



Polegate Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109485
Inspection date	17 October 2005
Inspector	Lisa Toole
Setting Address	54 Windsor Way, Polegate, East Sussex, BN26 6QF
Telephone number	01323 482448
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Registered person	The Polegate 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 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?

Polegate Pre-School Playgroup opened in 1964. It operates from three rooms in a local community centre in Polegate, East Sussex, although not all the rooms are available at every session. The playgroup serves the local area. A maximum of 40 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup opens 5 days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.15 until 11.45.

There are currently 50 children from 2 to 4 years on roll. Of these 20 children receive

funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup currently supports children with special educational needs, and who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs 12 staff, 8 of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is appropriately supported by staff who have a clear understanding of the group's health and hygiene procedures. Risks of cross-infection are generally well reduced through regular cleaning and hygiene routines; although children have been washing their hands in a shared bowl of water, which puts them at risk of infection and soap has not always been easily accessible to the children. Children are well cared for should they become ill while at the playgroup, although a comfortable area to rest and relax is not always available to them. The accident and medication records are accurately maintained, existing injuries are also recorded and almost all of the staff hold a current first aid certificate which enables them to care for a child appropriately should they have an accident while in the playgroup.

Staff liaise closely with parents to ensure any dietary requirements or food allergies are understood and staff are vigilant about ensuring they are fully met. Children are provided with snacks that promote healthy eating and they clearly enjoy their snacks of toast and a variety of fresh fruit such as mango, strawberries and apple. Children can have a drink of water at any time to remain hydrated but they are not always encouraged to pour their own drink or pass the plate of fruit around at snack time in order 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, paintbrushes, scissors and using tools with play dough. However, there are few opportunities for children to self-select pens to practice their mark making and writing skills.

Children enjoy the physical play activities and are provided with a varied range of activities to support their development. Children enjoy opportunities to practise their throwing and catching skills and show confidence when using the climbing apparatus indoors. Children comment that they enjoy riding tricycles in the garden and running around although children have not gone outside to play during the inspection.

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 are able to play and move around freely.

There is a wide variety of age-appropriate, stimulating toys and equipment to support children's play and learning in all areas of development and they are well used by the children. 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's welfare.

Staff are aware of the need to ensure children's safety and well-being. Daily risk assessments are carried out to identify and reduce any potential hazards to the children. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a fire and children are able to learn about and have regard for their own personal safety through procedures such as how to climb safely on to the A frame and how to hold and use scissors appropriately. The premises are kept secure and there are effective procedures in place for the safe collection of children. Although staff are generally well deployed throughout the session; during the inspection a small group of children are left in the hall, for a short period of time, without a staff member and this impacts on their safety and wellbeing.

The playgroup's child protection procedures are very basic; they do not clearly detail the procedures that staff should follow to report any concerns and some staff are not clear about the procedures they should follow if concerned, in order to promote and safeguard the children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are confident learners and they participate in activities with enthusiasm; they are happy and clearly enjoy their play and the activities provided for them. They play co-operatively, their social interaction is positive and staff spend time playing with the children, helping them to develop new skills and make progress in their learning.

Staff are caring, dedicated and they encourage each child to have a sense of belonging and feel secure in the group. However, the adult direction of some activities, especially the focussed activities, restricts children's opportunities for spontaneous play and inhibits their learning. The group times, such as registration, are very short and do not appear to be positive and worthwhile experiences for the children, resulting in them sitting without direction or stimulation.

There is a good range of toys and resources to support the children's learning. Resources are enjoyed and very 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. 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 rainbows, Halloween, camouflage and pond life 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.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making progress in their learning as 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, based around the Stepping Stones and aspects of learning. However, activities are often adult directed with some missed opportunities to extend learning; for example, the children find a real spider during a session and although the children look at it in a pot, there is no discussion about what it looks like, where it lives, how many legs it has etc. This restricts children's ability to explore, question, investigate and learn for themselves. Staff observe the children and use their notes to assess children's achievements to help identify the children's stages of learning and plan their next steps as well as supporting future planning.

Children learn to recognise their name by wearing a badge and finding their name at the table at snack time. They have good communication skills and are able to express themselves with confidence. Staff listen with interest to children's thoughts and ideas but miss opportunities to extend learning through the use of effective questioning. Children listen well during story times and enjoy opportunities to anticipate what will happen next or what the next rhyming word will be. There are limited opportunities for children to practise their mark making and emergent writing skills through every day experiences but they do learn about a different letter of the alphabet at each rising fives session and are encouraged to bring in a relevant item from home. 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 towers of bricks and skittles. They have an understanding of shapes and patterns and concepts such as what is the biggest as they construct with large bricks and enjoy learning about heavy, light and empty by filling and emptying containers of sand.

Limited opportunities are provided for children to learn about the world around them through dressing-up in police officers' and crossing patrol clothes as well as celebrating cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year. However, the staff have limited understanding of other festivals and this restricts children's opportunities to learn more about the world in which they live. Experiences for children to investigate and use simple everyday technology are provided and children enjoy using the play telephones and remote control cars.

Children are motivated, keen to learn and participate in all the activities with enthusiasm during rising fives sessions as well as in the hall.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

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. Each child is included as an individual and time is spent finding out about each child's likes and dislikes, health and dietary needs so that staff are able to care appropriately for each child, according to their parents' wishes. However, staff do not always find out about a child's cultural needs, especially regarding having a second language and this impacts on a child's needs being appropriately met.

Children are encouraged to talk about things that are important to them such as their family lives. They participate in the celebration of limited cultural and religious festivals to increase their understanding of the world around them, such as Chinese New Year 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 basic special educational needs policy in place to support staff and their care of children. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a sound understanding of her role, which ensures that children's specific needs can be identified and met quickly.

Children behave very 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, 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 satisfactory. Staff make some effort to forge a good partnership with the parents. Parents receive a handbook which includes information about the Foundation Stage. They also receive newsletters and there is a parents' notice board; staff encourage them to feel at ease and welcome in the playgroup. In general, parents comment that they are happy with the care their children receive. However, parents are not actively involved in their child's learning and some parents do not feel that they know the stage of development that their child is at or what they are learning about in the playgroup. 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.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of the 'Curriculum for the Foundation Stage' and all staff are involved in the planning which helps them provide a balanced and varied range of activities for the children. There are detailed plans in place regarding the curriculum for three and four-year-olds and assessment is carried out on the children to assess their stage of development and support future planning. However, staff do not evaluate the

curriculum or activities to ensure they are appropriate for the children currently attending the group which restricts their ability to effectively meet the children's individual learning needs.

Children are generally well grouped, with two separate rising fives sessions and there is a key worker system in place; children are appropriately supervised with the exception of a short period of time during the inspection. The children under three years 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. Group times also lack structure and are currently not worthwhile experiences for the children as they have little opportunity to engage in discussion, learn about the current topic or talk about important events in their lives. This means that valuable opportunities for developing communication skills are missed.

Children benefit from experienced staff who are very caring and committed to ensuring children are happy and settled at the playgroup. There are no formal recruitment or induction procedures in place but the group is aware of the need to do so as a matter of urgency. The staff work well as a team, which helps ensure the playgroup runs smoothly. 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 very receptive and committed to improving the quality of the provision for the children.

The required documentation to promote children's safety and wellbeing is in place and is, in general, 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. Some of the policies are very basic, including child protection and special educational needs but all policies are currently being reviewed and updated.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the playgroup was set three recommendations relating to care. The medication record is now accurately maintained. The socket covers no longer present a hazard to children as they are all covered and are routinely checked by staff. The third recommendation related to developing staff's knowledge and understanding of how to promote equality of opportunity for children with English as a second language. Staff have visual timetables to support communication and a limited number of dual language books. However, staff do not always spend sufficient time discussing children's individual cultural needs, for example establishing what a child's home language or second language is and this impacts upon their ability to provide appropriate care for a child with English as an additional language.

Following the last education inspection the playgroup was asked to improve the use

of assessment records to help inform planning and to show how activities would be adapted to cater for children's different abilities. The playgroup uses assessments which are linked to the Foundation Stage Stepping Stones and carry out regular observations to identify a child's next stage of learning and to help inform future planning. The playgroup was also asked to put in place systems to monitor and evaluate the provision. This is not yet being done, although staff are aware of the need to do so in order to ensure the provision is suitable for the children's developmental needs.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 1 2004 Ofsted has received one complaint relating to National Standard 3: Care, Learning and Play. The complaint related to the general provision of care for children, the organisation of assessment of children and the key worker system. Ofsted requested that the group carry out an internal investigation and report back to Ofsted. The internal investigation was carried out, an action plan for improvement was drawn up by the group. No further action was taken by Ofsted.

The registered person remains registered to provide sessional care.

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 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 there are sufficient staff with the children at all times to safeguard their welfare
- ensure that the planning and focused activities reflects the needs and stages of development of the children attending the playgroup and are child directed to maximise the learning opportunities for children
- review the organisation of the day so that group times, including registration,

are worthwhile and positive experiences for all the children in order to promote their learning and development

- increase the range of activities provided for the children to learn about cultural diversity
- update policies and procedures in line with current guidance and legislation.

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):

- ensure that there are effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate the curriculum so that it reflects the learning needs of the children currently attending the group
- increase the opportunities for children to practise and develop their mark making and emergent writing so they become confident writers
- improve communication with parents to ensure they are aware of their child's continuing developmental progress and feel involved in their child's learning
- ensure staff use effective questioning with children in order to further encourage their learning and development.

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