

Stone Cross Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507910
Inspection date	04 May 2007
Inspector	Alison Weaver
Setting Address	Stone Cross Memorial Hall, Dittons Road, Stone Cross, East Sussex, BN24 5ET
Telephone number	01323 769053
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Registered person	Stone Cross 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Stone Cross Pre-school has been running since 1952. It operates from one large room and a smaller room in a community hall in Stone Cross. The hall is situated near to local amenities and a primary school. A maximum of 30 children may attend at any one time. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.15 until 11.45. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The committee also runs a sister group nearby which takes children from three years of age.

There are currently 39 children from two to under four years on roll. Of these 13 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The setting employs six staff. Of these, two of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff working towards a recognised qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally clean environment. They learn about the need for personal hygiene through everyday routines such as washing their hands before snack times. However, the use of a shared bowl of water at other times is less effective at preventing cross infection. Staff have satisfactory hygiene practices for nappy changing including the use of disposable gloves. The area used for changing nappies does not always give sufficient privacy for the children.

There is a suitable sick child policy in place to minimise the spread of infectious diseases in the children. However, staff do not fully think through the implications of a bout of sickness in the setting when planning some activities. Most of the staff have current first aid training so are able to act in a child's best interest if they have an accident. The recording of any accidents and administration of medication help keep parents informed about their child's health. The setting ensures that it has necessary details of any individual health issues about a child so that they can care for the child appropriately and respect parents wishes.

Children generally have easy access to a jug of water during the sessions so can help themselves when they get thirsty. They have a variety of healthy snacks, with fruit regularly included. Children learn about keeping healthy when they do topics on the need to care for their teeth. The staff fail to reinforce the written sun safety policy with the children to ensure they are not harmed by the sun and heat.

Children enjoy regular physical activities where they develop their gross motor skills as they use the climbing frame and slide. They enjoy playing on the trikes, both indoors and outdoors. They develop good co-ordination as they move around the area. They experience activities such as obstacle courses and soft play. However, the use of space and grouping of the children limits children's opportunities to develop their physical skills. Their fine motor skills develop satisfactorily but this is limited by the small range of tools available to them on a daily basis.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being cared for in a secure environment. Overall, the premises are satisfactorily maintained to prevent children coming to any harm. Regular fire drills are carried out so that staff and children know what to do in an emergency. An appointed health and safety officer carries out formal risk assessments in the setting and deals with any specific concerns that arise. This helps to minimise any potential hazards. There are clear written safety procedures for the staff but some of these are not always carried out in daily practice. For example, children are put at risk from cleaning products when kitchen doors are left open.

There are sufficient staff available but they are not always deployed effectively to ensure children are supervised appropriately. The grouping of children and use of space is a safety concern as it means that at times there is insufficient space available for them to play safely. Children use toys and equipment that are safe and suitable for them. However, some activities set out lack enough parts to enable children to enjoy them fully, for example, the train set. Staff take some opportunities to develop children's understanding of how to stay safe. This includes talking to them about how to use the outdoor slide safely.

There are effective safety procedures for outings, which include site visits beforehand so that any potential risks to children are minimised. Parents are made aware of any areas of concern and the staff take appropriate information with them in case of an accident or emergency. Children are protected by staff who have a satisfactory understanding of child protection procedures. They know what to do if they have a concern about a child. This helps to promote and safeguard children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Most children arrive happily and settle in to the group quickly. However, the environment lacks visual stimulation, as there are very few pictures and displays to make it welcoming and attractive to the children. The lack of displays also fails to support children's learning and the topic work.

At times, new children find it hard to settle down, as there are insufficient activities to interest and distract them. Some activities are very basic and lack sufficient stimulation and challenge for children. The staff fail to promote the planned topics effectively to develop children's understanding. The grouping of the children is poor at times and space is not utilised to meet the needs of the children. Whilst staff are caring and friendly, they are not always spending their time interacting with the children at activities to help their development and support their play. Children are left too much to their own devices.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Whilst the planning is basic and adequately covers all six areas of learning, the staff fail to put it into practice on a daily basis. Activities are on the plans but not all are implemented which means that not all areas of learning are equally covered. This results in the children not experiencing a balanced curriculum.

Children do not make sufficient progress towards the early learning goals because the interaction from staff is often limited and very basic. Some staff fail to extend children's thinking and, for example, only ask very closed questions at circle times. There is too little to capture children's interest and most activities fail to give sufficient challenge to them. Some activities are used as time fillers rather than for any aim or purpose, so children gain little from them. Limited thought is given by most staff as to how to carry out activities effectively and there is very little useful evaluation of the activities.

Staff take into account children's interests in their plans but fail to identify their individual needs and progress towards the early learning goals. The planning fails to show differentiation to ensure all children are challenged and moved on in their learning. Focused activities tend to be adult led and there is an over emphasis on worksheets and pre-cut templates. This shows a lack of understanding of how children learn.

The children are generally confident but few opportunities are created for them to develop their independence. For example, at snack times they do not serve each other or learn to pour their own drinks although they do put their dirty cups in the bowl. They see to their own personal needs such as putting on dressing up clothes. Children do not have many opportunities for self-selection of resources.

