



Sowood Pre School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303810
Inspection date	09 February 2007
Inspector	Annette Stanger
Setting Address	Sowood Community Centre, Stainland Road, Sowood, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX4 9HY
Telephone number	01422 374367
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Registered person	Sowood Pre School 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 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?

Sowood Pre-School Playgroup is run by a voluntary committee. It opened in 1973 and operates in a local community centre in Sowood, situated between Huddersfield and Halifax. A maximum of 20 children may attend the provision at any one time. The setting is open from Monday to Thursday from 09.00 to 11.30 and on Friday's from 09.30 to 12.00, during term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 23 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 12 children receive funding for early education. Children attend from the local area for a variety of sessions.

The setting employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff promote children's health by taking a range of positive actions. Children are cared for in a clean and hygienically maintained environment and good precautions are taken to avoid cross-contamination, such as the provision of pump soap and disposable paper towels. Staff give good levels of support and guidance in encouraging children to gain a secure understanding of health and hygiene. Songs about hand washing are sung with the children and such practices help them understand that washing their hands after toileting and before their snack helps keep them healthy. As one child explained about hand washing, 'it washes the germs away'.

A good variety of healthy snacks are offered to the children, including fresh fruit. The fruit is attractively presented for the children; it is chopped into small pieces at snack time and is displayed in a fruit bowl for children to access throughout the session. Staff are aware of the many learning opportunities to promote an understanding of healthy eating. They talk to children about the benefits on the body by eating healthily. Snack times are relaxed, social occasions and children demonstrate their confidence and increasing independence by selecting their own plate and matching cup, pouring their own drinks and clearing their plates into the bin.

Drinking water is always available and children help themselves from the water dispenser, successfully accommodating their own needs. Staff are aware of each child's individual dietary needs and appropriate steps are taken to ensure these are met.

Children enjoy very good levels of physical activity which contribute to their good health and physical development. For example, there is free-flow access to the main hall for children to take part in physical play when they want to. This promotes a positive attitude to exercise. Children have access to a variety of large equipment to develop their gross motor skills, such as a slide, climbing frame, scooters and tricycles. They successfully pedal around the area, negotiating space well, and they are able to stop and manoeuvre safely around their peers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, well organised environment. A high ratio of adults to children and effective deployment ensures children are well supervised in all areas of the provision. Children have safe and independent access to a wide range of good quality age-appropriate toys, furniture and resources. These are clean, well maintained and are regularly checked for safety. As a result, children are able to move around safely, freely and independently and this encourages them to initiate their own play and learning.

Staff undertake regular risk assessments as well as completing a daily safety checklist prior to the children arriving. These ensure all safety equipment is in place and ensures potential risks are effectively minimised to protect children. Staff have a good awareness of security. They ensure that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and there can be no unauthorised

access to children. There are clear procedures to ensure children are collected by authorised people as detailed on the child registration form. All fire safety precautions are in place and children are learning about emergency evacuations because they are regularly practised and recorded to highlight any potential problems. Children are beginning to learn about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe. Staff raise children's awareness of road safety through discussion and planned puppet shows, they remind children not to wear long dressing up clothes when using the climbing apparatus and to sit on chairs safely. However, some of children choose to remove their shoes during their play and this puts them more at risk of having an accident. This is not fully considered by staff within risk assessments.

The staff are aware of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and have a good understanding of their responsibility towards safeguarding children. They have a good knowledge of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a child and there are clear systems in place to record any existing injuries.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the calm environment because they are cared for by a consistent staff team who are sensitive to their needs and help them to feel at ease. They enter the setting confidently and quickly settle into the familiar routine. They use their initiative well, selecting their own resources and experiences as well as participating in planned activities. Staff have received training on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and they use this effectively in practice to plan a good range of activities that further the children's development. Staff are skilled in supporting children's play. They ask questions to extend their experiences and learning without interfering unnecessarily in their play. They take time to listen to the children and value their input, which helps build their self-esteem. Children are given time to develop their ideas and explain their thinking, enabling them to expand their knowledge and understanding.

