



## Croft Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109058
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 September 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Rosemary Davies
<b>Setting Address</b>	Marlborough Lane, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 1RA
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<b>Registered person</b>	Croft 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?

Croft Playgroup opened in 1972. It is managed by a voluntary committee made up of parents of children at the playgroup. It operates from one room in the Croft Sports Centre in Old Town, Swindon and serves families from the local area. The playgroup opens each week day during school terms. Sessions run from 09:15 to 11:45. There are two afternoon sessions, which run on Mondays and Wednesdays and from 12:15 to 14:45. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently 46 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 39 receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

The playgroup employs 10 staff of whom four have appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. Regular support is received from an early years teacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children's good health and physical well being are maintained properly in this playgroup. They use a clean and hygienic environment because staff follow the committee's policies and procedures carefully. Staff make sure they use different coloured clothes for washing up, wiping tables or cleaning paint pots, for example. They make clear to parents when children cannot attend the group, owing to illness, so helping prevent the spread of cross infection.

Arrangements for changing children are managed both hygienically and so as to ensure their privacy. Children learn good personal hygiene routines. Older children understand that they must wash their hands after using the toilet or before eating their snack. They begin to recognise their care needs, such as whether or not coats are required for the walk home. They develop their personal independence well, trying to manage changing their shoes and putting on coats. They pour their own water when thirsty, drinking as much as they need and decide whether they want milk or water to go with their snack. They enjoy a healthy snack daily, choosing for themselves what fruit they want. Parents receive useful information about healthy eating, which promotes a consistent approach for the children's diet.

Children take regular daily exercise in the playroom. They use the slide enthusiastically but it is not sufficiently challenging for the more physically able children who are funded for nursery education. All develop their sense of space and body control as they move around the playroom or join in with circle games but, again, older children they have few opportunities to run around in large spaces outside in fresh air.

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

The provision is good.

Children play in a welcoming, child-friendly environment, which staff work hard to create and maintain. The spacious playroom is set up, ready for the children's arrival, allowing them to choose from a wide range of suitable equipment and interesting activities. Staff provide activities that promote all areas of children's development, so that they are well stimulated, can rest or be energetic as they wish, take refreshment if needed or be creative. They make full use of the available space but the lack of a suitable outdoor area hampers children's development of both physical skills and

their opportunities to take experiences outside and learn on a larger scale.

Children stay safe because staff follow procedures carefully. They ensure children's safety at the beginning and end of sessions by watching entrances and exits effectively. Children are safeguarded within the playroom as visitors cannot enter unchallenged. Staff accompany children to the toilet. Staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding children's welfare, although not all have had the full range of child protection training. All staff undertake first aid training so that children may be looked after appropriately in an emergency situation.

Children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe. Older children understand that sand must be brushed up carefully in case anyone slips. They know the 'rules' for using the slide, which staff apply rigorously so that children quickly adapt to the group's procedures.

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

The provision is good.

Children enter the playgroup eagerly, keen to see what is on offer for the session. All children in the playgroup are offered the same activities, which children access at their own level of development. They choose what they wish to do and quickly become engrossed in their play. Even the very youngest children concentrate well for considerable periods because they so enjoy what they are offered. They make their own decisions about when to do things, such as eat and drink, so that they remain immersed in their play for as long as they wish. In this way, children learn to operate independently within the playroom, which boosts their self-confidence.

Staff support their self-initiated learning extremely well, constantly talking with children and helping them when needed. They make good use of the Birth to three matters framework to plan what is offered to the children. Many experiences link closely with an overall theme, such as 'Nursery Rhymes' and this helps children make connections across activities and reinforces their learning. They learn to sing 'Mary, Mary quite contrary', for example, make little 'gardens' using shells and then act out planting seeds and watering a garden in the role play area. The excellent relationships between staff and children encourage children to accept support and seek it if needed, including a comforting cuddle.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. This is because senior staff have a thorough understanding of the Foundation Stage and ensure that less experienced or unqualified staff understand the aims of activities and what children are expected to learn from them. Children thoroughly enjoy a broad and balanced programme of experiences which are well matched to their stages of development. This results from staff observing children frequently, assessing what they know and can do and using this knowledge to plan for their future learning.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is a significant strength of this

playgroup. Staff spend considerable time building children's confidence and their understanding of how to operate independently within the playroom. As a result, children are well on the road to becoming independent learners. They understand how sessions run, quickly changing into indoor shoes on entry and searching for their names to self-register, for example. They manage their own snack time, pouring either water or milk carefully and spreading butter on crackers. They know where to put paintings to dry and that they may request other resources from the craft cupboard if needed.

