

Aston & Cote Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	134447
Inspection date	11 September 2007
Inspector	Jill Milton
Setting Address	Church Lane, Aston, Bampton, Oxfordshire, OX18 2DU
Telephone number	01993 851999
E-mail	
Registered person	Aston & Cote 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?

Aston and Cote Playgroup registered in 1973 and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents and carers. The playgroup is located in its own building within the grounds of the primary school in the village of Aston in Oxfordshire and the intake is from the local rural communities. The group has an enclosed outdoor play area.

The playgroup opens each weekday morning from 09.00 to 11.45, during school term times. An optional lunch club is held on Tuesday and Thursday until 13.00. A maximum of 26 children between two and five years may attend at any one time and there are currently 21 children on roll. Of these, 17 are in receipt of nursery education funding.

There are four members of staff employed to work with the children and over half hold suitable childcare qualifications. The playgroup receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are familiar with routines for hand washing throughout the morning. They are carefully supervised by the staff to ensure they use their own hand towel for drying so reducing the risk of cross infection. Children play in a clean environment and staff observe sensible precautions such as wiping down tables before children eat at them. There are satisfactory procedures in place to attend to children who are unwell or have an accident. Staff renew their first aid training and keep medical supplies accessible, though some items in the first aid box are out of the suggested use by date.

Children take part in sociable gatherings for their morning snack or whilst staying for lunch club. Staff sit at the tables with the children to help them feel secure and to encourage friendly conversations. The children readily quench their thirst and make good attempts to pour their own drinks. They of course may request extra drinks from the adults during the sessions though fresh drinking water is not freely accessible to them. The children try some snacks which promote healthy eating though the range of alternatives is rather limited.

Children have a suitable balance of energetic and quiet play. They are happy to spend time at more restful table top activities before venturing outside. The garden area provides a fair range of opportunities to engage in physical play and children enjoy balancing, climbing and bouncing. Some are quite skilled at using equipment like scooters where they develop their co-ordination. On some days the outdoor area is open for a large part of the morning and most children choose the option to play in the sun and fresh air helping to reinforce their enjoyment of active play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a welcoming environment which staff arrange and decorate to make them feel comfortable. There is plenty of natural light and ventilation and staff work with the committee to maintain the old premises to acceptable standards. The children have ample space for play and a large open floor area provides a useful place for group games or for spreading out floor toys. The children have access to an appropriate range of equipment which the playgroup have built up over many years and some boxes are on display at child height to encourage self selection. Whilst the appearance of most items is acceptable there are some examples of toys that are a little worn and not very clean.

Staff supervise the children's play well to ensure they are safe. The security of the building is sound and staff note if different adults are collecting children to safeguard their welfare. Children receive little reminders about safety issues, such as how to hold scissors correctly and working together to safely roll up a rug. The committee of the playgroup conduct a detailed written risk assessment of the building each year and note any on-going issues for action. Staff rely more on a visual check of the building and garden before the children arrive to play. Whilst this adequately addresses most concerns there are occasional lapses, such as inconsistent use of socket covers.

Staff have a satisfactory understanding of the area of child protection. They ensure parents are aware of the responsibility of the playgroup to safeguard children and they have the necessary policy and contact numbers for reference should they have concerns for a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle quickly into the routine of playgroup life and they cope well with separating from their parents and carers. The staff have an adequate understanding of the Birth to three framework for supporting children under three years and they are starting to incorporate some new ideas into the way they record the younger children's development. Children freely engage in the range of activities on offer each morning and they are soon happily engrossed in play. Children make their own decisions about what they would like to do and they can change resources, for example deciding that the model aeroplanes would be a better choice than the pirate ships. The morning routines provide children with a suitable balance between active and restful play. They are gaining useful experiences of play in small and large groups over their time at the setting.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are gaining confidence, supported by the staff who praise and encourage them at tasks like learning to use scissors. Children try things by themselves so that they are developing independence as they visit the bathroom or put on their own aprons. This is a friendly sociable group where children are starting to play co-operatively, taking a friend for a ride on a wheeled toy in the garden or when sharing toys in the water bath. Children sit well at large group times and they are learning to listen to each other. They happily talk to staff about their families and recent events in their lives like holidays. At show and tell time children are gaining confidence in speaking in front of others. Children are developing some basic early literacy skills as they recognise their own names or listen to a story. There are some opportunities for children to use early writing as they play with clip boards and pencils though staff routinely name their art work for them and at some sessions writing materials are not so readily included in the play. The children enjoy developing their ideas in imaginative play as they use props in the home corner or shop. Staff provide suitable variety to this type of play but miss chances to promote early reading and writing.

