



Little Owl Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY252361
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Inspector	Catherine Greenwood
Setting Address	Lancaster Hall, 28 Send Road, Send, Surrey, GU23 7AT
Telephone number	01483 2228609(eve)
E-mail	01483 212669 session time phone number
Registered person	Little Owl Play Group
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Out of School 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 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?

Little Owl Playgroup opened in 1966. It operates from a village hall in Send and has access to a kitchen, toilets and a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Children attend from Send and many surrounding areas. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 34 children aged from two to under five years on roll and of these, 14 children receive funding for early education. The playgroup currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disability.

The playgroup is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12.15, during term time only. Older children can access an extended lunchtime session until 13:00, one day a week. The playgroup employs six members of staff, of whom four are available to work with the children each day. Of these, five have an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. Each day there are indoor activities to help children develop control of their bodies. For example, they laugh with enjoyment as they take part in a large group parachute activity and shout encouragement to each other, as they try to keep the large inflatable ball on the parachute. Staff introduce different ways of using the parachute which makes the activity more varied. Children learn to balance as they use the small stilts. Planning shows evidence of objectives for children to develop their skills in climbing and balancing and there is a good range of resources available for inside and outside physical activities. Children show great enthusiasm as they develop skills in throwing and catching small balls, and follow staff instructions to hop like a rabbit and gallop like a horse as they run around the hall freely without collision. They develop good hand and eye co-ordination, for example, as they complete puzzles independently and use sticks to 'hook a duck' out of bowls of water. In addition, children are developing other fine motor skills when using the drawing and writing resources each day. Staff are on hand to show younger children how to hold pencils correctly.

Children have healthy snacks which include fresh fruit or carrot sticks and a choice of milk or water. However, they do not pour their own drinks or help to serve, and therefore do not improve their independence and self help skills. Water is not easily accessible throughout the session for children to help themselves. Children follow good hygiene practice as they wash their hands independently after using the toilet and before snack time. There are four staff with current first aid certificates which means that children receive appropriate treatment in the event of an accident. Children are protected from the risk of cross infection because staff have a good understanding of hygiene procedures.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are able to move around the premises safely, freely and independently because staff identify and minimise potential risks. Particular attention is given to safety and security. For example, once children have arrived, the main doors are locked and children are always accompanied to the toilets which are a short distance from the main play area. Staff complete a daily check of all areas of the premises and the well maintained play equipment to ensure they are safe for children to use. The outside play area is fully enclosed and secure, however, it is currently unsafe and a risk to children due to hazardous items being left there by other users of the premises. This means that children cannot use this area at the moment. Children are developing a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, for example, when asked, they remember that they are not allowed to run inside the hall. They are familiar with how to evacuate the building safely and sensibly as a large group and are therefore not at risk in the event of a fire. Records are kept of regular fire drills, although these need to be more detailed. Play equipment is safe, well maintained and meets children's individual needs. Children are kept safe on outings because parents always accompany the group and are responsible for their own children during these occasions. Children are well protected by staff who have a clear

understanding of child protection policies and procedures and give top priority to children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

On arrival at the nursery, children enter with enthusiasm and separate easily from their parents. They quickly choose an activity and are keen to use the resources, for example, they dress up as fairies, crawl through a play tunnel and tent and use the drawing stencils. This is because staff provide a wide range of different experiences for children and give them the necessary support and help to achieve their aims. Children are very settled and happy at the playgroup because staff consistently engage with the children, encourage them to take the lead within their play and choose their own activities and resources. This means that children learn to use their own initiative and develop good self confidence and personal independence. Close and caring relationships with staff increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. Children are very well behaved and form good relationships and friendships with each other. They play together co-operatively and enjoy each others company.

Staff gently encourage children to join in with large group activities, however, if they are involved with other things such as looking at books, or playing with others, they are given time to finish what they are doing and can continue. Children show enthusiasm for all activities, for example, as they paint large boxes and stick on crepe paper to make dragons heads, as part of a celebration of Chinese New Year. Children enjoy using what they have made to take part in a large group Dragon Dance and play musical instruments to accompany the music. Staff plan a wide variety of sensory experiences for children under three years such as looking spiders in jelly, using cars in the sand, playdough, cornflour, cooked spaghetti, water play, cooking activities, junk modelling, feely boxes, materials and pasta for collage activities, and painting. Children handle and explore resources such as a large tray of different buttons and are encouraged by staff to say how they feel. Consequently they extend their vocabulary and learn to use words such as soft, hard, rough, and smooth. However, activity planning for younger children is completed in relation to the Foundation stage curriculum and has not been adapted to incorporate the guidance for Birth to three matters. This means that objectives for younger children's learning does not always meet their individual needs, for example, their interest and attention is not always captured through large group discussions, such as when discussing the date and month.

