



## **Chequers Playgroup**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	254016
<b>Inspection date</b>	06 February 2007
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<b>Registered person</b>	Chequers Playgroup
<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 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?

Chequers Playgroup is run by a voluntary committee of parents and carers. It opened in 1964 and operates from a large room in the village hall in Hempnall, Norfolk. All children share access to a secure enclosed outside play area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.15 to 11.45 during school term times. On Monday and Friday an extended session is offered until 13.10 for children over the age of three years and also for children who are four years of age on Wednesday. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently 35 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 receive funding for early education. The playgroup serves the local area and surrounding villages.

The playgroup employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are learning the importance of personal hygiene through the pleasing support and guidance that the staff give them. They talk about why it is important to 'wash the germs off' before children eat their snack and colourful posters remind them to wash their hands after using the toilet. 'Toilet Teddy' encourages younger children to seek help, therefore, they are able to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene tasks from an early age. Children's health is appropriately safeguarded because the staff use an anti-bacterial spray on surfaces where food is served and they ensure snacks are prepared and lunch boxes stored in line with food hygiene requirements. Staff are trained to administer first aid treatment and parents have given their written permission to enable them to seek emergency medical care. As a result, children's well-being is assured as they are able to receive help quickly if they are seriously ill or injured.

Children's growth and development is well promoted. They are offered a variety of healthy options, such as toast, carrot sticks, apples, cherry tomatoes or raisins for their snacks so that they learn which foods they should eat to help them stay healthy. Children thrive because staff obtain details of their allergies before they provide care. They go to great lengths to ensure that children eat refreshments that are suitable by displaying a list of food that could damage their health in the snack bar area. Children meet their own health needs because they are able to help themselves to fresh drinking water from a small dispenser that is available throughout the session.

Children are developing a positive attitude to healthy living and they look forward to playing in the fresh air. Staff provide a valuable range of physical activities both indoors and outside to encourage children to use up their surplus energy. For instance, they greatly enjoy throwing balls, walking on stilts and crawling around the hamster wheel. Children are learning about the effect that exercise has on their bodies by listening to their heart beating rapidly after they have been active and staff remind them to take frequent drinks if the weather is hot.

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

The provision is good.

Children come in happily and quickly separate from their carers because they receive a warm welcome from the staff. The use of background music is particularly soothing to the younger children who easily settle to play. The staff work hard to transform the large hall into a child-centred environment by decorating the walls with attractive posters and displays of art work to help children to become emotionally secure. However, the layout of equipment does not sufficiently break up the large area and prevent them from running or pedalling wheeled toys around the tables and floor play areas. As a result, children's safety is not fully assured and those who wish to play quietly or concentrate are unable to stay relaxed.

Children independently access a stimulating range of good quality toys that are safe and complete. They can play freely with minimum risk of hurting themselves because the staff regularly check the resources and remove items if they are damaged or broken. The adults show children how to use equipment, such as stilts and scissors, safely and ask them to help tidy up so that they keep others safe. Children's safety is a priority. Staff are vigilant to assess risks before the start of each session and they take immediate action to minimise any identified hazards. For example, they secure the kitchen with a safety gate and, on occasions when the outside fence has been vandalised, they position an adult in front of the gap to ensure children cannot leave unnoticed. Children are learning to be responsible for their own safety by practising regular fire drills so that they are confident to escape safely and quickly in an emergency.

Children are very well protected from 'stranger danger' because they are never left alone with people who have not been vetted. Staff use the valuable 'Come and Tell Me' book to help children learn that they must always tell someone who they are with and where they are going to fully safeguard their welfare. Staff are guided by a comprehensive child protection policy and they demonstrate that they are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of children at risk. Local Safeguarding Children Board contact details are kept to hand so that staff may take action as soon as they have concerns, therefore, children are protected from the risk of possible harm.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy and they get on well with the staff who are consistently kind and caring in their approach to them. The generous staffing ratio allows children to have frequent individual support with adults providing gentle reassurance by quietly comforting them. Therefore, they come in eagerly and show self-assurance from a very early age. Staff join in with play to show that they are interested in what children are doing and make very pleasing use of questions, such as 'What colour?' or 'How many?' to develop learning opportunities. As a result, children are making good progress.

