



Brereton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	304989
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Registered person	Brereton Playgroup Committee
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

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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?

Brereton Playgroup is run by a parent committee employing one qualified manager and one assistant to work with children. It opened in 1983 and operates in a small purpose built play building within the grounds of Brereton Infant and Junior School. A maximum of 12 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each week day during term time from 09.00 to 12.00 and for two afternoons, 13.00 to 15.30, for the two terms before children start school. All children share

access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and also to the playgrounds and fields belonging to the school.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area as the locality is rural. The nursery is not currently supporting any children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup committee employs two members of staff. Of these, one holds an appropriate early years qualification. There is also a parent helper at each session.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because practitioners employ a thorough knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, parent helpers and staff wash and rinse all crockery used, wear gloves and aprons for food preparation and keep surfaces and toilet areas very clean throughout sessions. Staff vigilantly ensure that children wash hands, blow noses and dress appropriately for cold or hot weather. In addition, all children have their own clean plate, cup and cutlery for snacks and can also bring in their own personal cup for drinks throughout the session. These practices show that adults are fully committed to providing a healthy play environment.

Staff make time for children to become as independent as possible in taking care of their own hygiene. They encourage and remind them to use the toilets and basins, soap and paper towels which are all provided within the purpose built playgroup room. Staff talk to children purposefully about why hygienic procedures are adopted. This means that children aged three and four know where to find tissues to blow their noses and place tissues in the bin after use. They also know that they all bring cardigans and sun hats because they will be playing outside in the summer weather and need protection from the elements.

Children enjoy very regular physical activity outside throughout the year, using the small tarmac area or the large school playing fields and playgrounds when these are not in use by school children. They play imaginary games and utilise large balls, hoops and small bean bags to practise their sports day races. They often undertake sand, water, experimental, growing and role play activities outside, so that the curriculum is extended for outside, all year round use. There are also regular trips out to Brereton heath to look at the nature there. These activities nurture children's sense of space, ability to control their bodies and ability to use small equipment.

Accidents are dealt with kindly and practically by staff who have first aid qualifications. A cold compress and tender loving care are applied when a child falls over outside and grazes her hand. An accident form is subsequently completed and

parents are fully informed of the details and sign the form. A robust system is also in place for consent to and recording any necessary medication, but this has not recently been required.

Children are very well nourished and enjoy a healthy balanced diet because snacks and drinks given in the setting are healthy and without added sugar. For example, children eat pita bread, ham and tomatoes at snack time, with milk or water to drink. Staff are well organised, so that parent helpers prepare snacks efficiently, but they do not involve three and four-year-olds in laying the table and serving. Nevertheless, good manners at the table are promoted and children enjoy the social aspect of meal times, talking amongst themselves and with staff. A display called 'Feed me better' illustrates a number of good fruits and vegetables which are numbered so that children can be referred to them when doing number work too. This provides children with ongoing opportunities to learn about healthy eating and three and four-year-olds' understanding of this is good.

Children's health and dietary needs are efficiently met because practitioners are well organised to elicit any information about special dietary needs at the beginning of placement through enrolment forms. This information is summarised on contact sheets for children held on the register, so that all staff and any emergency services can have access to the information.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, bright, welcoming, secure and safe environment. The room is well organised and comfortable, with toilets that are partitioned off within the room, so that children move around the setting with confidence and do not need to leave the room. This welcoming accommodation is well used by experienced staff to very successfully promote children's emotional wellbeing because areas are homely, well labelled and very stimulating. Skilful use of soothing music helps children to settle down to free choice activities upon arrival. There are activity areas, posters, wall displays, labels and photographs everywhere to capture children's interest and imagination. These are used to remind children of stories and themes which they are learning about. For example, the role play hospital is labelled and set out to support the 'people who help us' theme and children are now changing the area into a police station, making black bars to put up at the windows.

Children use innovative and stimulating resources which are clean and purchased from reputable sources. These resources contribute significantly to children's enjoyment and achievement and are well set out for children to access freely. Resources are mostly kept in storage boxes which are labelled with words and pictures to aid children's letter and word recognition. This means that children can help with most aspects of tidying away. Equipment is suitable and safe so that all children benefit from appropriately sized chairs, tables, work tops, sand and water trays and ride on toys. There are also floor cushions, a laptop computer and an indoor climbing frame sometimes available for physical play.

