

Mawnan Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	102923
Inspection date	13 March 2007
Inspector	Linda Janet Chauveau
Setting Address	MCA Hall, Carwinian Road, Mawnan Smith, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 5JD
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Registered person	Mawnan 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?

Mawnan Playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the pre-school and is a registered charity. It has been in operation for over 30 years and runs from a room in the village community hall. It is situated in the village of Mawnan Smith, Cornwall. A maximum of 20 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday, from 09:15 until 11:45 during term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed play area.

There are currently 19 children, from two to four years, on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the village and surrounding areas.

The playgroup employs three staff. Over half the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from an advisory teacher from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance(PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being cared for by staff who follow sensible hygiene practices such as regularly wiping tables used by children and keeping toilets clean. However staff do not always keep children safe from infections as some shared equipment, such as bins used for the disposal of paper towels and tissues, are not monitored regularly for cleanliness. Children learn the importance of personal hygiene through daily routines, such as washing hands after using the toilet and before snack times.

Children's health is safeguarded as staff hold current first aid certificates, care for children with consideration following accidents and complete required records. Staff take note of children's individual health and dietary requirements. Staff make water available during the session and a mid morning snack of fresh fruit, milk and a sweet biscuit is provided each day. This time is not used by staff to discuss the benefits of healthy eating. Snack times allow special helpers to develop confidence by serving drinks. However, staff do not enable all children to develop personal and social skills by pouring their own drinks or serving their snack onto suitable plates.

Children have regular opportunities to learn about keeping healthy by enjoying exercise and time spent in the fresh air. They know that "We get bigger when we exercise". A range of physical activities is timetabled in the daily planning, this includes; parachute games, the use of bats, balls and hoops and access to a range of ride on toys. These activities enable children to develop large muscles and gain spatial awareness. Children are learning to use a variety of tools, such as scissors, dough cutters and rollers to develop small muscle control and hand to eye co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in the clubroom of the local cricket club. Staff make the best use of a difficult area to provide children with a carefully organised environment for care and learning. Children move between play areas in safety and with freedom. Children play with a suitable variety of well-presented toys and activities at tabletop and on floor level. Due to lack of accessible storage in the playroom staff have to rotate resources available and set out a specific variety each day, as a result, children have little opportunity to make independent selections other than from those on display.

Children benefit from a sensible range of procedures followed by staff to promote their safety. For example, the external door is secure, and staff carefully monitor all visitors to the group. Staff are responsible for ensuring that premises are visually checked for safety and suitability before children arrive and as a result, risks to children are minimised. Children observe personal safety as they line up sensibly to go outside to play and staff have taken appropriate measures to make the outside play area safe for children.

A child protection procedure and incident record keeping systems are in place which are designed to keep children safe from harm. However, the procedures have not been updated to refer to national guidance on child protection or procedures from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff do not have contact telephone numbers for local social services departments or the police, as a result, staff cannot act promptly if they wish to report a concern.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the playgroup. They have opportunities to achieve due to the manager's use of the early years guidance, the Foundation Stage curriculum, to plan a suitable environment for care and learning. All children arrive happy and keen to participate. They are developing independence as they choose between a variety of resources that are developmentally appropriate. Children benefit from warm relationships with staff. Children aged under three years attend the group and are able to easily access all the activities available. The manager of the group is aware of the Birth to three matters framework; however, she has not yet attended training on implementing this to meet the needs of younger children. However, younger children's development is observed and progress noted by the manager to ensure that they receive appropriate support before receiving funded education.

Nursery Education.

The quality of children's teaching and learning is satisfactory. The playgroup manager has an adequate knowledge of the Foundation Stage and provides a suitable range of activities and experiences to cover all areas of children's learning. Planning is clear and links to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, but does not show suggestions for extension activities for more able children. The majority of children attending are aged between three and four years and are in receipt of funded nursery education. The manager observes and assesses children's progress. Developmental records are used to plan the next steps in children's learning; however, these sometimes lack clarity and tend to be generalised. The room used by the playgroup is organised appropriately and resources are set out to encourage children's interest in learning.

Children are learning acceptable behaviour; they follow simple instructions, for example when tidying up or lining up to go outside to play. They are confident, participating with enthusiasm in large group activities for example, happily volunteering to sing a favourite song or nursery rhyme without help. Staff support children in developing self-care skills, for example, when visiting the toilet or washing their hands after a painting or craft activity. Some children can recognise their own name from cards used to self-register and find their place at snack time. An awareness of the initial sounds of letters is introduced with a letter of the week being learnt by children using the "Jolly Phonics" program. Children enjoy opportunities to practise mark-making skills, for example using a range of tools in the literacy area. More able children are starting to attempt to write their own name. Children enjoy listening to stories in large groups, but do not make good use of the book corner to appreciate and handle books alone or with staff.

