



Cottage Pre-School Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109404
Inspection date	03 October 2005
Inspector	Lisa Toole
Setting Address	Christie Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1PL
Telephone number	01273 476177
E-mail	tel contact 01273 474979
Registered person	Cottage Pre-School Group
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?

Cottage Pre-School Group has been registered since 1990, but has been running as a pre-school since the 1970s. The group operates from a hall within St Mary's Social Centre in Lewes, East Sussex and is run by a committee of parents whose children attend. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open, during term-time only, from 09:15 until 11:45 every weekday.

There are currently 14 children from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 4 children

receive funding for nursery education. The children attending are representative of the local community.

The pre-school employs nine members of staff, of which five hold appropriate early years qualifications and many have experience working in childcare. The group receive support from the local Education Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health within the pre-school is appropriately supported by staff who have a secure understanding of the group's health and hygiene procedures. Risks of cross infection are reduced through regular cleaning and hygiene routines; although some children wash their hands in a shared bowl of water, which puts them at risk of infection. Children are independent and confident in their self-care skills; they take themselves to the toilet and automatically wash their hands afterwards and wash their hands if they are messy after doing craft activities.

Children are well cared for should they become ill while at the pre-school, although a comfortable area to rest and relax is not currently available to them. There are good procedures in place should a child have an accident and parents are given an information sheet if their child has bumped their head or hurt their eye, which means they are made aware of possible signs for concern following an accident.

Staff liaise closely with parents to ensure any dietary requirements are understood and met. Children are not always provided with snacks that promote healthy eating, as they usually have biscuits with some fruit. However, the pre-school is taking positive steps to improve the provision, by beginning to offer an increasing amount of fresh fruit instead of biscuits to ensure that children's health is enhanced. Children can have a drink of water at any time to remain hydrated but they are not always encouraged to pour their own drink and are unable to freely access it to develop their independence and pouring skills.

Children's fine motor skills are generally developing well. They are gaining confidence when selecting and using small equipment, such as puzzle pieces, threading, using paintbrushes at the painting easel and using tools with play dough. However, there are few opportunities for children to self select pens and scissors to practice their developing fine motor and writing skills.

Children enjoy the physical play time and are provided with a varied range of activities both in and outdoors to support their development. Children particularly enjoy playing in the sand pit in the garden, digging and building as well as playing on the slide.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from playing in a spacious, safe and well-organised environment, where they and their families are warmly welcomed. Parents and their children participate in self-registration, collecting the child's name tag and hanging it up with their own towel, which helps increase their sense of belonging.

There is a wide variety of age appropriate, stimulating toys and equipment to support children's play and learning in all areas of development. However, there are few opportunities for children to be able to freely access toys and resources to promote their independence and choice. The equipment is clean, well maintained and checked routinely for any damage, which ensures children are able to play safely.

Staff are aware of the need to ensure children's safety and well-being. Daily risk assessments are carried out, however, records are not available for these assessments and detailed records of fire drills are also not maintained. Some staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a fire, but new staff are not as this was not covered in the induction programme. This results in children being put at risk. Children are able to learn about and are encouraged to have regard for their own personal safety through procedures such as how to climb safely on to the slide, how to carry a chair and how to hold and use scissors appropriately. The premises are kept secure, staff are well deployed at all times, both in and outdoors and there are effective procedures in place for the safe collection of children.

The pre-school's child protection procedures promote and safeguard children's welfare and parents are informed in writing of the staff's duty to report any concerns. However, staff have less understanding of the procedures to follow should an allegation of abuse be made against a staff member which impacts upon staff's ability to safeguard a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel settled and secure in the warm and welcoming environment as staff work closely with them and take a genuine interest in what they are doing and have to say. Children are confident learners and they participate in activities with enthusiasm. They play co-operatively, are friendly towards each other and adults in the group. They enjoy snack times, free play and outdoor play and line up eagerly as they wait to go outside.

Staff are caring and dedicated and they actively encourage each child to have a strong sense of belonging. However, the adult direction of some activities restricts children's opportunities for spontaneous play and inhibits their learning. There is a good range of toys and resources to support the children's learning. Resources are enjoyed and generally well used by the children but they are not freely accessible to them, resulting in them only being able to play with what is already set out. There is also a tendency for similar resources to be put out each day which results in the children losing interest in them and in turn not using them. This means that children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to lead their own play or make

independent choice.

A varied range of activities and topics including people who help us, night and day, autumn and shapes are provided for the children to support their development and learning. However, there is no formal planning in place to support the two year olds. This means that activities are not always appropriate for their needs or stage of development. Too few opportunities are also provided for free creativity or imaginative play such as dressing up.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making progress in their learning as most of the staff have an understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Staff plan a range of topics which encompass the six areas of learning. Activities are generally planned in detail, but do not clearly show how differing children's abilities are catered for and do not appear to arise directly from the children's needs, wants and interests. In general they are adult directed, which restricts children's ability to experiment, explore and learn for themselves. Staff are increasingly observing the children and intend to use their notes to assess children's achievements to help identify the children's stages of learning and plan their next steps.

Children learn to recognise their name by self-registering and finding their name at the table at snack time. They have good communication skills and are able to express themselves in a clear manner. Staff listen with interest to children's thoughts and ideas. However, there are less opportunities for them to practise their mark making and emergent writing skills through every day experiences. Children have some opportunities to enjoy books and stories though the book corner is not particularly inviting and lacks comfortable seating for children to relax while they look at books.

