



Bolton Under 5 Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109651
Inspection date	14 March 2007
Inspector	Carole Gronow
Setting Address	Beddington Centre, Riley Lane, Old Basing, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 7DH
Telephone number	07881 920709
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Registered person	Bolton Under 5 Playgroup Comittee
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Bolton Under 5 Playgroup opened in 1977. It is managed by an elected committee of parents and operates from a community building in the rural area of Old Basing, near Basingstoke.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time, which is open Monday to Friday 09:00 - 13:00. Sessions run from 09:00 - 11:45 with an optional lunch club from 11:45 until 13:00. Children have direct access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 35 children aged from two under five years on roll. Of these, 30 children receive funding for nursery education. Most children who attend the playgroup come from the local area.

The playgroup supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and welcomes children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs seven staff, four of whom, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment where their good health is protected through the policies and procedures that are in place. The playgroup holds all the necessary documentation for the administration of medication and recording of accidents as well as for seeking medical help for children in the event of an emergency. Children are further protected because of the very high proportion of the staff who hold a relevant first aid qualification. Children are aware of the need to wash their hands before they eat and happily go to the toilet to do so. They are learning about healthy eating and about the different fruits there are because parents are asked to provide their children with a portion of fruit for snack time. Children drink either milk or water and make choices about which they prefer to have. All children have access to drinks of water throughout the session because they all bring their own drinks containers which they are free to access whenever they wish.

Children have regular opportunities to get fresh air and have physical exercise and they go outside every day that the weather allows. Children play on wheeled toys such as bikes, scooters and cars and they ride around negotiating clear pathways. They climb on the climbing frame, go down the slide and clamber through the tunnel. Activities such as these enable children to develop their levels of physical fitness as well as improving their balance and co-ordination. They have fun playing as a group with the parachute, throwing a soft toy around on it and take turns running under the canopy to retrieve the toy when it falls through the centre hole.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a welcoming, well maintained environment where they have space to move around freely and safely. The premises have good, direct access to the outside area where children can participate in physical activities and messy play. All the furniture provided is child size and there are low level drawers in which children place any work that is going home. The security of children is given high importance by the playgroup which ensures that children are unable to leave the premises unnoticed. At arrival time, a member of staff remains at the door until all parents and carers have left the premises and the door can be locked. When outside, children know that they must not go beyond the perimeter fence and wait for a member of staff to retrieve their ball that goes outside it.

Children are very familiar with what to do in the event of them having to leave the premises in an emergency; the regularly planned evacuation drills ensure this. Children immediately stop what they are doing and line up at the main exit point when they hear the noise of the smoke

detector. They know that they have to respond quickly and are delighted when staff tell them they have done very well and have been really quick. Children's safety is at risk because risk assessments are not undertaken to ensure that the toys and equipment and all areas of the premises that children have access to are safe. For example, staff pick up waste matter in the garden after children have already gone out to play. Children are protected in areas of concern because all staff have undertaken some child protection training and are aware of their responsibilities to protect children. There is a comprehensive child protection policy in place, however, this neither reflects the most recent changes, nor is it shared with parents prior to their child commencing at the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and their parents and carers are all warmly welcomed by name by the staff on their arrival and the children quickly settle and play with their friends. Children are happy, they form good relationships with adults and children alike and are confident to approach staff to ask or tell them things. Children are helpful, they willingly help tidy away when asked to, using the dustpan and brush to sweep up sand. Children thrive on the praise they receive and their faces beam when they are told that they can have stickers for good tidying up or for listening quietly to a story.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum and they are all involved in planning the activities offered to children. These plans cover the topics to be looked at as well as the intended learning outcomes for children. However, inappropriate challenges are sometimes set for children, for example, some are encouraged to write their name even though they cannot hold a pencil correctly. Staff are not deployed effectively to ensure that children are always fully supported in their learning. When children are freely moving between indoors and outdoors staff do not always move accordingly. Also, children are not made aware of what the planned activities are, such as the making of wig-wams. Because no staff encourage children to access this not a single child attempts it throughout the entire session.

Children understand that they need to take turns and to share fairly. Children show concern for others, for instance, when one child cries another puts her arm around her and asks what is the matter whilst another goes to get a member of staff. They are learning about the consequences of their words and actions because staff take time to talk about this with the children and explain things to them. Children are becoming personally independent. They go to the toilet on their own, pour their own drinks and get tissues to wipe their noses. Children are very good talkers and have lots of conversations between themselves. For example, they chose what ice creams to buy when they are playing outside. Children enjoy story and circle time. They listen to a story about Elmer and wait to see what happens on the next page. However, children have very little chance to develop their listening skills by listening to and distinguishing sounds. Children enjoy looking at books both individually and together, they hold them correctly, understanding that print carries meaning, and they use both story and reference books.

