



Vicarage Hill Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219072
Inspection date	08 December 2005
Inspector	Diane Mary O'Neill
Setting Address	36a High Street, Flitwick, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK45 1DU
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Registered person	Vicarage Hill Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Vicarage Hill Playgroup registered in 1992 and operates from the Brotherhood hall in Flitwick Bedfordshire. The building is a single story building in the middle of the town of Flitwick. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each week day term time only from 09.30 to 12.00 or 13.30 in the summer term only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 25 children aged from 2 and a half to under 5 years on roll. Of these 11 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from the local area. The playgroup currently supports a number of children who have special educational needs, but does not support any children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs four staff. Two of the staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a recognised child care qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to learn importance of personal hygiene through the playgroups daily routines. Children have opportunities to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. However, staff are not always vigilant in changing the hand washing water, so children's health is therefore, at risk of potential cross infection.

Children's health and hygiene is maintained through procedures of exclusion for certain forms of illness. If children are taken ill then staff ensure they are made comfortable until such time they are collected. First aid and emergency procedures are well documented in the appropriate forms which are signed by the parents. Some of the staff hold first aid certificates, so they ensure all incidents are dealt with effectively. There is a sufficient awareness of practice and procedures to ensure any accidents are dealt with appropriately ensuring the best interest of the children are maintained at all times.

Children usually have a good variety of snacks, including fresh fruit, toast and in cold weather a warm drink. The children are encouraged to pour their own drinks and help themselves to the snack. This helps to build their confidence and independence. Snack times are also a very social occasion where the children have opportunities to tell the staff and each other about things they may have been doing.

Children enjoy a suitable and stimulating range of equipment to promote a healthy life and their physical development. These includes opportunities for children to explore, experiment and develop their physical skills in a supervised environment such as, pulling themselves up on the climbing frame and learning to balance as they walk along this equipment. Children clearly enjoy using the garden on most days to use their energy and imagination. This activity produces lots of laughter and interaction with one another as they run around, enjoy playing on the sit and ride toys. Children are given support from the staff who are on hand to guide and assist when required. Inside the playgroup children have opportunities to use their finer movement skills such as building, playing in the sand and painting. The children clearly enjoy climbing on the climbing frame and exploring the hanging Christmas decorations .

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's safety is at times put at risk because staff do not ensure that all of the premises are free of hazards and that all required safety precautions are in place. During the inspection it was noted that the area concealing gas bottles was not secure or safe nor was an outside drain. The playgroup has written risk assessments in place. However staff do not sufficiently monitor and assess all the risks within the setting to ensure children's overall safety and well-being. Staff practice evacuation procedures with all the children on a regular basis. Fire notices are on display for everyone to see.

Children have access to a suitable range of toys and equipment that are generally safe and age appropriate. These are organised throughout the playgroup and some are stored in child height storage units to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. The inside play space is spacious, bright, airy and children's work is displayed on the walls. The children are happy and relaxed within this environment. Outside the children have suitable access to a fully enclosed area that is monitored at all times by staff. Within this area the children have a variety of equipment that enables all areas of their physical development to be explored.

Most of the staff do not have a secure knowledge of child protection signs and symptoms, nor have they undertaken training for a number of years, therefore children in their care are not fully protected. However the playgroup leader has completed training and attended case conferences where she has met with other professionals. The playgroup has all relevant guidance should they need to report concerns to the relevant agencies.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enter the playgroup confidently, happily and generally settle quickly. Staff are on hand to give reassurance to any children who are unsettled. They develop a sense of belonging in the playgroup by beginning to be aware of the daily routine such as 'tidy up time'. However at times the children do not know the routine to follow as staff do not make it clear. They know to sit at the tables when it is snack time and to put on their coats when going out to play. Children enjoy choosing activities and materials, for example getting coloured paper to make a picture, painting their hands and creating their own work. Children develop independence, for example when pouring out their drinks and when choosing play materials. They confidently access the range of activities and are beginning to form secure relationships with staff and the other children. Staff do not have an awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework which limits their ability in planning and providing resources and activities for the younger age group.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Staff have some knowledge of the

Foundation Stage and plan a limited range of activities to cover areas of learning. Children are not sufficiently challenged in their learning due to staff's weakness in their methods of planning.

There are limited systems in place to record and assess children's achievements. These are inconsistently completed, resulting in ineffective planning for the children's learning. Therefore, children are not always appropriately challenged.

Children are confident speakers and listeners they have access to a suitable selection of large and small books which they share with an adult and with each other. They use mark making during practical activities and are beginning to recognise letters that are familiar to them. For example, their own name on their name cards. There are also pictures on these to help the younger and not so confident children recognise their card. They talk about their own lives and experiences and are beginning to develop their independence when managing their own needs. They use different media creatively to support their learning. For example, playdough with Christmas cutters, creating their own style of painting.

Children's imagination is developed through opportunities to use role play of everyday situations, such as at the doctors, restaurant and food shop. Children enjoy singing songs at song time and equally enjoy creating their own music. For example, singing songs with the bells that were available. Children at times use mathematical experiences within their play for example, playing shops, doing jigsaw puzzles. They have some opportunities to access play materials to help their learning. However staff are not planning or using equipment effectively to progress children's learning.