Children are confident counting from one to ten and enjoy opportunities to learn through practical activities such as counting fruit and cups at snack time. They have an understanding of simple addition and subtraction, shapes and patterns and concepts such as who is the biggest as they stand at the top of the slide. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about the world around them, for example making diva candles to celebrate Diwali as part of their topic on Night and Day. Staff do not regularly provide experiences for children to investigate and use simple everyday technology. Children also have limited opportunities to enjoy song and story times and dance or music sessions in order to develop their speech, language and understanding of rhythm and sound.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children interact positively with staff who act as good role models; children behave very well and are developing their confidence and self esteem. They play together co-operatively, share and take turns. Children are also learning about how to use good manners,

being reminded to say please and thank you at snack time and the children often respond without any prompting. Each child is included as an individual and time is spent finding out about each child's likes and dislikes so that staff are able to care appropriately for each child, according to their parents' wishes.

Children are encouraged to talk about things that are important to them such as their family lives. They participate in the celebration of some cultural and religious festivals to increase their understanding of the world around them, such as Chinese New Year, Easter and Diwali. Staff work closely with parents to identify any special educational needs so that children can be cared for according to their specific individual need. There is a detailed special educational needs policy in place to support staff and their care of children. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a clear understanding of her role, which ensures that children's specific needs can be identified and met quickly.

Children behave well; they share and play harmoniously. The staff manage children's behaviour in a calm, positive manner, which encourages children to respond effectively to any guidance. Children are confident and motivated to learn and staff encourage, praise and support children to have self-esteem and a sense of pride in their work.

Partnership with parents is good. Staff promote close partnerships with the parents and encourage them to feel at ease and welcome in the pre-school. They receive written information about the pre-school and are kept informed through regular newsletters. Staff encourage parents to visit with a child before admission and to stay with them as long as they wish, which helps the children feel settled and secure.

Parents also receive written information regarding the Foundation Stage. Parents feel involved in their children's learning and benefit from receiving informal feedback about the progress their children are making.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Most of the staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the 'Curriculum for the Foundation Stage' although not all staff are involved in the planning. There are detailed plans in place regarding the curriculum for three and four-year-olds and assessment is beginning to be carried out on the children. It is, however, difficult to clearly ascertain from the plans whether the learning objectives are being met, so that children do achieve or how staff plan for children's individual stages of development, in order for them to make progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

Children are generally well grouped and there is a key worker system in place. However, staff do not take advantage of the available space to separate the different age groups during the session to ensure their specific learning needs are met. The children under three years old are included and valued as individuals but there is no specific planning in place and this means that the programme of activities is not always suitable for their developmental needs. Children are not actively involved in

the planning or organisation of the day, by contributing ideas of what they like to do and they have limited opportunities to independently access resources or make choices about what they do and play with.

Children benefit from experienced staff who are very caring and committed to ensuring children are happy and settled at the pre-school. Effective systems are in place for staff recruitment and staff work well as a team, which helps ensure the pre-school runs smoothly and children's needs are met. The induction of new staff is very limited, which means that they are not sufficiently aware of the group's policies and procedures and this impacts upon the welfare of the children. Staff are positively encouraged to attend a variety of training courses to increase their knowledge of childcare and education for young children. Staff hold meetings to review their practice and are committed to improving the quality of the provision for the children.

Most of the required documentation to promote children's safety and well-being is in place and is being accurately maintained. There is a register of attendance in place, but it does not show children's or staff's times of arrival and departure. There is no fire drill record in place, although drills are carried out, or details of the risk assessments carried out, the uncollected child policy is not in the file and some staff records are not in the staffing record.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was set two recommendations relating to care. The organisation of snack time has now improved. Children find their own name at the table, snack time is used as a social experience, with staff sitting chatting to the children, discussing the fruit they are having, while children pass the fruit around the table to each other. A written policy regarding an uncollected child was implemented following the last inspection but was not in the policy file at this inspection. Staff do, however, have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities should a child fail to be collected. A further recommendation has been made, relating to documentation.

Following the last education inspection the pre-school was asked to improve the use of assessment records to help inform planning and to include extension activities for more able children. The pre-school is now introducing another new form of assessment, linked to the Foundation Stage Stepping Stones which they plan to use to identify each child's stage of development. They are not currently adapting activities for the more able children but intend to do so once they have an increased understanding of where each child is at developmentally.

The pre-school was also asked to provide more opportunities for children to engage in meaningful role play and to provide areas where children can experiment with writing for different purposes. Role play activities are sometimes linked to the current topic but these are rather limited and children continue to need to be provided with a wider range of creative activities to support their imaginative play. Children are provided with some opportunities for mark making to develop their early writing skills

although this is an area for further development which the staff are fully aware of and they provide a range of meaningful activities to support children's fine motor skills.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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 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 rigorous induction procedures are in place so that staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of their role and the policies and procedures of the group
- ensure that all required documentation relating to the uncollected child policy, risk assessment, fire drills and staff records are in place
- increase opportunities for children to independently access toys and resources in order for them to have more choice about what they play with and use
- review and improve the provision of care for children under three through the use of the Birth to three framework.

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):

- increase opportunities and activities to support and promote children's creative development so they develop their imagination, make decisions and use their own ideas in order to express their creativity
- ensure that the planning reflects the needs of the children attending the group and that it builds on what children know and can do as well as encouraging them to make progress towards the early learning goals

- increase the range of meaningful activities and experiences that are provided for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of ICT.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk