



Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 508117
Inspection date 28 June 2005
Inspector Lindsey Pollock

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Registered person Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup Committee

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?

Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup opened in September 1999. It operates within the annexe of Lowson Street Methodist Church in Darlington. The pre-school has access to three rooms, kitchen and toilet facilities and an outdoor play area.

There are currently 36 children aged from 2 to 4 years on roll. Of these, 5 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from local and surrounding areas. Procedures are in place to support children with special needs and for children

who speak English as an additional language.

Five full time staff work with the children. Four staff have an early years qualification. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have implemented suitable hygiene routines to protect and promote children's health. Good standards of cleanliness are maintained in the facility to ensure children are cared for in a warm, clean environment. Adequate toilet and changing facilities are available. Most children are gaining an awareness of the importance of following good hygiene routines. Older children are familiar with the routine of washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet and some understand why they are doing this.

Children are beginning to understand the benefits of a healthy diet. Staff raise their awareness through offering healthy snacks such as strawberries and melon, and have also held a 'health awareness week' during which children were encouraged to try a variety of healthy foods. Although drinks are provided for children at snack times, water is not easily accessible to them throughout the session. The staff take account of parent's wishes for their children and comply with any special dietary requirements to ensure children remain healthy.

All children enjoy a varied range of outdoor activities which support and help to develop their physical skills. They regularly use the small outdoor area and have access to the large hall where the skilfully manoeuvre bikes and other wheeled resources. Some opportunities are provided for children to practice and develop their skills for climbing. Children move with control and coordination, they can successfully negotiate obstacles and move around the environment safely and are beginning to respect each others space.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment. Bright and cheerful examples of children's work are displayed throughout the rooms. The premises are well organised indoors to maximise play opportunities for children. The use of a designated room for delivery of some areas of the foundation stage enables older children to play and learn with the minimum of disruption and allows younger children extra space to enjoy the activities in the hall. Children use a broad range of safe, good quality developmentally appropriate resources. These are suitably organised in child height furniture in the pre-school room to encourage independent access. Younger children are able to safely access a wide range of developmentally appropriate resources selected by staff.

Staff conduct clear daily risk assessments to reduce potential hazards and minimise the risk of accidental injury to children. Most health and safety procedures are implemented effectively, however emergency evacuation procedures are not practised frequently enough to ensure children are fully aware the procedure. Staff help children to gain an awareness of safety both indoors and outdoors by talking and explaining to them and by setting a good example. They have a sound awareness of children's constantly developing abilities and take appropriate safety measures to avoid dangerous situations.

Children are cared for by staff who give priority to protecting children and keeping them safe. Staff's sound understanding of their responsibilities within child protection procedures help to ensure that children are effectively protected and their welfare safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time in the pre-school, they arrive happy and eager to participate. Staff work sufficiently well together to meet children's needs. They are sensitive in their handling and give lots of praise and encouragement to help promote children's self esteem. Younger children are interested in a suitable range of developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities, however staff do not plan these effectively to promote children's learning fully. Although staff are aware of Birth to three but are not yet using the framework to support children in their earliest years.

The children enjoy good relationships with the staff and approach them confidently. They relate generally well to their peers and are beginning to socialise. Their communication and language skills are developing well, they enthusiastically join in with the older children at registration time, and love participating during story and singing sessions.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching generally motivates children so that they make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Staff's knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage is sound and developing well. Children benefit from good quality interaction and appropriate use of questioning techniques, to encourage them to talk and think about what they are doing. Staff manage children well and have appropriate expectations for their behaviour resulting in children behaving well. Although planning and assessment has developed since the last inspection it is still not rigorous enough to ensure all aspects of the curriculum are fully covered and to challenge children appropriately.

Children are generally eager to learn and confident to try new experiences. They are happy and settled, make good relationships and play well together. Some opportunities such as selecting resources allow children to begin to develop their independence. They listen intently to stories and particularly enjoy the use of story sacks. Although some children are beginning to distinguish the sounds of letters they are not encouraged to develop this further. Their concept of numbers, shapes and size

is developing well as they count objects, use positional and size language in most activities and talk about shapes of everyday things, however they have little experience of early calculation.

Children are developing an awareness of time and place; they gain knowledge of the local environment by planned walks, outings and visitors. They have opportunities to increase their knowledge of simple technology and explore 'how things work' through regular use of the computer and other technology. Although children enthusiastically join in singing, they do not listen to, make or move to music. They use their imagination well in role and small world play and explore a range of craft and design activities spontaneously.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy mutually respectful relationships with the staff and each other. They develop self-esteem and confidence as they voice their opinions, make choices and decisions, and receive praise and encouragement from the adults caring for them. Resources are used which reflect positive images of culture, gender and disability to raise children's awareness of diversity. Suitable procedures are in place to support children with special needs. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are well behaved. They show care and concern for each other and play harmoniously together. Clear boundaries are established by staff according to children's level of understanding. As a result, children are becoming aware of the routines and procedures and know what is expected of them.

Trusting partnerships have been established with all parents to help promote children's well being, development and progress. Information is shared at the beginning and end of each session. Parent's knowledge of their child's needs and interests is actively sought prior to the child attending and throughout their time there. Parents speak highly of the staff and the care their children receive. The partnership with parents of funded children is satisfactory, as they are not given sufficient detailed information about activities and children's intended learning. This means they are not able to fully participate and contribute to their child's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by an enthusiastic team of staff who have a strong commitment to developing the facility. Most staff have a relevant childcare qualification and attend regular training to update and develop their practice. Although recruitment and selection procedures are in place these are not consistently applied to ensure all staff are suitably vetted.

The premises are well organised indoors to maximise play opportunities for children.

The use of a designated room for delivery of some areas of the foundation stage allows those children to play and learn with the minimum of disruption and allows younger children extra space to enjoy the activities in the hall. Staff are deployed effectively and generally support children's play and learning well.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The managers have a developing a clear vision for the nursery education and are actively seeking ways to improve their practice. Although systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of education that is offered, this is not yet sufficiently rigorous to identify all areas for improvement.

All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well being is in place and is regularly reviewed. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection the managers have completed a level three qualification in childcare and education. This has given them the skills and ability to make good improvements to the facility. Children are now grouped appropriately within the setting according to their stage of development enabling staff to support their learning more effectively. Resources in the pre-school room are organised so children can access them more easily to promote their independence, and younger children choose from a wider range selected by staff than at the last inspection. All records are now kept in line with requirements.

The previous nursery education inspection recommended that staff increase their knowledge of the foundation stage, group children effectively, develop planning, resources and opportunities for children, and increase information and involvement for parents. Staff have now completed training on the Foundation stage and have a sound and increasing knowledge of how young children learn. Planning is much improved and is based on the areas of learning although this requires developing to ensure areas are fully covered and children continue to be appropriately challenged. Children are grouped appropriately and are able to play and learn without distraction and with a wide range of good quality resources. Information for parents is still basic and remains an area for development. Managers have set up basic system to monitor the curriculum, they are keen to develop and improve this ensure it is effective.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- make children aware that drinking water is available to them at all times and improve the facilities for changing children
- develop the activities for children under three, for example, by using the Birth to Three Matters framework
- ensure Ofsted are informed of significant changes to staff.

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):

- develop curriculum planning and the use of assessments to ensure all aspects are covered fully and children continue to be appropriately challenged
- provide further opportunities for children develop independence skills
- develop ways to involve parents and carers in children's learning and to keep them fully informed about their children's education.

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