Children talk openly but some are not good at listening to others and cause disruption as they compete in shouting to each other at an activity. The circle times are often ineffective as staff

fail to use the time to promote and extend language skills successfully. The children enjoy stories with adults but staff rarely spend time with them snuggled up looking at books together. The planned letter of the week is not reinforced so lacks meaning to the children. Mark making is available but is often poorly resourced and unattractive so restricts children's imagination and enjoyment. There is very little use of name cards other than at the self-registration activity to help children learn to recognise their names.

Staff do not promote children's mathematical development sufficiently. They fail to reinforce children's mathematical understanding in everyday activities and routines such as circle and snack times. There are some opportunities for children to explore and investigate their world. They enjoy exploring the cornflour and chatting to the adult about what it feels like. They have fun playing in the sand but at times, there is insufficient adult support to help them. They plant and watch runner beans and courgettes grow in the garden. Children have limited daily access to different materials and tools. They experience different forms of technology on a regular basis. Children enjoy outings to places such as Sharnfold Farm where they feed the sheep. However, staff fail to use these opportunities to extend children's learning back at the group due to poor planning of the topics.

Children join in with singing and action songs. They have opportunities to explore sounds that different instruments make. However, due to a lack of adult support this activity deteriorates into just making noises and banging the instruments hard on the table. Children enjoy painting and like to explore with their hands. Some activities are too adult led which limits children's opportunities to express their own ideas and imagination. The role play areas, such as the fire engine and office, are poorly resourced and often lack adult support. This also limits the children's opportunities to use their imagination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Staff obtain a variety of useful information from parents about each child by using the registration form and the 'Key worker information sheet'. However, they fail to make full use of some of the information to help new children settle in to the group. Children have access to a few resources that show positive images of different aspects of society. This small range of resources limits the opportunities for staff to instil in children a positive attitude to others. The setting has appropriate arrangements in place to care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Behaviour management is frequently ineffective. There are no obvious clear boundaries and rules for the children. This results in several children becoming very disruptive, particularly during group times, when they are bored. Children behave inappropriately with toys but staff fail to deal with the incidents. Children deliberately throw food on the floor at snack time but staff do not follow situations like this through with effective behaviour management strategies. At times, staff show a lack of awareness of how to deal with difficult situations. Children fail to learn to manage their own behaviour and to learn to respect others and property. There are often disputes over toys. Many children are not sufficiently aware of the effects of their actions on others, such as hitting and fighting. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. They receive some basic information about the Foundation Stage so that they have a general outline of what children should be learning. Staff also give them useful written information about how to help children in their learning at home.

Parents can be involved in their child's learning through the use of the 'Home to Pre-school Workbooks' which they complete with their children. Regular meetings are held with parents to discuss children's progress and look at the individual records and folders. However, due to the lack of emphasis on some areas of learning the assessment records do not always show clearly how well children are progressing in all six areas.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Leadership and management are inadequate. There is a new staff team and committee who have yet to establish a good working relationship together. The staff work reasonably well with each other but the overall organisation of the setting is weak. Space is not always used well, with the children sometimes confined into a very small area with insufficient room to play. Time and resources are not used effectively to support children's learning. Staff deployment is often ineffective, with staff spending too much time on tasks away from the children. This limits children's potential to develop and make progress. The setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The sessions and groupings of the children are not organised to meet the needs of the children. The lowering of the age of entry for new children has had a considerable negative impact on the group. Too many young children have started in the group at the same time and this has resulted in staff struggling to settle them in. This affects the care of the older children as they do not receive as much adult attention as they need.

Overall, the recruitment procedures are satisfactory to help ensure staff are suitable to work with children. The necessary policies and procedures are in place to help guide staff in their work but these are not always implemented. The legally required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place. The induction procedures for new staff are satisfactory and there is an appraisal system in place. Ongoing training is encouraged. There are contingency plans in place to cover staff sickness but these do not always work out well in practice. Volunteers are unclear about their roles and what is expected of them.

There is no effective monitoring or evaluation of the nursery education provision and as a result, children's individual learning needs are not promoted. Identified improvements needed from the last inspection remain outstanding.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection three recommendations were made. The first was that the toys and equipment must be well maintained. Overall, this is satisfactorily met as a regular check is carried out on the equipment used. However, some of the toys are rather tired looking and lack sufficient pieces for children to be able to enjoy them fully. The setting was also asked to improve the daily availability of resources that show positive images of race, culture, religion and disability. This remains a concern, as there are still few resources regularly available for children to develop a positive attitude to differences in society. The last care recommendation related to documentation. The child protection policy has been updated so that there are clear procedures if an allegation is made against a member of staff to help protect the children. The complaints policy has only very recently been updated, as it had not been done after the last inspection.

At the last nursery education inspection two key issues were identified. Very limited progress has been made to address these. The setting was asked to make more effective use of the indoor environment to promote children's learning. There are still very few visual displays used to support children's learning. The setting was also asked to extend the planning to show how activities could be adapted to take into account children learning at different rates and abilities. This is not being sufficiently addressed in the current plans. In addition, the setting still does not take into account the information in the children's records to help plan the next steps for individual children's learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that staff deployment, resources and activities are organised to meet the children's needs effectively (also applies to nursery education)
- develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour, taking into account their age and stage of development
- plan and implement a good range of activities and play opportunities that are stimulating and fun for all ages and abilities of children (also applies to 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 quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure planning includes differentiation to support and challenge all children appropriately and evaluate the activities to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum
- develop skills of staff so that they can actively support children at activities and move them on in their learning (also applies to care).

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