Children build on their existing skills as the staff teams make commendable use of 'Birth to three matters' to provide a balanced programme of child-led and focused activities. Children are allocated a key worker from the time that they come into the playgroup, therefore, the staff have very realistic expectations of their abilities. They encourage children to make an active contribution to the session by initiating play and choosing resources from items that are set out or stored at their level. They take great care with their work as the staff make effective use of praise and encouragement. For example, young children persevere with the challenge of covering a large board with bright paints, continuing until the entire area is covered.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children achieve well in all areas of their learning because staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They provide a rich learning environment together with a programme of varied activities that are ably matched to the early learning goals. The planning cycle is robust. Staff discover children's starting points when they first come into playgroup and continue to monitor the children as they play. The staff skilfully

use their findings to identify the next steps in learning for each child and produce detailed plans that support them to do things that extend their capabilities.

Children have a positive attitude to learning and they work together well. They are willing to share and take turns and politely ask each other 'Can I borrow some blue please?' as they paint. Children show increasing confidence and are eager to offer visitors 'a cup of tea' to involve them in their role play. Some are content to work at their own self chosen task but, when they play together, children chat confidently and are able to make their needs known. They respond to questions eagerly and most wait for adults to finish speaking before they answer. Children enjoy books and often self-select from the excellent range of fiction and reference books that are attractively set out at their level. They handle books carefully and begin to use them for pleasure. Children are helped to understand that there is a purpose for written text through the effective use of labels in words and pictures. They have consistent opportunities to recognise their own names within routine activities, such as at registration and snack time.

Older children can reliably count to 14 and beyond and they are encouraged to recognise numerals through planned activities. They enjoy number rhymes and staff promote learning by holding up their fingers and asking 'What comes next?' However, there are insufficient opportunities within daily activities for children to practise problem solving and simple calculation, such as 'one more' or 'one less', to extend their mathematical skills. Children measure and compare as they weigh the pasta in the Chinese restaurant and show pleasing hand to eye co-ordination as they pour it from one container to another. They use a valuable range of tools to develop their manipulative skills and skilfully place pegs or geometric shapes on to a board. Children negotiate the vast indoor space well as they move around the hall during planned physical play. They show increasing control over their bodies as they stop and change direction with ease or crawl through the long tunnel.

Children have effective opportunities to learn about the natural world as they examine insects and plants when they visit a local garden. They explore their multi-cultural society by taking part in planned topics and looking at the many positive images in the reference books. Children make good use of their local community through visits from people who help them, such as the local vet and vicar. They are taken to the school to meet their teachers and choose books from the mobile library but they particularly enjoy singing for the elderly residents of the Mill Centre. Children are encouraged to use technology to support their learning and efficiently use push button phones and calculators as they pretend to work in the 'office'. They have access to a laptop computer to further extend their skills and competently control the mouse or navigate around the keyboard.

Children's creative skills are very well promoted and they are responsible for their work from beginning to end. They enthusiastically use paint and drawing materials and are given a sense of pride in their work because it is displayed to decorate the hall. Children's imagination is well fostered through the varied use of the role play area. They freely express their ideas and feelings as they serve customers in the fruit and vegetable shop or care for their pets in the vet's surgery. Children develop their senses by feeling the different textures of compost, collage materials or 'gloop' and they relish producing rainbow pictures from paint that they have spread over the table tops.

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

The provision is good.

