



Crescent Playgroup (The)

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 123582 |
| Inspection date | 22 September 2006 |
| Inspector | Tina Kelly |
| Setting Address | St.Lukes Church Hall, The Crescent, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL2 3NF |
| Telephone number | 07879 850713 |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Crescent Playgroup |
| Type of inspection | Integrated |
| Type of care | Full day care |

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Crescent Playgroup is managed by a committee of trustees, it was registered in 1993. The group operate from two rooms in St Luke's Church Hall in Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire. The group has use of a spacious hall and a small activities room, a kitchen and cloakrooms are nearby. The premises is multi-purpose with other community groups using the building whilst the playgroup is running.

A maximum of 28 children can attend at any one time. The playgroup is open on Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 9.30 to 12.00. On Thursday the provision is open from 9.20 to 15.10, children may attend the morning and afternoon session, they bring a packed lunch and stay for the Caterpillar lunch club. Children have access to a secure outside play area.

There are currently 38 children on roll aged from two-and-a-half to under five years. This includes 11 funded three and four-year olds.

The Crescent Playgroup employs five staff, the manager and deputy hold level three qualifications, one member of staff is working towards a level two qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Foundation Stage department of the local school. The playgroup is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning about being healthy through their daily routines. Children are encouraged to be independent, they benefit from good support from staff who monitor the children in the cloakroom area. They learn about personal hygiene, to wash hands after using the toilet and before snack time. Their understanding is extended as staff talk to them about general cleanliness and how they need to be sure they have dry hands as they return to play.

Children enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables at snack time, they are introduced to different foods as part of the planned activities and topics throughout the year. Children's dietary requirements are appropriately recorded, staff are aware of the children's likes and dislikes which are discussed at length during snack time. Parents provide packed lunches for the lunch club. Children's well-being is maintained as staff have attended a food hygiene course.

Children make good progress in their physical development. They have a wide range of opportunities both inside and out to take part in activities that develop their skills. They are competent in negotiating the assault course set out in the hall, they are aware of the space available to them as they go through the play tunnels and balance on the rockers and climbing frames. They co-operate and take turns as they learn to skip, staff hold the rope and offer instruction and encouragement for the children as they attempt an activity they have not tried before. They practise their finer motor skills with throwing and catching games in the garden. Children are becoming aware of the changes to their bodies when they are active, they tell staff that they are tired as they sit out of the activities to rest and have a drink.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well maintained, welcoming and child friendly environment. The hall used is made secure as the children come in. Visitors are monitored by staff who allow access to those who are known to them or are expected. The hall is well organised with children being able to access all activities safely.

As the children use the cloakrooms outside the hall they know they must line up and wait for an adult, they keep to the same routine as they are taken through the building to the outside play area. Children are learning about simple rules that will keep them safe.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe as part of the everyday activities and the topics planned throughout the year. Children's birthdays are celebrated with a cake and real candles. Staff talk to the children about the dangers of matches, they explain that they must not play with them and the concept of 'hot flames'. Children listen intently, they nod their heads, showing a growing understanding of this serious matter.

Children are protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection issues and have attended training in this important aspect of childcare. Policies, procedures and information provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) are readily available for both staff and parents, although parents are not fully aware of the procedure with regards to allegations made against a member of staff. Good documentation is in place to monitor children's well-being at all times, children are cared for by qualified staff all of whom have been appropriately vetted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled, they are eager to come into the group where they engage quickly in their chosen activities. They are motivated and become engrossed in a broad range of purposeful and well planned activities. Children who are new to the setting receive sensitive and caring support from the staff to enable them to become involved with the other children and feel part of the group. Staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, activities, resources and ideas for play are based on the various aspects and components which build on the young children's experiences and their developing skills.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good, children have a positive attitude to learning, they are keen to take part in new opportunities and practise their existing skills in a child centred environment. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage, they understand how children learn. A balanced curriculum is in place that covers the six areas of learning. However, plans do not currently include activities organised for the outside area and strategies to ensure that all children are achieving and extending their physical skills.

Children's individual achievements are recorded, the information is used to plan the next stages of the children's learning. Assessment is thorough and the information gained is used to plan future activities and projects to ensure children have a solid foundation to their learning.