Children are introduced to the concept of number through group activities, such as counting to the date at registration time. They learn about shape and size through adult led activities such as sorting and weighing "compare bears" and by using the computer to complete simple mathematical programs. Daily routines develop children's awareness of time and place as they discuss the day of the week and the weather. Children develop an interest in technology and are becoming competent computer users. Children investigate the natural world, looking at snow, bugs and baby chicks. They begin to appreciate their own culture and the cultural traditions of others through planned activities. Children develop their imaginations in the role-play area and by using small world toys, acting out imagined scenarios. They use a variety of media, working with paint, dough and wet sand to mould, create and explore texture. They

enjoy craft activities such as making Mother's Day gifts. They sing songs confidently from memory and use actions to beat out rhymes and rhythms.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have warm relationships with staff and each other. Staff have a sound awareness of children and their families, this ensures that children receive appropriate care at the group. Children's behaviour is generally good and most of the time staff manage children effectively. However, on some occasions, poor staff deployment leads to the majority of adults being involved in one activity, resulting in a lack of supervision and interaction with other children. This results in minor squabbles and disruptive behaviour in small groups of unsupervised children, who flit between activities without purpose or direction. However, when staff notice this behaviour they respond promptly and engage with children and redirect them to more purposeful play. Children develop confidence by being given individual responsibilities, such as being nominated as the day's special helper and work well as a group tidying up toys with enthusiasm before snack time. Staff reward group effort by presenting stickers to all children.

Children have access to an adequate range of resources and planned activities to learn about their community and the wider world, for example making pictures of their homes. The group have formed good links with the local school and have regular visits to help with children's transition to their reception class. There are few resources available to develop children's understanding and awareness of people with disabilities. Children with additional needs have been supported within the group, but the manager has not had wide experience of using written records or applying strategies to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The playgroup fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is inadequate. Recommendations to improve from the last nursery education inspection have not been addressed. Parents receive basic information about the playgroup's operation through a short prospectus. However, there is little up to date information on policies and procedures and no information on nursery education. Staff have friendly, informal relationships with parents and provide verbal feedback on their child's progress. Parents' views are not sought on their child's capabilities before receiving nursery education and their involvement in their children's learning at home is not fully encouraged. Staff do not share information on individual progress targets set for their children. As a result, parents do not have the opportunity to work with the playgroup to teach and support their children.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff are employed and managed by a voluntary committee consisting of parents of children attending the group. The operation and organisation of the playgroup is underpinned by a set of policies and procedures, written to demonstrate how National Standards will be met. However, the group uses a set of standardised policies, and it is clear that these statements have not been adapted to relate to this individual setting, additionally some of the procedures have not been updated to reflect recent changes to regulations. The committee is aware of their responsibility to assess the suitability of any new members of staff but have not fully established systems to implement this. There are no systems in place to appraise staff performance or evaluate their on-going suitability. Most records are maintained to a reasonable standard;

however, poorly organised record keeping systems means that staff are not always able to locate required paperwork, for example, the accident book, with ease.

The current staff team is well established and there have been no recent changes to personnel. The playgroup manager and her staff use time and resources effectively to provide an adequate environment for children. Staff work well as a team and are clear about their individual responsibilities. The leadership and management within the playgroup is inadequate. The group have not effectively addressed the recommendations made at their previous inspection relating to support and appraisal of staff and the monitoring of the effectiveness of the setting. There is no system in place to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the education provision. Staff discuss the curriculum on an informal basis. Local authority support staff have visited the group, however, staff have not received any written feedback to act upon to improve the provision. As staff have not received any appraisals their training needs have not been identified. Staff have not attended any recent training events to update their skills or for professional development. The manager has not attended any recent training or support meetings to develop her knowledge of strategies to help children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last combined care and nursery education inspection the playgroup was asked to improve children's safety by providing procedures to follow in the event of a child becoming lost, ensuring that there were sufficient staff with first aid training on site and improve their child protection procedures. The group now have a lost child policy in place and all staff have attended first aid training, with two members of staff currently holding up to date first aid certificates. The child protection policy was updated but does not include contact details to enable staff to make a prompt referral or refer to most recent changes to guidance. The group were also asked to improve information available to parents if they wished to make a complaint, this has now been updated.

The group were also asked to improve aspects of the nursery education provision. This included increasing resources to promote mathematical development and information technology awareness. This has been addressed and children now have increased opportunities to develop their mathematical awareness using weighing and comparing activities and through the use of a computer to complete simple mathematical programs. They also develop their awareness of information technology through the use of tape machines and tills and telephones in the role play area. The group were also asked to develop children's assessment records to identify individual progress targets, this has now been carried out and assessment records note children's progress towards the early learning goals and the manager uses these records to set individual targets. However, these records are not clearly linked to planning to show how extension activities and challenge for more able children will be provided.

The recommendations that the group improve nursery education information available to parents and encourage their links with their children's learning has not been addressed. Nor has the recommendation that systems to appraise staff performance and the effectiveness of the education curriculum. This has contributed to the inadequate judgement for nursery education in this inspection.

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):

- ensure that the child protection procedure is updated to reflect most recent guidance and includes contact information in order to make a prompt referral
- ensure that there are effective systems in place to appraise and vet new and existing staff, including professional and personal suitability
- ensure that all policies and procedures used to support the operation of the playgroup are not generic but relevant to the individual setting and that there are effective systems in place to share policies with committee, staff and parents.

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:

- develop the partnerships with parents and carers in order that; they receive sufficient information regarding the nursery education curriculum, maintain their involvement with their children's learning by sharing information on what their child knows and can do before receiving nursery education and by being involved in setting individual progress targets
- increase the levels of support and monitoring for staff in order to promote their professional development and develop methods in which to monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of provision for nursery education.

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 *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