During good weather, staff make very good use of the outside play area as a learning environment. For example, children develop their senses as they smell mint, rosemary and lavender they have grown in the garden. They particularly enjoy handling soil during planting activities, for example, as they decorate Wellington boots and plant them with marigold seeds. As part of this activity children learn to look after the seeds, water them and watch them grow. However, children do not have the opportunity to choose to play inside or outside during each session and the garden is not made regularly accessible at all times throughout the year.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Activity planning is excellent, with clear learning objectives that are related to the current topic. All staff contribute their own ideas for activities and receive a copy of the learning objectives before each term begins. Staff join children at the activities, show great interest in what they say and do, and ask appropriate questions that are related to the objectives for learning and the knowledge they have of children's individual progress. This means that children make good progress in all areas of learning. However, not all staff are observant of the spontaneous opportunities they can use to extend children's learning even further. Children are happy and interested in their environment, concentrate well at their chosen activities and play independently for long periods. They are very well behaved and co-operative. This is because staff use positive reinforcement methods, consistently praise children for their individual achievements and help them to understand how their behaviour affects others. Staff keep samples of children's work in folders as evidence of their achievements. They use their knowledge of children's progress to identify the next step for their individual learning. However, these records are not all kept up to date and do not cover all areas of learning within the Foundation Stage Curriculum.

Children show good pencil control and often use the accessible drawing and writing resources to make marks and draw pictures. Although some older and more able children can write their name, there are insufficient opportunities for all children to write for different purposes within all areas of play or use practical activities to learn letter formation. Children show an interest in books because staff sit and read to them individually in the book corner. They enjoy listening to large group stories, handle books with care and can recall and retell elements of the stories when asked. Children can count reliably, for example as they look at the animals on the Chinese New year card and can identify numbers at random whilst completing puzzles. More able children are developing knowledge of simple addition, for example they know that five and five make ten, when staff hold up numbers as part of large group discussion. Children have a good knowledge of size and can name which are the small and big ducks when asked by staff. They can name shapes such as diamond, circle, and square and are beginning to describe patterns when looking at books. Planning shows evidence of objectives for children to learn about shapes, symmetry and relating shapes to everyday objects. Children learn about life cycles, for example, through making their own indoor pond and using real frog sporn to watch and learn about how it changes into frogs. This learning is supported through visits to places such a local nature reserve where children can see frogs in their natural environment. Children learn about how worms live and burrow down through making their own wormery. In addition, they take part in activities such as making their own pretend indoor hide and badgers set and enjoy planting and looking after grasses, strawberries, tomatoes, runner beans and bulbs in the playgroup garden.

Children learn about different cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year, Diwali, Buddhism, Hanukkah and the story of Christmas through planned activities and interest tables. They take part in experiments such as making jelly, melting ice, and make windmills, string telephones and moving masks. Planning shows evidence of children learning about the Arctic and the Antarctic through topics such as Winter sports. Children develop good computer skills and can use the mouse and operate a simple programme with the support of a volunteer that comes to the playgroup once a week. However, the computer is not currently made accessible at all times

for them to practice what they have learnt. Children use construction resources such as the straws and the train set, however, there are too few accessible resources for them to build and construct on a large scale. Children paint freely and imaginatively at the easel and take part in adult led creative activities such as colouring in pre-cut dragons heads, and use glitter, glue, folded paper, and straws to make their designs. They scream with excitement as staff use hand puppets for rhyming activities and enjoy taking part in a large group singing sessions where they copy movements and play musical instruments. Planning show evidence of activities where children print bubbles , make Mothers day cards and animal masks, paint Easter eggs, and make hand puppets from socks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are greeted warmly on arrival and staff are observant and responsive to the choices they make about activities and play resources. They are very relaxed and at ease in the setting and move around freely and enjoy everything on offer. All children are welcomed and play a full part in the playgroup because staff value and respect their individuality. Children quickly follow the teachers instructions and respond with enthusiasm, for example during music and singing sessions. Staff consistently praise children for their individual achievements which means that children feel good about themselves and develop confidence. For example, staff use a stamp in the shape of a star on the children's hands for good work during the session. Children are very well behaved and co-operative and work together well on their own and in large and small groups. This is because staff use positive reinforcement methods and talk to children about the consequences of their behaviour. As a result children have a very good awareness of right and wrong. They form very good relationships with each other and staff, and negotiate well. Children welcome others involvement in their play, for example, when doing the puzzles they ask their friends to help them. Children learn about differences and the wider world through access to books and play equipment that reflect positive images of differences and take part in activities and projects about different celebrations. For example, planning shows evidence of making Chinese lanterns for the home corner, learning about special food and gifts used to celebrate New Year, tasting noodles and making Chinese New Year cards. Children particularly enjoy taking home items such as money purses as part of their celebration of this festival. Partnership with parents is good. Parents speak very positively about the setting, for example, they say that the playgroup is a very friendly fun environment, children are provided with varied activities, develop good social behaviour and are well cared for and happy. Children benefit from the good relationships and communication that staff have with parents. Staff communicate with parents in a friendly manner. Parents are welcomed into the setting and encouraged to become involved through a rota system where they help during each session. In addition, they volunteer to help with topics such as talking to the children about their own knowledge and experiences, for example about France, Spain and Diwali. Regular newsletters contain information about activities and topics. Parents have access to all policies and procedures which are clearly displayed in the entrance area. Staff share information about children's individual progress informally with parents on a daily basis. Information is available for parents to see about the Foundation Stage Curriculum. In addition, the manager has individual meetings with parents to explain about the aims for the playgroup in relation to children's learning and the Foundation Stage Curriculum. However, parents do not receive any written assessment