Younger children particularly enjoy playing with their peers in the home area. They regularly imitate adults and enjoy 'conversations' on the telephone. As a result, children are becoming skilful communicators. Their creative development is well supported, staff maximise opportunities for sensory and exploratory play that also includes the use of natural materials. For example, children have regular access to sand, water and malleable materials. Staff also encourage the children to explore their senses during many different types of activities. Children frequently talk about what they can see, how things smell, what they hear and how things feel. This was particularly evident when children found some bubble wrap packaging material and discovered they could make it 'pop'. They had great delight in demonstrating this to both staff and their peers as they asked them to listen carefully.

Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. This ensures that children are offered a broad and balanced curriculum, including focused planned activities as well as opportunities for informal learning. Staff know the children well and ensure

that appropriate challenges are incorporated into the curriculum, based on observations of what the children know and can do. They are very skilled at communicating with children and use effective questioning techniques to successfully stimulate thinking, extend knowledge and encourage children's language skills. The written plans cover the six areas of learning, they include the learning intentions for activities, and there is a system in place to ensure that all stepping stones will be covered sufficiently over time. Staff complete written observations of children and this information is then used to inform future planning and ensures children are appropriately challenged.

Children's progress is recorded in their key person assessment files. These include a profile which staff complete to show children's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, within each area of learning. Most files also contain individual observations which give a clear picture of how the child approaches learning. However, there are inconsistencies across the files with only some and not all containing this level of detail. Children are very confident when entering the setting and take part in the self-registration recognising their own name cards and posting them through the red letter box. Some of the cards also include an accompanying picture for those children who are unable to recognise their name without it. They settle quickly into the familiar and trusted routine, highly motivated and eager to participate in activities of their own choosing, such as physical, imaginative and creative activities.

Children show an early appreciation of books. They handle them well, turning the pages correctly and talk about the pictures and what they think is going to happen. Writing materials are included as part of the continuous provision and children make good use of these during their play situations, particularly in the home and office areas. This maximises opportunities for children to write for a variety of purposes in everyday play situations and develops their confidence. Children's communication skills are developing well. They are confident in their interactions and they talk with enthusiasm about what they are doing and what they are going to do. Children regularly count and use mathematical language. They recognise and correctly identify numbers within displays around the room and during games of hopscotch. They talk about size, space and use positional language in their play, even when feeding the fish, for example one child says, 'I'm going to feed the little one first, down there under the big one'.

Children show a great interest in information and communication technology. They independently access the computer, operating simple programmes and performing simple functions with good skill. Their mouse control is excellent when using the computer and they show good physical skill and control when moulding and manipulating dough and other malleable materials. Children construct with a purpose in mind and use their imaginations well in their creativity. They describe their creations in detail and use tools safely and skilfully for a range of purposes, for instance to cut, poke and flatten. However, there are few opportunities for children to construct with larger materials, such as fabric, planks and crates, to further their physical development.

Children have good recall as they talk with enthusiasm and excitement about significant personal events in their lives. For example, children recall sleeping at grandmas and when the setting had a wormery on loan. They enjoy exploratory and sensory activities, such as sand and water and these are included as part of the continuous provision. They regularly explore natural

materials and learn more about the natural world through innovative activities. These include making their own bird feeders, nests and woodland night time scenes, using a range of natural materials, such as twigs, compost, hay, and grasses. They use their senses well to explore the properties of these materials, squeezing the compost between their fingers and describing it as, 'wet and cold'. Children show a keen interest in music, they sing to themselves and with their peers during their play. They are beginning to tap out simple rhythms and become aware of different sounds and how these can be changed. This was particularly evident during a group session where the children were using the pasta and rice shakers they had made to tap out their names.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff promote an inclusive provision and all children are positively welcomed. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported through good partnerships with both parents and professionals. Staffing arrangements are designed to meet the individual needs of the children and ensure that children are able to participate fully in the life of the setting. Effective settling in procedures and initial visits ensure that children's individual needs are met. Children are becoming aware of the wider world because staff provide children with positive images of diversity and plan activities which explore a variety of celebrations, including Diwali, Christmas, and Chinese New Year.