Staff are good role models as they work with the children, extending their language and comprehension so children are confident and able to understand and adapt to new experiences. Staff explain what is expected, they may show by example, use books or puppets to reinforce the children's learning experiences. Children learn in various styles, they may have one to one support for more complex mathematical and mark making activities. They share resources in small groups, learning to negotiate and to take turns. Larger group activities ensure that children are aware of the needs of others, they are learning to listen and to concentrate.

Children talk confidently to each other and to the adults in the group. They link sounds and letters as they use name cards as they come into the group and to find their place at snack

time. Children have a range of mark making opportunities both in imaginative play and the planned activities. They show great interest in the magnetic white boards that can be written on, wiped clean and be used with the magnetic letters and animal shapes. Staff prompt discussion about building letters to represent words and identify letters that are used by the children from their name cards.

Adults who are skilled story tellers expand stories with puppets and character voices. Children sit and listen intently, they are invited to join in familiar phrases in both well known and new stories. Props are used imaginatively to enable the children to identify with the various characters that are depicted in the stories told without the use of a book.

Children are becoming aware of the wider world through imaginative play. They access computer-type toys, tills and calculators in an office setting alongside paper and pens. The natural world is brought into the group as the theme of 'homes' is extended to include spiders and their webs and birds and their nests. Conversation continued as the children explored the garden where staff explained to the children about the squirrels and birds who live in the trees.

Children have many opportunities to take part in creative activities. They are able to access a wide range of different materials to experiment and expand on their own ideas. Children are introduced to simple electronic games that develop mathematical concepts, counting, prediction such as 'how many, more or less'. Adults support the children's mathematical language throughout the sessions, counting at snack times, as children line up to go outside and in stories, rhymes and songs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are catered for as staff ensure all children are treated with equal respect and their backgrounds are valued. Children new to the group settle well, parents are encouraged to visit and to stay for as long as they need to so their children are happy when left. Staff and parents work together to meet each child's personal requirements. Strategies are in place to ensure children receive appropriate support with regards to language and special needs.

Children learn about diversity and the wider world through the planned activities. A wide selection of resources supports their learning, these reflect different cultures and family settings. Children have many opportunities to learn about the natural world. They plant seeds, watch them grow and then bring photographs to show the plants in some of the children's own gardens.

Children are developing good social skills, they sit together at snack time, show good manners as they wait for children to serve the fruit and snack items around the tables. They are learning to play together and are becoming aware of the needs of others as they share and take turns in their play.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents are kept informed about daily activities, newsletters outline themes and topics planned for each term.

The display board keeps them up to date about day to day issues. Parents are not well informed about the nursery education provided by the playgroup, there is some detail about the early learning goals in the prospectus but there is no detail about the provision for funded children, the registration with Ofsted or the inspection process.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's well-being is monitored and maintained as systems are in place to ensure staff working with the children are safe to do so. Appropriate documentation is in place that complies with regulation, additional detail has been developed as the group works towards continuing accreditation by Herts Quality Standards scheme.

The quality of leadership and management of the group is good. The play group is well supported by trustees two of whom made themselves available for the feedback at the end of the inspection. The staff team have a strong commitment to training and to extending their understanding of how children learn. Planning, observations and recording of the children's achievements is continually reviewed. The play group has regular input by a qualified teacher who supports them in ensuring children are progressing well towards the early learning goals.

Children learn in a well planned environment, there is a balanced range of activities and experience that encompass the six areas of learning. Children are interested and engaged in their daily routines, staff are good role models as they are consistent in their interaction and support of the children.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last care inspection the playgroup was given two recommendations; to ensure they had a procedure in place for lost or uncollected children and to ensure the attendance register records children's hours of attendance. The group has the required documentation for lost and uncollected children, the register records the required detail on the children attending to ensure their safety.

At the time of the last nursery education inspection the playgroup was given two recommendations; to develop observations to ensure children progress, to extend the information for parents on the Foundation Stage and their children's progress towards the early learning goals. The observations and plans are now in place to monitor children's progress. The information for parents has been reviewed and does contain some detail about the Foundation Stage, however parents are not well informed about the provision of the groups nursery education, funded places and how they are inspected against the Foundation stage curriculum, therefore they are not able to support their children's learning to its full potential.

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):

- ensure parents are aware of the procedures for allegations made against a member of staff.

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):

- continue to develop information for parents to ensure they are aware of the learning opportunities available to their children, the requirements for nursery education funding and the inspection process.
- develop plans to include activities organised for the outside area and strategies to ensure that all children are achieving and extending their physical 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