Children feel at home in the playgroup because the staff have a positive approach and welcome families from all backgrounds. They help children to feel good about themselves and encourage them to show a caring attitude towards each other by sensitive use of praise, frequently saying 'Well done!' 'Wow!' or 'That's super!' Children's individual needs are robustly met because of the effective verbal communication between their parents and the staff. They are learning to respect diversity by accessing books, dolls and puzzles to encourage them to discuss other cultures, role reversals and age differences.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They make friends easily and have planned opportunities to learn about the faiths and beliefs of others through celebrating the Chinese New Year, Christmas and Halloween. Most children behave very well but staff handle challenging behaviour in a consistent and positive manner. They get down to the children's level so that they can see their face and quietly explain 'we don't play roughly as it may smash' to prevent toys being thrown. All staff are positive role models and their calm, very polite responses help children to manage their own behaviour. Children know what is expected of them because the staff remind them to look at the playgroup rules which are clearly displayed in words and pictures and use praise to reward good behaviour so that it is repeated. As a result, children are learning right from wrong.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities receive appropriate support to meet their specific needs because the staff are quick to recognise any developmental delay. Children's individual needs are identified by their parents before care is provided and there are procedures in place to guide staff if they appear not to be making progress. The member of staff nominated to co-ordinate care for children having special needs has accessed relevant training and is able to work closely with parents and other agencies to develop individual care plans. Consequently, all children receive worthwhile support to help them to participate to the best of their ability.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are able to access a well developed prospectus and a comprehensive policy pack that fully explain the care and education that is provided by the playgroup. Parents exchange information informally as children are delivered or collected and there are planned opportunities to share their children's developmental records. For example, learning stories are sent home at the end of each term so that carers can include skills that have been learnt at home. As a result, parents say that they know how their children are getting on. They feel pleased with the quality of care and education that the playgroup provides and state 'my child's happy here so I'm happy'. Parents say 'the staff are good with the children' and 'there are lots of different activities to choose from'. This supportive partnership between parents, carers and staff significantly contributes to the overall good quality care and education that children receive.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being cared for by staff who understand how they develop and are committed to ongoing training. For example, they are keen to access short courses to ensure

that their knowledge and skills are up to date and some are currently working towards a relevant early years qualification. The staff communicate effectively and work well together as a team to provide a happy learning environment. They organise the available space so that children can make choices but the layout of the equipment does not fully promote their safe movement around the hall. Children have time to be active, to concentrate or take part in quieter activities and the well established daily routine provides plenty of variety to hold their interest.

All legally required documentation is in place to promote the welfare and care of the children. The robust attendance records ensure staff are always aware of who is present so that all adults and children are kept safe in an emergency. Staff are guided by a comprehensive range of policies or procedures that are specific to the setting and regularly updated, therefore, the playgroup operates effectively.

The leadership and management is good. The organising committee follows thorough recruitment procedures to ensure that they employ skilled staff who are appropriately vetted. Robust induction practices help newly appointed staff obtain a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that they quickly become an effective team member. The annual appraisal system ensures that all staff continue to have valuable support and guidance. It enables the committee to monitor the effectiveness of the setting and helps the staff to maintain their enthusiasm to plan, deliver and monitor the educational programme. In addition, staff and committee members meet together each month to review the provision and address any perceived weakness. For example, they are currently working to ensure that staff training is up to date, to fully develop the operational plan and improve the outside play area. As a result, children's welfare and learning is very effectively supported. The playgroup is guided by clear aims and objectives that enable staff to provide a secure and stimulating learning environment as evidenced by the good progress that children are making towards the early learning goals.

Overall, children's needs are met.

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

At the last care inspection the playgroup was recommended to change the structure of the session from snack time onwards to eliminate waiting times for hand washing and putting on coats. They were asked to implement an alternative system for storing coats and to include contact details for Ofsted in the complaints policy.

Children do not wait to wash their hands because staff have introduced a cafeteria style snack bar so that they can choose when to take a break from their play. As a result, children can freely access the hand basins, serve themselves quickly and spend more time engaged in play. Low-level hooks have been provided in the main hall to enable children to easily find their coats and boots, therefore, they spend much less time waiting to dress for outside play. Children are safeguarded as the complaints policy contains full contact details for Ofsted to ensure that their parents and carers can make their concerns known.

At the last inspection of early years education the playgroup agreed to increase opportunities for children to make marks in every day situations and to use the assessments and evaluation of focused activities to inform planning.

Writing materials, such as pens, pencils and felt tipped crayons are provided at every session, especially within the role play areas. Children enjoy making marks in the diaries that are provided in the 'office' and 'doctor's surgery' to develop their early writing skills. Consequently, some form recognisable letters and older children begin to write their names. Staff meet each half term to discuss their evaluations of focused activities from the previous planning cycle. They identify gaps in children's learning by using the 'next steps' from their learning stories and staff draw all information together to produce future plans. Therefore, children's progress towards the early learning goals has improved because activities target their developmental needs and help them to go beyond their current capabilities.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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

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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the space is managed effectively to meet the children's needs with particular reference to promoting their safe movement around the hall.

#### **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):

- increase opportunities within daily activities for children to practise problem solving and simple calculation to further develop their mathematical skills.

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)