Children show curiosity and wonder when exploring the Christmas decorations within the playgroup. They also use binoculars and cameras to develop their imaginary play and exploration skills. However, staff do not always enhance the children's learning by extending questions to them. Although children have very few opportunities to learn about festivals and other cultures and do not sufficiently progress in their information technology skills. Staff do not effectively plan or use activities to support children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children attend from a variety of backgrounds and are warmly welcomed into the playgroup. They have limited access to a suitable range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity. Staff do not always plan to use the resources productively to support children's learning.

Children's behaviour can vary considerably within the playgroup. Staff support and awareness of situations is not always effective in reducing some incidents. Children are beginning to learn about boundaries and sharing of equipment with their peers. Staff are able to deal with situations in a calm and caring manner. All children are valued and respected as individuals and their needs are suitably maintained. However, there is no key worker system in place so the recording of children's

achievements is limited.

Children with special educational needs are supported adequately by staff who have a sound understanding of their role. They share information with parents and seek the involvement of other professionals to meet the children's individual needs.

Children are generally polite and well mannered when engaged in group activities such as snack time. This encourages discussion and a social time. Staff and children show good levels of respect and consideration towards each other. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from a stable partnership with parents. Staff liaise closely with parents regarding the care of their children and their wishes are respected. However, there is no formal recording of their children's progress or achievements, for parents to gain a clear picture of how they can extend learning at home for their children.

The playgroup has a complaints procedure in place. They are not fully aware of the addendum to the National Standards, in relation to the recording of complaints. Therefore parents and carers are not fully informed of the processes and issues relating to this.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care and learning is compromised at times due to the poor organisation and deployment of staff and leadership and management within the playgroup. The staff have considerable limited knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage Curriculum which effects the learning potential for children in their care.

The premises are organised to ensure the indoor and outdoor space is organised to ensure that children have play opportunities and enjoy activities that will enhance their development and learning. When children arrive and they are keen to participate in the playgroup and freely move around talking to staff and their peers. Staff at times work well as a team, moving with the flow of the children where they can actively involve themselves in the children's play.

The setting has some records and documents which ensure children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their child's care. Some of the required documentation is well organised and in place to support the management and running of the setting. There are informative notice boards and leaflets for parents as well as day to day communication to share information about their children.

The Leadership and management is inadequate. Staff do work as a team and regular staff meetings are held. The playgroup does not have suitable systems for clear planning, observations and assessment records for the children. This limits how children's learning can be challenged and extended through a variety of activities within the playgroup and with parents at home.

Staff are limited in their knowledge and understanding of child development as well as their understanding and knowledge of 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage Curriculum to enable them to extend, challenge and further enhance children's learning and development. This failure to have suitable planning, assessment and recording systems in place means the children's care and education is being compromised. Overall the provision does not meet the needs of the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the playgroup was asked to ensure an adequate temperature is maintained at all times. There are now more gas heaters suitably housed ensuring safety within the play room making it warmer for the children and staff. They were asked to include the address and telephone number of the regulator in the complaints procedure. This has now been added to their policy. They were asked to observe and record what children do to plan the next steps in children's play and learning. The playgroup staff have made insufficient progress in this area. Their observation and recording process is not consistent and does not enable them to fully follow the learning progress of the children to enable them to plan their next steps.

Under the Nursery Education part of the inspection, the playgroup was asked to introduce appropriate written plans, assessment and records of children's progress towards the early learning goals, appropriate to their developmental age. The staff do not have effective planning in place, nor do they use an appropriate systems to record children's progress within the early learning goals to challenge children's learning and move them forward in their development.

They were also asked to provide detailed information to the parents on the setting and work in partnership with them in gathering information about their children, and sharing information on their child's achievements and progress towards the early learning goals. As well as encouraging the parents to be involved in their children's learning and provide them with advice and information on the Foundation Stage. The playgroup has not devised a detailed information system for the sharing of information to parents. They just receive verbal confirmation of their child's progress within the playgroup. However there is no system to ensure learning practices can continue at home. The playgroup management stated it had thought about having parent's evenings and sending an information sheet home. This practice has not been implemented as yet.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted 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.

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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):

- further develop staffs knowledge and understanding and planning of activities to help children's development using the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- further develop staffs knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures
- ensure complaints procedure contains a robust system for sharing of information with parents
- ensure children's health is promoted by good hygiene practices with regards hand washing
- ensure that risk assessments identify areas of concern within the playgroup with regards to the gas bottles and outside drain.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- introduce written plans, assessments and records of children's progress towards the early learning goals, appropriate to their developmental age
- develop the planning and staffs knowledge to ensure all aspects of the curriculum are covered, giving due emphasis in relation to mathematical learning and children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Ensure planned activities provide suitable challenges for all children
- further develop a robust system for sharing of children's information, achievements and progress within the early learning goals to enable parents to extend learning at home.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk