

Crewkerne Methodist Church Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY280504
Inspection date	10 May 2007
Inspector	Mary Daniel
Setting Address	Crewkerne Methodist Church, South Street, Crewkerne, Somerset, TA18 8DB
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Registered person	Crewkerne Methodist Church
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?

Crewkerne Methodist Church Playgroup (Busy Bees) operates from the church hall, which is situated in Crewkerne, Somerset. Children have use of an entrance hall, play room and cloakroom, all sited within the church hall premises. There is no outside play area available. This church committee run group is open from 09.00 to 12:00, Monday to Friday, term time only. It is registered to care for a maximum of 26 children aged between two and five years, at any one time. Children attend from the age of two years and six months. There are currently 41 children on roll, of whom 28 are in receipt of government funding for nursery education. Nine members of staff are employed, of whom the majority have completed training in child care and early years education. The group is supported by the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a wide variety of physical play activities. For example, they join in with a music and movement session and clap their hands up high and low, swing their arms and touch their toes. They jump like a jumping bean, wobble like a jelly bean and run on the spot like a runner bean. This helps them learn to control their large body movements well. They also combine and repeat a range of movements as they jump up and down on the small trampoline. As a result, children have fun while using up their energy and are offered frequent opportunities to exercise.

Children's health is supported well through the relevant recording of accidents and administration of medication. This contributes to maintaining continuity in children's care. Children are encouraged to wash their hands regularly, which supports their understanding of looking after themselves. They wash their hands after going to the toilet using liquid soap and paper towels. This helps to prevent the spread of infection. However, at times all children use a communal bowl of water to wash their hands, such as before snack time. Although anti-bacterial soap is put in the water and paper towels are still used, this does not fully promote clear hygiene practices, or effectively encourage children's independence skills in self-care.

Children's awareness of healthy eating is promoted well as they enjoy tasting fruits, such as pears, apples, bananas and grapes in interesting, themed activities. They feel the skins of the different fruits and talk about whether they are hard, soft or smooth and paint 'healthy eating' pictures. They play a matching picture game, which supports their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' foods. This helps them in learning what foods are important to eat to keep healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's needs are supported well in their play, through use of a range of suitable toys and equipment that show as clean and in reasonable condition. Children sit on colourful chairs at low tables and use child sized resources in play. For example, the home corner has a small microwave, washing machine and cooker unit and there are easy to hold shopping baskets for children to support their imaginary games. This encourages their involvement in play activities. Children are cared for in a bright, attractive play environment, where interesting wall displays and posters are on show. Overall, play rooms are laid out well to look inviting for children, although ways of maximising the use of space to support the younger children's needs have not been fully considered.

Children's safety is promoted well through effective supervision, as high staff ratios are maintained. Clear procedures are followed to promote children's security. For example, staff stay by the main entrance to monitor children's arrival and collection, and visitors attendance is recorded. This helps in keeping children safe. Regular risk assessments are completed through the church committee and staff make daily checks, for instance to make sure stair gates, socket covers and door guards are in place. This helps to minimise accidents, although children are not always suitably grouped for some physical play sessions to ensure they play safely at all times. Children's welfare is effectively supported through the sound awareness of staff, some of whom have completed child protection training. Written information is available for reference in managing any concern arising, which helps staff in their role of safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enter the setting happily and go easily to play. They explore the play areas with interest and most become involved in activities provided. For example, children spend time sticking some Christmas cards to make a picture or painting a favourite animal. They play together pushing their cars up and down the ramp of the toy garage and become involved in an exciting imaginary game. Staff are aware of the Birth to three matters framework and have made steps to start implementing this system to focus more on the needs of younger children. However, there are times when the younger and less able children are not fully enabled to participate in some group activities at their own level. Consequently, full consideration has not been given to the planning and organisation of some activities to meet the needs of all children attending. Children enjoy mixing with their peers and they sometimes give each other a little hug as a greeting. They respond well to the caring, friendly approach given by staff and this supports them in feeling settled and content

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are keen to help children learn and plan a variety of activities based on interesting themes, such as pets, the weather, space or healthy eating. They are familiar with using the stepping stones and form suitable learning intentions for the planned activities, which cover each area of learning and this supports children's overall development well. However, planning does not show how activities are modified or extended to meet the differing developmental stages of all children. Daily routines, such as snack time are not effectively planned for to maximise children's learning opportunities. As a result, there are times when some children are not sufficiently challenged in all areas of their learning.

Staff use imaginative methods to help children learn. For example, they adapt well known nursery rhymes to songs about shapes, and use the tune of 'Hickory, dickory, dock', to sing 'Three straight sides', which helps children learn the shape of a triangle. Children enjoy playing a 'find the shape' game and look around the room to find a circle, square or rectangle. They look at a picture displayed on the wall and are delighted to find a cat's ear is shaped like a triangle. Consequently, they begin to recognise shapes well, which effectively supports their early reading skills. Children regularly use numbers in their play and some can count easily to 10. They count and colour raindrops and readily help a friend count the candles on his birthday cake. This supports children's number awareness, but their understanding of the written number shape is not always readily promoted. Children sing songs, such as 'Five currant buns' and 'Five green and speckled frogs', which encourages them in some early calculations. However, more able children are not effectively supported in independently starting to solve simple number problems, for instance, within everyday routine activities.

Overall, children concentrate well at activities. They spend time at the pastry table rolling out and cutting shapes to make their 'cakes', which also helps them develop their small muscle control. They follow a simple computer program with their friends and laugh as they carefully move the mouse to 'put the penguins into the washing machine', and then count how many are left. They mix well with their peers and enjoy dressing up with hard hats and tabards, as firemen, policemen or builders in an imaginary role play game. This supports them in forming their early relationships and provide opportunities for them to act out what they see around them in their community. Most children are keen to hold 'Billy Bee' at circle time and tell their friends about their pets or talk about some recent news. They enjoy listening to a favourite story about 'Click, clack, moo', which also supports them linking sounds with letters. They start

to recognise familiar words as they find their name card on arrival at the group, and stick it onto the 'Busy Bee' welcome picture. They see their names written on their pictures. Staff provide lots of opportunities for children to colour and trace, such as with use of pre-printed pictures linked to the current theme. This helps them in developing their pencil control, but while some children are starting to form recognisable letters and shapes, they are not always fully challenged to independently write for a purpose, for instance, within their own imaginary games.

Children explore their natural world through a variety of planned activities. They grow runner beans and look at how the weather changes through the different seasons. They see changes happen in cooking activities where they knead dough to make bread, or mix a batter to cook some pancakes. This helps them see how things happen through enjoyable activities. They develop an awareness of simple technology as they look through a magnifying glass to study different insects, and remember significant events in their circle time discussions. Children sing their 'days of the week' song, and know when the group bell rings it indicates it is tidy up time. This supports them in developing a sense of time. Children find an apron for painting and can make their own choices in play from some toys that are easily accessible. However, their independence skills are not always fully promoted, for example in pouring out drinks themselves. Children thread with colourful beads and steadily balance some small, colourful bricks on top of each other to make a tower. They carefully fix the construction straws together to make their models. This encourages the development of their hand eye co-ordination well. They have many physical play opportunities to develop their large muscle skills. However, some sessions, such as with the ride on toys or skipping rope game, are not effectively structured to challenge the more able children in developing clear control in their established movement skills. Children discover colour as they hand paint a picture using red, purple and yellow paint. They use their creativity in painting through use of suitable equipment, such as hand rollers or a painting wheel to make colourful swirly pictures. They explore the textures of pasta, lentils and rice, and learn about content and measure as they use cups and spades to scoop up the sand. They respond happily to play experiences and laugh together as they try to catch the floating bubbles. However, pre-printed pictures are often used within planned activities, which reduces the opportunity for children to develop their own creative expression. Children enjoy their songs and music games, for example, as they sing 'Farmers in his den' and 'Ring a ring a roses'. This supports them in having fun and joining with their friends.

Staff make regular observations of children's development and use an assessment profile based on the stepping stones of the Foundation stage of learning to record their progress. They regularly discuss what children are managing to do and use this to plan further activities. However, overall recorded observations do not clearly evidence how children achieve their developmental stages. Consequently, this impacts on the challenges provided in further planning of activities which are then not always fully based on children's existing skills and abilities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are very much valued and welcomed at the group. Their particular developmental needs are recognised and supported well in play. For example, photo books and picture sign timetables are available to help children find familiar people or make choices in activities, and know what happens next. All children are encouraged in learning some simple sign language, such as for colours or favourite nursery rhymes. This promotes integration and helps all children feel included within the group. Parents are greeted and friendly relationships formed with staff. Relevant parental permissions are obtained, such as for taking photos or the management of

any necessary emergency medical treatment. Parents receive a group prospectus and are informed of the groups operational policies and procedures on registration with the group, but their access to these documents is not well promoted. Consequently, they are not fully supported in sharing information on all aspects of the provision. Children find out about some differences within their world through planned activities such as celebrating various festivals. For example, they learn to sing 'Gung Hay Fat Choy', a Chinese New Year song, or they make a candle for Diwali. There are toys and resources, such as books, dolls and jig saws available, which show positive images of different cultures. This provides some opportunity to encourage children's understanding of other ways of living, although, they are not always sufficiently reflected within the general, daily play environment.