Children routinely use number names throughout their play, for instance they know and use the numbers of the main engines connected with Thomas the Tank Engine. Children can count up to nine and they count as they hand out the cups at snack time. Children count in songs such as 'Five speckled frogs', counting one less each time, holding up the correct number of fingers. Children enjoy learning about shapes and positional language; a practitioner skilfully uses puppets and encourages a child to select a shape, name it and hide it by a box. Children then look under, inside, behind, on top and to the side of the box as directed by the puppet. Many children know basic shapes and others are learning new ones, such as 'cone'. Opportunities given to children to develop their designing and making skills are very limited. Children cannot self select what materials to use but have to use the small selection of materials set out for them - boxes, straws and lolly sticks which they join together with either glue or sticky tape. Children are not encouraged to freely express their creativity and individuality through their art work because it is adult directed. For example, children stick red paper on a pre-drawn bus and they are given pre-drawn and cut out tepees to colour. Children enjoy finger painting but this is then cut out into an oval shape by a member of staff to be used for the Mothers Day card that each child is making.

Children investigate using their different senses through a range of activities such as cooking, dough, water, pasta and music. Children enjoy gardening and planting things and they study mini beasts using magnifying glasses. Throughout the session they watch a daffodil in bud, that a child brought in, start to open. They fly kites out of doors. Children go for walks in the local community and look for things related to the topic they are doing. They are not, however, provided with any opportunities to find out about different cultures and beliefs. Children enjoy joining in and singing familiar songs such as their 'good morning' rhyme. They enthusiastically play with the musical instruments which are put out daily for them to freely access and explore. Children even have a quick play on them on their way to and from the toilet.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Each child's individuality is recognised because staff ensure that they find out any relevant details when a child commences. Although the children learn about their local community they do not have opportunities to learn about the wider world. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported. A member of staff who is identified as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) links with parents and other professionals. This is to ensure that children are provided with the most appropriate support and that activities are offered which meet each child's needs. Children's behaviour is good. At times they negotiate between themselves, for example, when wanting a turn on one of the most popular wheeled toys outside. Children who find it hard to do this are helped and supported by staff who use a visual prompt in the form of a large egg-timer. This along with a reminder just before it runs out is generally sufficient for children to accept that it is now someone else's turn.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from the good, very relaxed relationships that exist between their parents and carers and staff. Parents and carers are given sheets with information about the interest table, topic list and dates and also a regular newsletter. They are provided with a prospectus about the playgroup when their children start

there. This informs them that the setting follows the nationally approved Foundation Stage of the curriculum and it lists the six areas of learning. Parents and carers do not receive any further information about the early learning goals or about their child's record of achievement. Parents and carers can have informal discussions daily with staff and are aware that they can ask to see staff at any time. However, except after the AGM there are no planned opportunities for parents and carers to see their children's folders, discuss children's progress or to be able to share what they know about their child with staff.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides. Children benefit from being cared for in a preschool where there are very good adult to child ratios and where the majority of staff hold a relevant child care qualification. Although required documentation is in place the preschool was not aware of the requirement to maintain a log of any complaints they receive from parents. This is a mandatory requirement which means that there is a breach of regulation. All staff are suitable to work with children and all members of the staff team are long serving. Consequently, no new members of staff have been appointed for a long time, however the recruitment procedure is being revised in order to ensure that it is sufficiently robust when it is needed.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The parents committee is keen to support the staff and to ensure that the provision offered to children is good. The officers of the committee meet with staff half termly and the supervisor attends committee meetings. Policies and procedures have recently been reviewed. Annual appraisals have been introduced for all staff but there is no system in place to either assess the strengths and weaknesses of the playgroup or to monitor and evaluate the quality of the nursery education provided. Not all the recommendations from the previous inspection which were made to support improvement in the provision have been implemented. Some still remain an issue, such as risk assessments and the monitoring and evaluating of the quality of teaching. Staff are encouraged to undertake training, however this is not always allowed to influence what takes place within the group.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection regarding the care of children the playgroup was asked to: develop procedures to implement regular risk assessments, ensure that all documentation is sufficient and up to date at all times and to increase opportunities for children to independently select toys on a regular basis. Risk assessments are not routinely done and so this has been raised as a recommendation again, however most documentation now holds sufficient detail and children make choices about what to play with from the selection of resources that have been put out for them.

Concerning Nursery Education, the playgroup was asked to: increase opportunities for children's independence for selecting toys and to express their ideas through creativity. Children do make some choices about what they play with from what is set out for them. There are limited opportunities for them to express their ideas through creativity with materials such as dough and gloop, however this does not extend to art work. The playgroup was also asked to increase

opportunities for children to practise both emergent writing and for simple calculations and associated vocabulary in practical activities. Children now have opportunities for this on a daily basis. Also, the playgroup was asked to introduce a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, however this has not been implemented and so this has also been made a recommendation once again.

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):

- develop the range of activities provided outside so that children are able to experience different areas of learning
- implement regular risk assessments on all areas of the premises that children have access to as well as on toys and equipment
- improve knowledge and understanding around the requirements to maintain a log of any complaints made and ensure that any new requirements made by the regulator are implemented promptly. Share information about the child protection procedure with parents prior to their child's admission.

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):

- implement an effective system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching giving particular attention to staff deployment
- improve the use of staff knowledge and skills when planning with particular reference to creative development, linking sounds by developing listening skills and an awareness of different cultures and beliefs

- provide parents with detailed information about the early learning goals and with regular opportunities for them to see their child's record and share what they know about their child.

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