, and quiet areas for reading, relaxing, or watching

television. Rooms are prepared on a daily basis prior to the children's arrival ensuring they have play opportunities as soon as they arrive.

Children access a good range of age appropriate toys and equipment, and staff add to this range on a regular basis. Resources and play areas are regularly rotated and are used to support activities and children's enjoyment. Children have opportunities to make choices about their play and use of equipment as they self select toys from see through storage boxes. Children thoroughly enjoy this time, making informed decisions about their play and enjoyment. Toys and equipment are checked regularly for safety and hygiene to ensure children's safety at all times.

Children's safety is promoted because staff have a good understanding of the need to ensure their safety at all times, follow procedures, and use appropriate safety equipment, such as socket covers and high locks. Regular risk assessments are conducted by staff, and checks of areas used are completed each day before children arrive, ensuring their safety at all times. The manager liaises closely with the church hall committee to ensure safety aspects of the building are completed. For example, the checking of fire fighting equipment, and checking that gas and electrical installations are completed as legally required, ensuring children's safety at all times. Children are encouraged to develop an understanding of the need to keep themselves and others safe. For example, safety when being escorted to school and nursery, and the safe use of tools and equipment during activities. Staff are clear about children's safety, and conduct regular fire evacuations to ensure both children and staff responses are appropriate in the event of this occurring. Staff ensure children's safety in the event of an emergency, and have written procedures to follow in the event of particular incidents, however, an uncollected child procedure is missing.

In the main staff have a sound understanding of child protection policies and procedures, and are clear about their responsibility to the children in their care. A written child protection policy is in place, however, this does not include the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a range of activities and experiences, which are supported by their access to resources and staff interaction. Children are engaged in a variety of play experiences, for example, craft activities, role play, construction, and quieter activities, such as reading and story time. Children attending both the breakfast club and playgroup, enjoy activities that are age appropriate and supported by suitable toys and equipment.

Playgroup sessions are structured giving children opportunities to be involved in large and small group activities. Children attending the breakfast club have choices about their play from the activities available. Younger playgroup children also make choices about their play during the free play element of the session, where they self select toys from see through storage boxes.

Children are greeted warmly by staff as they arrive enabling them to settle and participate in the activities on offer, any children who may be unsettled are given good staff support, enabling them to participate and join in the activities when they feel ready to do so.

Children within the playgroup are excited as they join with staff in making play dough, taking turns to add flour to the bowl and mix with a spoon. Children make decisions about the colour of this, choosing both pink and orange.

Children recall their discussions with staff on hibernation, and are able to tell staff which animals sleep during the winter and why. They enjoy listening to, and joining in with their favourite book about a bear who didn't want to go to sleep for the winter.

Children join in with singing as they recall songs and rhymes and enjoy playing with the varied musical instruments. Children spend time in the book area sitting with one another quietly looking at books.

Staff support children's enjoyment and achievement well through their interaction with children. For example, younger children are encouraged to develop their imagination as staff join them in role play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are welcomed and included in the activities offered. Staff gather information on children's individual needs, enabling them to provide for each child. Children attending both before school and playgroup are developing an awareness of their own culture and that of the wider world, through access to a range of resources and activities. For example, children celebrate a variety of festivals from around the world, such as Chinese New Year and Easter, and access resources, which include small world play people, posters and a good range of books, which encourage the children to be aware of people's differences. A written equal opportunities is in place, however, this is limited in content.

Staff are aware of the children's individual needs and requirements and work closely with parents, carers and other professionals to support children with particular needs. A written policy, which details how the setting will work with children with learning difficulties or disabilities is not currently in place.

Children's behaviour is good. Children receive lots of positive praise for their efforts, attempts and achievements, which has a positive impact on their enjoyment and achievement. Staff work closely with, and interact with children in a positive and supportive way, and as a result children are developing self confidence. Children are polite, and are gently encouraged to develop an understanding of the need to share and take turns with toys and equipment.

Children's placements are supported by positive partnerships with parents and carers. They have access to some written information about the setting, along with regular verbal feedback as they collect their children. Parents and carers confirm that they are happy about what the setting offers their child, and find the staff supportive and approachable.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Checks are in place for all staff, therefore children are cared for safely. The manager is aware of the changes in regulation in terms of staff checks and has access to written information and procedures regarding the recruitment of new staff.

The required ratio of qualified staff is in place, with staff committed to the enhancement of their existing skills through the attendance of additional training. Training attended recently includes; food hygiene, 'Birth to three matters' and child protection. Staff work well with children, offering support and encouragement, however, the setting does not operate a key worker system. Sufficient staff work with the children during sessions, however, during the inspection, minimum staff ratios were not adhered to within the playgroup, when breakfast club children were escorted to school. This constitutes a breach in regulation.

Policies and procedures are in the main in place, however, some require developing or amending. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and appropriately maintained, with the exception of the accurate recording of hours of attendance of staff, visitors and children.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, a number of issues were identified as areas for improvement, which related to: staff knowledge of children's dietary needs; the formulation of a sick child procedure; increasing of the range of resources to enable children to explore and learn about the environment; the increased provision of resources to promote positive images of diversity, and maintaining a visitors' record, and recording the times of arrival and departure of all staff and children.

In the main these have been appropriately addressed, however, some items require further development.

There are effective procedures in place to ensure that staff are aware of children's individual dietary requirements, and where necessary appropriate arrangements are made to meet these needs. A sick child policy was not available at the time of this inspection, the formulation of an appropriate policy will be made a recommendation.

Children have access to a variety of resources and activities that help to promote their understanding of their environment. For example, children have regular nature walks and study different aspects of the environment, such as looking at hibernation and the seasons. They also have access to a variety of resources that help to promote children's understanding of diversity. For example, children celebrate festivals, such as Chinese New Year, and have access to a good range of toys and posters, and in particular books that look at differences.

Daily registers, which show the attendance of both children and staff, along with a separate visitors record are now in place, however, these do not show the actual hours of attendance. This is raised as a recommendation 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 a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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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 the organisation of snack and mealtimes, and provide access to drinking water throughout the session
- develop staff awareness of child protection procedures, and amend the policy to show the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer
- develop a key worker system
- amend or formulate policies in line with the National Standards and current legislation, in particular: sick child and uncollected child procedures, equal opportunities, and a learning difficulty or disability policy
- ensure minimum staffing ratios are maintained at all times.

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