reports and there are no formal opportunities to meet with staff to discuss the progress that children are making in all areas of learning. This means there is no clear agreement about whether children are reaching their full potential. The playgroup provides excellent individual support for children who have learning difficulties and/ or disability. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to meet children's individual learning objectives. Consequently children are making good progress. There are currently no children attending the playgroup who have English as an additional language. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The environment is well organised, stimulating and welcoming, and good use is made of the available space. Children benefit from a structured routine, which includes time for physical activity and snacks as well large and small group sessions. All children have the opportunity to make their own independent choices from well organised accessible resources. This means that children are happy and secure in everything they do. Children enjoy having plenty of space to move around for physical activities such as organised movement sessions and when using the parachute, tent, tunnel and balls. Staff work together extremely well as a team and are motivated and clear about their responsibilities, which means children are happy and settled. Children benefit from the continuity of staff who have extensive experience in working with children and are dedicated to providing high quality care and education. Leadership and management are good. The manager works directly with staff and children and provides a very positive role model due to the way she engages with the children and responds to their individual needs. She has a clear ethos for the provision, clear expectations of staff practice and involvement, and a very good commitment to assessing and improving the quality of care and education for the children. As a result of clear self evaluation and identified targets for improvement, staff have introduced changes which have enabled children to make good progress, for example in relation to the clear learning objectives within activity planning for the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Staff provide a good range of interesting and well planned activities for all children and a wide range of experiences that are related to the guidance for the Foundation Stage Curriculum and Birth to three matters. Children's welfare is protected because the registered person ensures that staff are appropriately vetted. However, not all checks have been completed for the manager and the committee chairperson and some procedures and record keeping systems have not been updated, for example there is no system in place to record complaints. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the provider agreed to ensure that opportunities for children to play creatively are provided, ensure that the child protection policy is consistent with Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures and ensure the medication policy meets children's individual needs and that the complaints procedure includes the address and telephone number of the regulator. Children now have independent access to dressing up clothes which includes lots of different materials to create their own outfits, the home corner is changed according to the theme and has become a French café, an ice skating rink, a hide, an igloo or badger set.

In addition, children take part in regular large scale creative activities, sing, dance and play musical instruments. Child protection guidance and a copy of what to do if you're worried a child is being abused has been obtained and discussed with staff and made easily accessible. A statement has been put on the registration form to seek parental consent for children to receive emergency medical treatment and the complaints procedure now includes Ofsted details. This means that children's play opportunities and health and safety have been improved.

At the last education inspection, the provider agreed to improve the opportunities for children to develop self-help skills and health and bodily awareness, to lead activities, make independent choices and play imaginatively and plan the extension of some activities for more able children, particularly in the area of communication, language and literacy. The provider also agreed to introduce procedures for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery education. Children learn about healthy eating through projects where they take part in cooking activities and food tasting. Staff introduce discussion with children in small groups where they are encouraged to select items healthy items from a basket of food. The setting also plans a sports day and incorporates team games throughout the year. Children can now move around freely and access all activities and resources independently. Older and more able children are provided with better opportunities to make progress in relation to reading and writing as a result of the interest they show in copying and writing simple words. They are given more opportunities to complete creative activities with less adult direction and make their own decisions about their creative designs. The manager has devised an action plan which is consistently reviewed and used for discussion with staff to meet the care and educational needs of the children. Areas for improvement are recorded at each staff meeting and shared with committee members. This means that children's health, independence, creativity and literacy have been improved and the setting has taken steps to review and improve the quality of children's nursery education.

Complaints since the last inspection

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. 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 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):

- review and improve snack time, so that children can improve their independence and make water easily accessible throughout the session
- improve the opportunities for children to choose to play inside or outside during each session and make the garden accessible at all times throughout the year
- ensure necessary checks are completed for all committee members and the manager and devise a system to record any complaints

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 staff awareness of the spontaneous opportunities that they can use to join in children's play and ask questions to extend learning
- ensure that assessment records are kept up to date for all children and that the next step for their individual learning covers all areas of the Foundation Stage Curriculum
- provide formal opportunities for parents and staff to discuss children's progress and the next step for their individual learning

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