



## Vicarage Hill Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	219072
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 September 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Paula Jane Hayhow / Kelly Eyre
<b>Setting Address</b>	36a High Street, Flitwick, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK45 1DU
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<b>Registered person</b>	Vicarage Hill 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 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?

Vicarage Hill Playgroup registered in 1992 and operates from a single-storey building in the middle of Flitwick, Bedfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each week day during term-time only, from 09:30 to 12:00 or 13:30 in the summer term. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 17 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and the setting serves the local area. The group is able to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs five staff. Three of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards a recognised child care qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a comfortable and clean environment. Their special requirements with regard to health and diet are documented and they are offered healthy snacks. These include foods low in sugar, salt and additives. The group organise the snack session as a social event and ensure that the children have time to help themselves to snacks, pouring their own drinks and discussing subjects such as what shape the savoury biscuits are. This promotes their independence and provides them with opportunities to learn valuable social skills. They are learning appropriate hygiene practices, for example, they wash their hands before snack, after being in the garden and regularly have opportunities to discuss the relevance of this. Children's health in an emergency situation is promoted because there are three staff members trained in first aid. However, their health is compromised as the first aid box is not appropriately stocked.

Children enjoy a range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and coordination as they participate in activities such as using ride-on cars, bicycles and climbing frames. The use of small equipment such as pencils, glue spreaders and small construction pieces aid the development of children's finer manipulative skills. Their independence is promoted and they are developing an understanding of their own needs, for example, pouring their own drinks and visiting the bathroom independently.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where their work is displayed and resources are arranged for easy accessibility. Their safety is promoted as staff carry out informal daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. Children's play opportunities are encouraged because they are able to move independently throughout the setting, making choices, using safe and well maintained equipment. However, their safety is compromised as they have access to one set of heaters, the kitchen, garden debris and plastic bags. Children are gaining a sound understanding of taking responsibility and keeping themselves and others safe. They are given clear explanations by staff and understand the importance of turn-taking and tidying toys away in order to prevent accidents.

Children's safety is further promoted by the provision of appropriate equipment such as correctly sized tables and chairs. Children independently select toys and activities from an appropriate range of play materials. Staff regularly check these to ensure that they are clean and safe. Children's welfare is soundly promoted as staff have an effective understanding of child protection procedures and have attended additional training to ensure that they are able to report and follow up any concerns.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are secure and settled. They enjoy their time at the pre-school and readily participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. They are confident in their relationships with each other and with staff. Their personal development and self-confidence are consistently promoted because staff treat all children as individuals, interacting and offering appropriate support. Staff generally sit at the children's level and join in enthusiastically with their play and conversations, enhancing children's confidence and self-esteem. An example of this is a staff member joining in with children playing with wooden blocks, helping them to choose the right pieces and making appropriate sounds when children pretend that the large bricks are pneumatic drills. New children settle well because staff are very caring, offering appropriate support to individuals, for example, a member of staff comforts a child who is upset, involving them in a conversation about drawing green leaves. The child soon becomes confident to leave the member of staff and goes to explore the painting easel.

Children's interest is maintained and their natural curiosity encouraged because they are generally able to freely access the resources, exploring these and determining their own play. Children confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Staff pay attention to getting to know the children and generally make good use of open questions to encourage them to think further and extend their knowledge. Children are able to participate in all activities because staff adapt these to suit individuals. An example of this is a staff member working with children to make leaf collages, encouraging younger children to rip the paper and more able children to use the scissors to cut desired shapes.

## **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and combines this with their experience and knowledge of child development. Children's progress is generally balanced as staff have developed effective planning and assessment methods. However, written assessments do not clearly show children's starting points, which could lead to a delay in highlighting potential areas of concern and assessing early progress. The planning does not give sufficient detail to enable staff to easily relate children's individual development to all areas of learning and they rely on their personal knowledge of the individual children to do this.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in an appropriate range of activities. These include regular opportunities to engage in role play, construction, outdoor and an assortment of crafts activities such as collage-making and painting. Children's knowledge is further extended as they participate in themed topics, providing some opportunities for them to look more closely at subjects such as 'The Rainbow', where they explore colour, shape, pattern-making and discuss weather changes, learning appropriate songs to compliment this. Children interact well with others, confidently initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts and negotiate activities. An example of this is a group of children playing in the 'green grocers' role play area, where they decide who will be the shop keeper and discuss what items they are going to buy.

Children have opportunities for mark making and to develop early writing skills, for example, a child pretends to write a shopping list in the role play area. They recognise some letters and most children can recognise their own name. However, there is little labelling around the room and although children enjoy stories, these are sometimes disrupted, with children only choosing books independently when prompted, meaning that their learning in this area is minimised. Children are developing the skills necessary for future learning, for example they show curiosity when playing, exploring resources and discussing their observations with staff. They enjoy construction activities and show developing skills in these areas, for example, children playing with wooden blocks are able to build both vertically and horizontally, working out which size and shape to put next.

Children are developing their understanding of the concept of numbers and are beginning to use mathematics to solve everyday problems, for example, counting how many tables and chairs are needed for snack time. They are beginning to use mathematical language when playing, describing bigger and smaller items and discussing space and measure. Children's physical development is promoted. They are developing an awareness of different forms of movement through organised activities such as music and movement sessions, action rhymes and negotiating obstacle courses. They show a developing awareness of their own needs and are able to meet these, for example, visiting the bathroom independently, pouring their own drinks, and putting on their coats.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed and offered a good range of opportunities which promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include celebrations connected with Chinese New Year, Easter, Divali and Christmas. Children's behaviour is generally good throughout the sessions as they choose their activities and organise turn-taking and sharing. They respond well to staff, and the positive approach and good staff role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have special needs have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented. They work sensitively with individual children and parents to make sure that all are included in the activities and routines.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. There is a commitment to involving parents in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through daily dialogue, newsletters and parents' evenings. There is a welcome pack for parents' which gives details of policies and procedure, enabling parents to understand the setting and how their children learn through play. The setting seeks feedback from parents, taking this positively and acting on their ideas and comments. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care can be provided for each child.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall, children's needs are met. They are offered a range of play opportunities because staff organise the play space effectively allowing them the freedom to move safely and independently from one activity to another. This enables the children to feel confident to initiate their own play and learning. Children's welfare, care and safety are promoted through the staff's practical knowledge of the pre-school's policies and procedures. There are sound procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children and this is supported by an adequate induction process for new staff, ensuring that all are able to work appropriately with the children.

Children's overall welfare and development are supported by the active involvement of the committee who work with staff to review practice and ensure that the group is able to meet the needs of all children. However, some policies and procedures are out of date and do not contain sufficient detail to enable staff to act promptly in all situations. Paperwork is generally well organised to support the efficient running of the group. However, some paperwork, such as written permission for the seeking of emergency treatment is not in place. This would lead to a delay in treating children in an emergency situation. The certificate of registration is not displayed and therefore parents are not fully informed to enable all to work together to support children's well-being.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The play leader and staff act as good role models and staff are motivated and enthusiastic, attending additional training and thus ensuring that they are able to provide appropriate care for all children. Sessions are generally well planned, with a balanced range of activities. Children are given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and parents are kept informed of this. Staff meet regularly to plan future work, ensuring that the needs of individual children are met and the development of all children is promoted.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The playgroup were asked at the previous inspection to further develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures, to ensure the complaint's procedure was shared with parents, to minimise hazards in the garden area and to ensure that good hygiene practices were adhered to when children washed their hands. The group was also asked to further develop staff's knowledge, understanding and planning of activities to help children's development using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

The playgroup displays the Ofsted complaint's poster documenting relevant details within the premises and has a concise complaints policy and log for parents to view. Staff members have completed child protection training and cascaded the information received to other staff members during staff meetings. The hazards within the garden have been rectified by fitting a cover to the drain and over the gas bottles. The children wash their hands using a bowl and towel. These are now changed three to four times during a play session. The group have received 'in service' training on the subject of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. It is being used in their planning.

At the last inspection, the quality and standards of nursery education was judged as inadequate. The group was asked to introduce written plans, assessments and records of children's progress. They have now introduced more detailed planning and assessments which are cross-referenced to the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This ensures that children's progress in all areas can be monitored. However, the group has been asked to continue to develop the planning and assessment methods to ensure that these contain sufficient detail to highlight any issues and carry these into future planning.

The group was asked to develop staff's knowledge to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are covered and planned activities offer suitable challenges for all children. Staff have now attended additional training and are receiving ongoing support to ensure that children are offered an appropriate range of activities and play opportunities. Children are suitably challenged as staff are allocated to specific activities and areas of play, working on an individual basis with children to ensure that the activity offers challenge which is appropriate to the child. The group was also asked to develop a robust system for sharing children's information, achievements and progress to enable parents to extend their learning at home. Staff now make use of newsletters, parents' evenings and the key worker system to ensure that parents are kept informed and are aware of current topics so that these can be extended within the home environment.

These measures further improve the children's safety, welfare, security and learning.

### **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 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):

- provide a first aid box the contents of which are checked frequently and replaced as necessary. This refers to gloves and sterile dressing

- ensure that children cannot access hazardous items such as debris, including the brambles in the garden, plastic bags, the kitchen and the heaters
- continue to develop the policies and procedures so that these contain up to date information and ensure that these are available to parents.
- request written permission from parents for the seeking of emergency advice or treatment and comply with conditions of registration with regard to displaying the certificate of registration.

### **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):

- further develop opportunities for children to view written words and recognise that letters and writing have a purpose
- continue to develop the methods for assessing children's progress so that this includes an initial assessment to enable children's progress to be tracked and any issues highlighted at an early stage
- continue to develop the planning methods to detail how long, medium and short-term plans relate to the areas of learning and to individual children's development.

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