Children's behaviour is very good in response to the staff's positive and consistent approach to behaviour management. Staff regularly praise children and take time to acknowledge good behaviour. Children's efforts are clearly valued by staff and effective methods are in place, designed to recognise and highlight these achievements, such as 'The helping hands tree', which celebrates all children's individual achievements. Consistent boundaries are set and staff support younger children in sharing and turn taking and encourage older children to take responsibility for their own behaviour. For example, children are learning to negotiate and resolve their own disputes and use egg timers to assist them in taking turns on popular activities, such as the computer. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Relationships between staff and parents are honest, open, and professional. Parents reported that they find staff friendly and approachable and feel that their contribution as a parent is valued. This helps to ensure children are settled and secure. Parents receive a welcome booklet when their child starts at the setting and this includes a useful and informative piece on the importance of play in helping children to enjoy and achieve. They receive regular newsletters to make them aware of current themes and are also made aware of the existence of the policies and procedures file, however, this information could be better shared with parents as it is not easily accessible for parents to refer to. Parental participation is encouraged through the use of a rota helper system and this gives parents and family members the opportunity to see what a typical session is like. Staff actively seek parents' views about their children's needs and interests before they start and on a regular basis throughout their time in the setting. For example, through the completion of an initial child profile. Staff then use this information to plan activities around the children's interests to ensure they are enjoyable and maintain the children's interest. Parents receive regular verbal

feedback about their child's time in the setting and how their child is progressing. They have the opportunity to request to see their child's file, although the accessibility of these files could be further improved. Planning is displayed and useful parental leaflets are used to keep parents informed of the latest topics being covered and how they can extend children's learning at home. Suggestions include, activity ideas, books to read, places to visit and useful websites. This ensures that parents are fully involved in their child's learning and recognises them as an important educator in the child's life.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting is well organised and all of the required documentation is in place. Recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are well protected and cared for by qualified staff with good knowledge and understanding of child development. Induction procedures are thorough and ensure that staff have a good awareness of expected practice. Regular staff appraisals are used effectively to ascertain continued suitability. The majority of the staff team have worked in the setting for many years and this allows both children and their parents to experience a sense of familiarity and security from the stability provided.

The well organised and welcoming environment contributes to children's good levels of independence and actively increases their confidence as they initiate their own play and learning. Effective deployment of staff ensures children receive good levels of support; staff know the children well and work well as a team and in the children's best interests.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The provision is proactive in identifying their own areas for development through thorough completion of the self evaluation document against each National Standard and by welcoming ongoing feedback and suggestions from parents. This demonstrates a strong willingness to continually improve and has a positive impact on the care, learning and play provided. All staff have a high regard for the well-being of the children and ensure that most procedures work well in practice. However, the procedure for monitoring the completion of progress files is not entirely effective as it does not ensure that all files include the same level of detail.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to make improvements to safety, the resources, to include those that reflect positive images, and to improve the layout to ensure children are able to make choices. A new safety checklist has been designed and this is used daily to ensure areas are safe for use before the children arrive. Resources which reflect positive images have been improved and now include a selection of books, small world figures and posters. Regular activities are also planned that centre on current festivals and celebrations, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year and this too raises children's awareness of the wider world. Staff have made changes to the layout of the provision. This has been successful in promoting children's independence and encouraging their decision making skills as they exercise choice and make full use of the provision. They were also asked to make improvements to the support provided

for children with additional needs, and the system for recording what children do and to use this information to inform planning. Staff have received support from the local authority and parents and professionals work effectively in practice to support children with additional needs. The system for recording what children do has been further developed and is used regularly at planning's meetings to ensure this information is used to plan the next steps in children's play and learning.

At the last nursery education inspection the setting were asked to extend the opportunities for children to investigate how everyday things work and how things happen. Additional resources have been purchased including cameras for the children's use. Activities are planned for this purpose, for instance designing and making a pulley system to erect bird feeders and hanging baskets. The setting were also asked to improve the teaching methods to encourage children to form letters and know them, and to be able to link written letters to sounds. Staff have attended associated training and are working well with local schools to address this. Staff regularly talk to children about letter sounds and many children are able to correctly identify some letters in their own names, as well as identifying these letters on the computer keyboard, such as O for octopus and orange and M for mummy. The children's assessment and achievement records have also been developed to ensure that staff are aware of each child's stage of learning, and are able to plan for the next step and offer appropriate challenges. These include a profile which staff complete to show children's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, within each area of learning.

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.

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 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):

- review risk assessments to further improve safety

- improve accessibility of the policies and procedures file for parents
- improve the accessibility of children's progress files to ensure parents have regular access to this information(also applies to nursery education).

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):

- improve opportunities for children to take part in large scale construction to further improve their physical skills
- improve systems for monitoring the completion of children's progress files to check they all include the same level of detail.

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