Children's behaviour is managed effectively. Staff give a consistent approach, keeping suitable boundaries and reassuring children when mishaps happen. For example, when a cup of pencils is accidentally knocked onto the floor, staff calmly say to the children 'Never mind, shall we help each other pick them up?', and they do so willingly. Staff give clear explanations and ask children not to run in case they slip and hurt themselves. As a result, children start to understand right from wrong and develop self-discipline. Children are encouraged well in good behaviour through the use of exciting reward charts linked to the current planning theme. For instance, when children are kind, helpful or have tried hard in a game, staff record their names on pictures of a 'pet', a 'smiley face' to go on a 'space rocket' or a piece of 'healthy fruit', which is then put onto a window chart. This helps to boost children's sense of self esteem and promotes acceptable behaviour well.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Regular newsletters are sent to parents informing them of the current themes and children take home their pictures and craft work. Staff have frequent liaison with parents on arrival and collection of their children, and discuss the days activities. This provides some opportunity for parental involvement. However, although clear information on the funded nursery education is available in the operational procedures, there are few other opportunities provided for parents to share in their child's developmental progress. Consequently, some aspects of parental involvement are not well promoted.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The general ethos of the group supports children in being kind to each other. For example, as a child lets a friend take a turn in a matching card game. Children help to raise money for the Guide dog association and sing 'Happy Birthday' to a friend. They make a card for Father Christmas and celebrate some festivals. Children join together each day to enthusiastically sing their group song about the 'Busy Bees'. This helps them to feel a clear sense of belonging and supports them in the early development of suitable values.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Clear daily routines are established which overall helps children feel secure and at ease within the group, and provides them with a balance of quiet and active times. For example, they spend time at the pastry table making their 'cakes', and then join in with an action game where they 'bend their knees' or 'stretch their arms out wide'. This gives variety in their play and ensures they do not spend long periods just sitting still. Children's records and documentation are used with regard to confidentiality and stored securely in lockable filing cabinets. Staff are supported in their role by the church committee and a recruitment policy is in place. However, this does not currently include the completion of some relevant checks, and only an informal induction and

appraisal system is undertaken. Group policies and procedures have been formed and overall support the smooth running of the session. However, the organisation of some activities for younger children does not always effectively support their play and care. For example, in a physical play activity involving ride on toys, some younger children are less confident to join in. This means their developmental needs are not always fully supported.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff are committed to helping children learn through play and work well together as a team. They undertake relevant training as required. For instance, the majority are qualified in child care and first aid. Staff evaluate themed activities and use these to inform future planning of suitable activities. Regular staff meetings are held and minutes kept, and issues arising are discussed on a daily basis. This contributes to addressing some of the group aims for improvement, although overall, there is no clear system in place to monitor the effectiveness of all aspects of the provision in promoting children's development. For instance routine daily activities, such as snack time. This impacts on parts of children's play and learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection recommendations were made relating to health and safety issues. The group regularly complete fire drills and these are now clearly recorded to help in monitoring children's safety. Children now use paper towels for drying their hands, which helps prevent cross contamination.

At the last inspection of nursery education, key issues were set relating to planning and assessment, evaluation of play activities, and the organisation of parts of the day. The planning system is now designed to cover each area of learning and activities to promote children's mathematical development are regularly included. For example, a range of simple and fun computer programs relating to counting and numbers have been obtained. This ensures children are supported in learning through all areas of play, and their awareness of numbers is supported. A new assessment system has been introduced, which links observations made directly to the stepping stones of the Foundation stage of learning. This contributes to monitoring children's progress across the early learning goals, although staff are still becoming familiar with using this system. Planned activities are regularly evaluated to ascertain if the learning intention of each activity has been achieved. This helps in assessing the effectiveness of planning. Daily routines have been reviewed and now provide more opportunities for children to move around between activities, and therefore they do not sit for long periods. This means they have frequent opportunities to stretch and use their muscles within their play times.

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 any complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain some 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 suitable hygiene procedures are consistently encouraged with children
- review the organisation of the provision for younger children to ensure their developmental needs are sufficiently met, with particular regard to use of space and planning of some large group activities
- improve the staff employment procedures to ensure a secure recruitment system is in place, and that clear induction and appraisal systems are followed

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):

- further develop the assessment system to clearly identify how children achieve their stages of development, and use this information to plan activities, which can be modified or extended to meet their individual stages of development
- provide more opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning, to share in their achievements and contribute to their developmental progress
- develop clear systems for reviewing and monitoring the overall effectiveness of the provision offered, to support the groups aims for continual improvement.

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