There is excellent security to the one entrance door which has a high hook so that

only staff let people in. All gates to the building are secured with a hook and chain. The register is marked as children and staff arrive and a total of children and adults is chalked onto a board for viewing at a glance to check numbers. Written permission must be given by parents if anyone other than the parent or carer is collecting a child and staff are very vigilant to ensure that collection is only by those known and authorised to do so.

Staff are vigilant to ensure that children move about safely within the setting and with increasing responsibility for themselves. For example, children do not run, they move chairs safely and put them back under tables when they get up to move on. Staff keep areas clean, dry and safe throughout sessions and remind children of how to carry things safely. For example, a staff member takes one handle of a basket full of bean bags, so that the child can manage the other handle and they carry the basket in together. Another child is reminded not to run with the hoops she is carrying. These procedures show that there is a strong emphasis upon children's safety.

Parent permission is sought for using photographs in a variety of ways within playgroup, so that parents can be very specific about what uses pictures of their child can be put to. Parents also usually accompany their child on trips and an adult-to-child ratio of one-to-two is assured. Parents complete permission slips if they are not going to be there. Children learn to keep themselves safe when out walking on foot and in cars because there are regular local trips to places, such as, Brereton heath and the library. They learn about road safety and staff make use of the Tuffy club information and resources to teach about this. Children are also confident about what to do and where to go if there was a fire at playgroup or at home because the fire officer has been to see them. Children's safety is assured as a result of all these measures.

Children are well protected from abuse because staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. The supervisor has been on recent child protection training. Staff are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation being made against them and know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. They are proactive in organising ways to teach children appropriately about stranger danger and they record previous injuries. However, they do not display up to date reference information about child protection and the policy does not contain sufficient detail for parents to be fully informed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children are developing a sound level of confidence and self esteem because leaders listen to them, ask questions of them and have high expectations of what they can achieve. They happily come into playgroup and hang up their coats and go straight to play, seeking out the supervisor to tell her their news. Children are usually happy, settled and interested in what they are doing because the supervisor is committed, enthusiastic and well prepared. She plans activities carefully to cover all the Areas of Learning and is able to give many children one to one time because

maximum numbers in the pre-school are one dozen. For example, older children play one to one with the supervisor doing a quiz using large playing cards to learn about lesser and greater numbers. However, use of the Birth to three matters framework is underdeveloped and not all staff and parent helpers talk consistently to children enough during play to really extend their vocabulary, number understanding, concept of shape, imagination and creativity. For example, assistants sometimes miss opportunities to question, challenge and develop children's understanding and experiences as they play. This reduces children's enthusiasm and slows their acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are generally good because staff know children well and know what they can do. They watch and assist children giving clear instructions, for example, about how to make their string pictures or how to complete the race to put the beanbags into the hoop. Challenges are tailored to children's individual stages of development so that they take the next steps in their learning. For example, staff assist some children with extra help to use scissors and challenge other children for ideas on how to fix the cardboard bars they are cutting to the role play walls.

Children are very involved and usually respond well to one another and the challenges presented to them. They comfortably play alongside one another and form friendships as they show one another how to find fishes with their magnetic rods. Relationships are cemented when staff and children sit together in circle time and share handshakes, hugs and smiles, each one passing them on to the child next to them. Children have good opportunities to create and represent because staff have successfully planned a wide range of stimulating activities within the current themes of 'people who help us'. Children can also role play a variety of domestic situations using good quality home role play equipment, such as, ironing board, washing machine and cooking utensils and pans. However, children do not have much adult input into their role plays to fully extend their ideas.

Children's opportunities to investigate are adequate because areas are well set out to allow children to choose their own learning and the supervisor takes many opportunities to talk about the world around us. For example, they look at how tall their bean plant is growing, what the woodlouse looks like that was on the floor or how the wind is blowing the doors and the various wind chimes which they have made. However, no sand or water or free painting is available on the day and there are no binoculars or magnifiers out with which to investigate things.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere, a varied programme of activities covering all the areas of learning and an approach which fosters good relationships, self-confidence, good social behaviour and high levels of independence. Children understand what behaviour is expected of them and are making sound progress in most areas of learning. This is because the supervisor is successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. This underpins children's ability to learn because it gives them self-confidence and a desire to learn new skills.

Supervisory staff have a thorough understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn. They are planning and evaluating a broad range of activities according to themes and constantly question and challenge children to promote their development. They record evidence of what children can do under each area of learning and know what areas to concentrate upon to meet children's needs for their next steps. However, assistants are not involved in planning, evaluations or recording children's progress and are unclear about what children need to learn from the activities on offer. In addition, information about individual children's development needs is not clearly passed to all assistants and written plans are not tailored to reflect these needs. As a result, some adults lack purpose in their interactions with children, tend to concentrate upon health and safety aspects and therefore do not maximise children's learning and development.

