

Potters Cross Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218207
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Inspector	Anne Georgina Phillips
Setting Address	Methodist Church Hall, Enville Road, Kinver, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY7 6AA
Telephone number	01384 873362 and 07742616192
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Registered person	Potters Cross 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Potters Cross Pre-School playgroup opened in 1970. The group operates from the Methodist Church Hall in Kinver, South Staffordshire. It has use of the hall and two additional rooms. There are local shops, a park and a school within walking distance. It is a registered charity managed by a board of trustees. There is also a voluntary committee made up of parents of the children at the playgroup and members of the local community.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the group at any one time. It is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12:00 for 38 weeks of the year during school term times only. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently 54 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The group currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The group employs seven members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The group belongs to an early years

support group and the Pre-school Learning Alliance. Students may attend on work placement. The group has established close links with all local schools and pre-schools.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive because staff follow highly effective procedures and practices which meet children's physical, nutritional and health needs. Staff ensure that current health guidelines and effective policies and procedures are implemented consistently well to protect children from infection. Children develop an excellent understanding of good health and hygiene practices. They confidently explain why they need to wash their hands to get rid of germs after using the toilet and before eating their snack. They dispense the liquid soap themselves and wash their hands thoroughly so that they are becoming increasingly independent in their personal care. They are quick to explain why it is important to clean the mouthpiece of the didgeridoo after each person has a try.

Children's individual dietary needs are very well supported by knowledgeable and vigilant staff. They ensure that parents' wishes are closely followed, undertake additional training if necessary and ensure that emergency supplies are close at hand in order to meet individual children's needs promptly. Children are closely supervised at all times to minimise the risk of accidents. Staff are well prepared if accidents do occur. All staff hold a current first aid certificate. There is a cooling gel pad and a very well stocked first aid box readily at hand.

Children help themselves to easily accessible drinking water throughout the session and enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables at snack time. They relish making choices between good sized portions of pear, apple, banana or cucumber and are involved in making choices about the fruit they might have at snack time next week such as melon. They talk about which foods are good or bad for their health. Parental involvement in a project to increase children's awareness of the importance of choosing water or milk instead of juice has contributed significantly to developing children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

All children develop a very positive attitude to physical exercise and gain excellent control of their bodies through a comprehensive range of varied, daily activities within the spacious environment of the hall or on outings to the local school field. Younger children enjoy the challenge of coordinating their movements when marching round as well as playing a musical instrument. Older children become very skilful when doing their gym exercises, managing their clothes and shoes, using balancing equipment and manipulating a wide variety of tools and equipment. Sessions are carefully balanced to give all the children daily opportunities to be active, play quietly or rest comfortably if they are tired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a very spacious, accessible and child friendly environment. It is made very welcoming with attractive posters and displays of their colourful and individual artwork. Children are very safe and secure. They enjoy very stable care that protects them from harm extremely well. Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised because staff are extremely vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Security is excellent

ensuring that no person who is not vetted enters the premises unannounced or children leave without a parent or previously agreed carer.

Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance and involve children effectively in organising their environment. Children develop an excellent understanding of how to think and act safely during planned and spontaneous events. They calmly take part in frequent fire drills so that they will be able to respond promptly in case of a real emergency. They explain that it is important to be careful with the hot tap so that they do not hurt themselves. They start to associate red with danger as part of a poem that older children can recite. They learn about safety in their local community with an outing to the canal and visits from police officers and fire-fighters. They act out what they have learnt in their imaginative play.

Children use high-quality equipment that is very appropriate to their age and stage of development. Activities and equipment are presented very appropriately to children at their level so that they can make active choices. The new dinosaur Duplo is very popular with children because it allows them to develop their imaginative play. Lots of good quality messy play opportunities such as free painting, sand play and play dough are available each session which provides open-ended activities that ensure children are able to develop their own ideas at their own pace. All children are fully included because of sensitive adult support which ensures that all children have equal access to resources and activities.