Children develop their conversation skills extremely well. They enjoy frequent conversations with staff on a one to one basis because of the extremely favourable adult to child ratio. They discuss their activities, their home lives and special occasions, such as birthdays. Such chatter helps widen their vocabularies too. This is helped further by a very good range of topics, with children hearing about 'cockle shells', 'rye' and 'blackbirds' as they hear nursery rhymes. They listen carefully to learn these and staff are skilful in speaking clearly and slowly, which results in children joining in fully when singing because they know the words. Children begin to develop a love of books through hearing well read stories. They enjoy looking at books for themselves too, although these are not presented in an inviting way. Children's hand dexterity develops quickly and they are helped in finding an effective pencil grip. Some older children begin to write their names but overall, there is insufficient purposeful mark-making in the daily routines to encourage use of these emerging skills.

Staff integrate mathematics effectively across all areas of learning. Children develop their understanding of number in purposeful, practical ways, such as putting socks into pairs on a pretend washing line, counting its clothes pegs and looking at numerals on birthday cards. Adult-led activities, specifically to promote mathematics are well planned and executed. Children enjoy Kim's Game, for example, eagerly counting how many objects have 'disappeared' and how many are left.

Children's creativity is fostered well. They explore a wide range of media and materials freely through painting, glueing, collage and playdough, for example. They enjoy particularly good role play experiences linked to the current topic, using their imaginations well as they pretend to hang out clothes, make tea or use the telephone. Staff interact well with the children. They use good questioning techniques, which encourages children to think and solve problems. Children make pastry, for example, and have to decide which sized cutters will fit on rolled out pieces of dough.

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

The provision is good.

All children, including those with learning difficulties or physical disabilities receive a very warm welcome in this playgroup. Staff do their utmost to ensure that all can join in equally. All children receive high levels of individual attention and staff get to know them very well. New children receive much help and support in settling in and parents appreciate the flexibility of this period.

Children's confidence and self-esteem rises as they quickly learn what is expected of them within the playroom. All staff praise children consistently; children respond well, eagerly helping to put resources away in the proper places and helping to keep the playroom tidy. Children's behaviour is excellent as a result of these clear expectations and because they so enjoy their play. They learn about the diversity of the world around them, responding to a range of special celebrations and festivals. They use resources that help them learn about family life different from their own. They begin to learn about their feelings understanding, for example, the difference between being 'happy' and 'sad'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. They are extremely supportive partners in providing an appropriate playgroup experience for the children. Throughout their children's time in the group, parents receive an excellent range of information about what is offered to the children and of their progress. There is an informative welcome pamphlet, parents' notice board, monthly newsletters and written 'reflections' which detail children's individual progress. Parents serve on the committee, helping to decide which staff are employed, or come in as 'parent helpers', when they see at first hand, their children at play, learning and interacting with others.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The chairperson and committee provide substantial support to the running of this playgroup. They understand their responsibilities for appointing staff that are cleared to work with children. They oversee the implementation of a full range of policies, including all those required in law and which underpin the smooth running of the playgroup: the complaints procedure requires updating, however, to reflect most recent legislation. They implement risk assessment procedures and monitor these to ensure that children use a safe and hygienic environment. Strong emphasis is placed on staff training. An appraisal system is in place and this identifies any shortcomings in staff skills or knowledge. The chairperson and supervisor understand their respective roles. They work together closely to run the playgroup effectively, sharing a vision for its future development.

The leadership and management of nursery education are good. The supervisor provides clear leadership to the large staff team for which she is a very good role model. The staff work together extremely well. They overcome many of the difficulties of shared accommodation and work extremely hard to create a suitable play environment each day.

The supervisor seeks, takes and acts on, advice from the local authority's support teacher with whom she has a close working relationship. Although the playgroup has been taking funding for nursery education for one year only, children progress well towards the early learning goals because of this effective collaboration. Staff evaluate what they offer the children and strive to improve their practice. The group identifies its own strengths and weaknesses accurately and has an Action Plan in place to

improve what is offered to the children. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

Following the previous inspection, the playgroup was required to address five recommendations relating to children's play opportunities and the provision of mathematics; the physical environment; the assessment of children with special needs and the information given to parents. All these issues have been addressed successfully with the result that children now play in a welcoming, suitable environment with a full range of activities. They are assessed suitably and any particular needs are met, whilst the partnership with parents has been strengthened. All this has improved the quality of education and care offered to the children.

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

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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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):

- continue to explore ways of providing children with daily fresh air, challenging physical exercise and outdoor learning opportunities (also applies to Nursery Education)
- update the written complaints procedure to reflect most recent legislation

#### **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):

- provide opportunities for children to use their emerging mark-making skills in the daily routines.

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