The supervisor presents activities to children in a way that truly interests them and helps them to focus, persist and resist distraction. For example, stories are presented in an interactive way, with questions and links to the themes and relevant day to day happenings. She also asks questions about number, shape, colour and position as children move about the setting and she challenges them to complete self care and tidying up tasks for themselves, so that they learn how to share, work together and respect each other. Providers have some knowledge about children upon entry which is based upon effective verbal communication with parents by the supervisor. However, parents are not regularly updated with evidence or updates about their children's progress through playgroup, only being presented with development profiles at the end of their child's playgroup career.

Children's progress is best in Mathematical development. This is because the supervisor creates excellent opportunities for children to acquire and practise counting, calculating and using concepts of shape, space and measure. She does this through questions and use of visual cues around the room both on the walls and within the activities set out. She refers to furniture by shape and colour too, so that children are familiar with mathematical language and are comfortable with numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world, communication, language and literacy, physical development, and creative development are sound. Staff ensure that children have daily opportunities to explore and investigate and to use tools to create and manipulate objects. They learn about many cultural festivals and about their own community as they experience stories, crafts, celebrations and events which explore their locality and the wider world. A leavers service is just one opportunity for them to link their playgroup experience of creativity, music, physical exercise and language skills to their experience of family and community life.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children join in, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting because the warm environment and friendly staff enable them to feel at home from the outset. Children are greeted at the door with their parents and all children start the day together with free play. Some aspects of the sessions then promote

children's sense of belonging and responsibility for themselves and others as they play. For example, children are given responsibility to help with tidying away and carrying equipment out for sports day practise. However, there are no special helpers for the day and there is minimal involvement with tasks such as preparing for snacks. Nevertheless, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are various books, dolls, play figures and games which show positive images of culture and special need. Activities using food tasting, crafts, photos and role play have helped to bring festivals, such as, Chinese New year, Harvest festival, Diwali and the Queen's birthday to life for children. Posters or pictures are also used which show people from other cultures and key words in various languages.

Children's individual needs are met well when experienced staff use their time to encourage children with concentration, behaviour, language or other particular needs to join in with group activities. Staff model appropriate play skills and use short and simple language. They make it easier for children to conform when they praise wanted cooperation and ignore non-participation, although this is not always made sufficiently obvious for children to respond quickly. Adults are committed to inclusion for all children and are willing to keep up to date by undertaking relevant training. They liaise well with parents and relevant professionals to ensure that they plan and work together using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit any children with emerging special needs. Regular assessments and evaluations are thoroughly conducted by the supervisor to ensure that children who have particular needs make as much progress as possible and are taught in an effective way.

Most children behave well and understand responsible behaviour because staff are vigilant and interested in teaching children how to behave well and consider others. Staff use positive discipline and give clear instructions so that children understand what is expected of them and good manners are taught. Children confidently go to staff for help to resolve disputes when they occur. However, the incident record is not sufficiently utilised to record significant incidents involving unwanted behaviour and/or physical intervention, so that the actions of children and staff are not fully documented or explained. This adversely affects children and staff and hampers openness in working with parents. In addition, policies for behaviour and equal opportunities do not explain in sufficient detail what the playgroup responsibilities and methods are. This means that parents are poorly informed and cannot support their child consistently alongside the playgroup in these areas.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children receive consistency of care because the supervisor communicates well verbally with parents. She is approachable, interested and makes time to speak to them. Parent information leaflets about the provision are adequate and cover the terms, conditions, and procedures of the playgroup. Newsletters and notices keep parents well informed about fund raising events and half termly activity plans and the learning intentions of these. They also request items to support children's learning, for example, about the letter of the week. The parent notice board gives some information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework. However, parents have little knowledge of the curriculum which their child is following and do not know the main elements which have been covered in a session. They are not

given suggestions for activities at home. There are photo albums charting some of the significant events which take place, but these are not annotated to show what children are learning or what Stepping Stone the activity was meeting. These omissions limit parents' ability to understand how their child is learning and their ability to be involved in building upon their child's learning at home.