Children are very well-protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection policies and procedures and give top priority to children's welfare. Child protection procedures are detailed, up to date and shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are enthusiastic about their time in the pre-school where their individual views and opinions are sought and valued.

They achieve well because staff are highly skilled and use their exceptional understanding of early years guidance such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, to provide high quality care and education.

Children arrive happy and eager to participate. New and younger children are helped to settle by staff who are sensitive towards their individual needs. Children's comforters are valued and readily at hand if they need reassurance and they receive a warm hug from an adult if they are tired or upset so that they quickly become emotionally secure and confident. An effective keyworker system ensures that staff have an excellent knowledge of the needs of each child and are able to pitch the challenge of activities successfully to enable children to quickly develop at their own pace.

Close and caring relationships increase children's sense of trust and help them to develop a strong sense of self. Early communication skills are extremely well supported by high quality adult: child interactions. Adults are observant and responsive to children so that they develop excellent communication skills. They begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they join in a diverse range of exploratory and sensory experiences.

They become increasingly independent in their personal care and making choices about their individual activities. They are curious and eager to learn, for example, questioning why the wet sand does not shake through the sieve.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are often inspired by stimulating activities which are very relevant to their needs. They access an extensive range of well chosen resources which support their development extremely well across all areas of learning.

They become excited by the activities on offer and develop excellent attitudes to learning. Staff are skilled in adapting the level of challenge in the individual activities to suit each child. This ensures that they succeed, are self-assured in their play and face the next steps in their learning with confidence. This specially tailored programme which monitors each child's progress and provides individual care and attention ensures that children develop at their own pace and achieve their full potential.

Children listen intently to stories and recount favourite poems. They develop a real love of books and handle these carefully and correctly. All children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are adept at writing their own names. Some older children competently write their own name and then ask an adult to write their friend's names so that they can copy these accurately too. They put their writing into an envelope and proudly show their friends.

Children make sense of the world around them when visiting areas of interest in the local community such as the houses built in the sandstone rocks near the pre-school. They explore the cultures of other countries by examining and using real artefacts such as a boomerang and a didgeridoo from Australia. Children are extremely imaginative and creative. They learn about the stars and planets and create exciting, individual artwork which is displayed attractively and promotes children's self-worth and high self-esteem. Children are inquisitive. They are fascinated by changes to the properties and textures of the sand. Older children are confident to express their ideas about why the sand will not shake through the sieve. They explain to younger ones that it is feels hard because it is wet compared to the week before when it was soft and dry.

Children work very well together. They work co-operatively when building their very own creations with the 'Mega Construction' equipment. They spontaneously look for and find the pieces that other children might need such as specially shaped or connecting pieces. They concentrate and persist for long periods of time when experimenting with how the wheels fix onto the axles and adjusting the screws to stop them falling off again. They make suggestions about how problems might be solved showing that they are developing very good thinking and reasoning skills.

Children are very confident in using numbers in their play, planned activities and daily routines. They enthusiastically ask for and succeed with more challenging number activities. Older children competently identify the numbers on the dominos without having to count the number of dots. They quickly identify the difference between the number six and number nine and use numbers in everyday activities such as counting out the plates needed for each table at snack time.

They develop excellent physical skills through a wide variety of experiences including moving imaginatively to the 'Sticky Kids' tapes, the Australian music or using the balance beams and parachute. They skilfully use felt tips to elaborately decorate their boomerangs or competently operate the mouse for the computer programme. They develop independence in managing

their personal care, dressing and undressing for the gym activities and in looking after their bodies by eating and drinking healthily.

Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs when talking to parents and carers. They build on this information effectively to help children achieve as much as they can. Frequent observations, thorough planning and detailed, daily evaluation by staff at the end of each session ensures that an excellent balance between adult and child led activities is achieved. This ensures that children learn at their own pace and quickly move on to the next step in their learning. Staff are very perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions very successfully to challenge children's thinking and language skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The special atmosphere created by working closely with parents and carers ensures that all children are welcomed. Each plays a full part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. Staff support younger children in sharing and turn taking so that older children spontaneously become helpful and kind to one another. Children respond extremely well to high expectations to behave because staff warmly praise good and considerate behaviour. They use imaginative methods to develop children's understanding. For example, children listen closely to the story about the ostrich who was voted the kindest animal because he had helped so many of the other animals. Older children know and respect consistent boundaries such as sharing the aprons at messy activities, helping to tidy away the toys before snack time or waiting to use the active play equipment. They concentrate closely to identify their own space around the edge of the parachute without being reminded.

Children have extensive opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and a world around them through planned activities, visitors to the pre-school and outings to local places of interest. They use and see numerous positive reflections of diversity and disability in resources and posters. They find out about the cultures and traditions of others and are actively involved in their local village community. They fundraise for causes such as Children in Need and the Meningitis Trust. They take part in the scarecrow festival and learn about people who help them in the local community such as police officers, health workers and fire-fighters. Children's spiritual and moral social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Excellent relationships and active involvement contribute significantly to children's well-being in the pre-school. Parent's views about the children's needs and interests are actively sought before the children start at the setting and on a regular basis throughout their time there. Staff ensure that all parents know how their children are progressing and developing. Children benefit greatly from the involvement of the parents in projects which contribute to their good health, safety, development and learning. For example, they are actively involved in developing children's awareness of healthy eating and drinking guidelines. They support children in the recording of the adventures of Little Ted who visits individual children's homes over holidays and weekends, so that these can be shared with all children at the pre-school. Children are keen and eager to hear the latest instalment in his adventures.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care and learning is greatly enhanced by the exceptional quality of the organisation. Leadership and management is outstanding.

The premises are very well-organised. The spacious indoor environment is laid out and used to maximise the play and learning opportunities available to children at each session. Younger and older groups of children are cared for in separate groups with each one having daily opportunities to experience wide ranging physical play activities in the spacious hall. Smaller rooms are used imaginatively to provide excellent opportunities for quieter, messy and creative activities. The dividing up of the different age and ability groups ensures that the level of challenge in activities is especially well matched to children's individual needs and ensures that they achieve their full potential. Children are excited by learning and build excellent relationships.

Children benefit from an extremely competent, well qualified and very experienced staff team and effective management. All staff are vetted, inducted and monitored. They are very committed and hard-working and execute each new initiative with enthusiasm. They conscientiously reflect on, monitor and improve the quality of their care and education after undertaking numerous training courses. They regularly revisit their own comprehensive self evaluation which includes consulting children about their experiences. They demonstrate a real depth of knowledge, experience and skill which they use to create a rich learning environment for children. They build genuine and rewarding relationships with parents and other agencies to enhance children's learning and development. Overall children's needs are met.

All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and regularly reviewed. It is extremely well-kept and accessibly stored. Some records are stored off the premises because of the nature of the building to ensure confidentiality but these are readily available when required for inspection. Records of children's progress are very thorough, attractively presented, shared and valued by parents who contribute their own comments.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection three recommendations relating to improving care and one point for consideration in relation to nursery education were raised.

The pre-school was asked to improve the documentation in relation to: the written record of fire drills; the detail in written accident records and complaints procedure. Very good progress has been made in all areas so safeguarding children's welfare effectively. Documentation relating to the recording of fire drills is now comprehensive and very detailed. Accident records now include details of any injuries and description of the accident in full. The complaints procedure which is available to parents now includes information about the contact details of the regulator and has also been updated to include the new regulations for dealing with complaints including timescales to reflect the legislation brought into force in October 2005.

In relation to nursery education, the pre-school was asked to give consideration to improving the opportunities the children to use writing for various purposes during their play. Children now have numerous opportunities to develop their writing skills both in writing their own names and those of their friends. They competently used pencils and felt tip pens both during organised activities and also when preparing something to put in the post for their friends.

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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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