Parents mostly express satisfaction with their children's progress and the quality of the setting and staff. They find their children are happy and settle quite easily into the homely setting. Many parents are also involved in the helper rota, taking a turn about three times a term. Being on the rota gives many parents a good insight into the playgroup and their child's progress, although opportunities to actually be involved with the children's activities and learning are quite small after domestic duties. The committee and staff do not elicit feedback from parents through questionnaires or suggestions boxes.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Recruitment and vetting procedures work adequately to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by suitable staff with qualifications in child care. However, there are no accessible staff files kept on the premises containing information about recruitment, training and qualifications. The effect of this upon children is minimal because all staff are suitable, but parents' confidence is not reinforced without this information available. Nevertheless, the supervisor takes many opportunities to improve her knowledge by attending courses and workshops. She uses this knowledge effectively to provide children with a wide range of learning experiences and to be prepared for helping children with a range of learning difficulties or disabilities.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The supervisor has a clear sense of purpose and is well supported by the committee to provide a setting which is well subscribed. They aim to continue to improve the overall delivery and assessment of the nursery education to ensure that children enter full time school having had a good pre-school experience. However, they are less successful in setting clear directions for staff and parent helpers to create an effective team to work with children. Adults have divided their roles so that the qualified supervisor takes responsibility for the planning and delivery of the teaching, while the assistant and parent helpers focus more upon preparation, setting out and ensuring the safety and cleanliness of the setting. Adults do not all spend as much time as possible in direct contact with children, enhancing their learning and enjoyment through meaningful conversation and example. As a result, there is over-reliance upon the supervisor to deliver all the teaching, reducing the quality of the outcomes for children. Nevertheless, leaders evaluate their strengths and weaknesses quite well and are open to suggestions about how to improve team working to maximise children's enjoyment and achievement in all aspects of the session.

Policies and procedures work satisfactorily in practice to promote children's safety,

enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. For example, child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and systems for recording accidents, medication and emergency evacuation practises are robust. However, there is no uncollected child policy in place and the complaints recording system is not in place ready to use. In addition, the daily register is not completely accurate and up to date at all times. These omissions compromise children's safety and welfare. Nevertheless, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There was one action and seven recommendations made at the last inspection of care in October 2003. There were three key issues raised at the last inspection of nursery education in September 2004. The action required the person in charge to make an action plan for becoming suitably qualified. She has achieved this, completing the Cache level three certificate in 'work with children in the early years' in 2005. Children benefit from this because they are being taught by someone who has both great experience and suitable qualification.

Of the recommendations, six of the seven have been fully completed as follows: committee members are properly vetted; parent helpers have access to information about their practice; electricity supplies and appliances are properly checked; play resources include some items which promote an awareness of disability; parents are made aware of Ofsted's address and phone number and supervisory staff are aware of up to date guidance regarding child protection procedures. The work undertaken in these areas improves children's safety and their understanding about disability as well as ensuring that parents are better informed. However, policies and procedures relating to behaviour, child protection and equal opportunities still require improvement to make them useful working tools to promote these areas in the pre-school setting.

The key issues from the nursery education inspection are partially met. Children have more use of the book area and go to it a little more often than before, with books being looked at as part of every morning session. Books are also borrowed through the regular library van visits and older children are benefiting from the government initiative to distribute free books. However, some parents are still unclear about the six areas of learning and do not see their child's developmental records until they leave pre-school. It also remains unclear what the roles and responsibilities of the assistant are and staff and helpers are unclear of the learning intentions of activities. This reduces their effectiveness in questioning and talking to children in ways which will promote children's learning in the areas intended.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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):

- ensure that all adults have a clear sense of purpose, know what individual children need to be achieving next and use their time well to question, challenge and extend children's development, making use of the Birth to three matters framework
- ensure that equal opportunities, child protection and behaviour policies are relevant, sufficiently detailed, and used effectively to care for children and staff
- ensure that the incident record is used when appropriate, to record significant incidents involving behaviour, so that children and staff are protected and joint work with parents is promoted
- ensure that the complaints record is ready for use and complies with recent new guidance and devise an uncollected child policy
- ensure that the daily register is always accurate and up to date, showing which children and adults are on the premises at any one time
- ensure that accessible individual staff and committee records are kept on the premises, with contact details and information about recruitment, training and qualifications.

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):

- make use of regular assessments, evaluations and notes to tailor plans to meet children's individual learning needs, so that all staff are aware of these and so that parents can be regularly updated with evidence of their child's progress

- ensure that parents are encouraged to make their views known and to become more involved with their child's learning in meaningful ways
- ensure that leaders set clear directions and build committed teams, leading to improvements in organisation and the outcomes for children.

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