Children are confident at counting and they use their early mathematics in different situations. Children receive encouragement to work out simple problems, such as deciding whether there are enough pieces of banana for all those at the table during snack time. Children are familiar with words used to compare sizes of play dough shapes and they play with resources requiring them to sort by size, shape and colour. Children use early number skills with some software on the computer and when they sing songs requiring them to count down.

Resources are available to enable children to use some basic design and building and they concentrate when taking part in tasks like cutting out red apples to glue onto paper trees. Children's awareness of the wider world is steadily increasing with topics about seasons and celebrations during the year. They explore materials using their senses such as sand or water, readily identifying large and small shells in the sand tray. The opportunities to learn about the natural world in the garden are limited at present with previously nicely developed activities now overgrown and offering little stimulation. Children express their own ideas and imagination as they use materials like play dough and paint. They enjoy story making with friends and sometimes use musical instruments or share a few simple nursery songs. They take part in energetic play which develops their physical skills and they are progressing with finer movements as they use paint brushes, construction toys and tools.

The staff provide appropriate support to the children whilst they play. They move freely between groups of children where they think they can be of best support. Staff plan the educational curriculum around the Foundation Stage and they take into account all six areas of learning. The plans are clearly on show for the whole staff team and for parents. The children are making steady progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. The staff note when a child achieves a particular skill and they collate the information providing a basic dated record. A short written review takes place though the information is not specifically used to plan the next steps in learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff make families feel welcome into this friendly group with an open door policy. Children appear to settle very quickly when a new school term starts and they soon become familiar with the routine of the sessions. Children benefit from seeing their names on view when they arrive and they receive a warm greeting from the staff. Older children have visits to the neighbouring primary school and this greatly eases the transition to full time education for them. Children are learning about different life styles through a range of activities in the year focusing on festivals from their own culture and those of the wider world. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is fostered.

The children behave well at play group and respond to simple directions from the staff. They show a positive attitude to helping tidy away toys and they sit quietly when required to at group times. The staff act as good role models in the quiet way they speak to the children and unwanted behaviour does not go unchallenged. Staff offer simple explanations to the children so that they have the opportunity to learn the difference between right and wrong. There are no children attending the setting with learning difficulties or disabilities at the present time. Staff take active steps to attend training to learn how to support families should the need arise and they liaise with other professionals to help children.

The parents play an active role in supporting the group and they are keen to attend the helper's rota. This provides them with a useful opportunity to see what the children are learning and to share in the running of the group. The staff invite parents to look at policy documents if they wish and to view previous inspection reports. The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is satisfactory. Parents may see child profiles if they wish though there is not a great deal of additional information about the children's achievements. Some information about the educational curriculum is on display for parents with a few written introductory details in the brochure for parents. Staff occasionally seek parental feedback, for example when deciding which days to hold the lunch club to best meet family needs.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The long established team of adults work well together to make the sessions flow smoothly. They offer the children a welcoming place to play and there is a friendly rapport with the families using the group. The staff organise the sessions appropriately and they maintain suitable ratios of adults to children so that supervision is maintained at required levels. The staff have many years of experience of working with young children and they attend a steady range of training opportunities over time in order to maintain an awareness of new developments. They are starting to familiarise themselves with using staff appraisals and they ensure they meet together

on a regular basis to discuss issues. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The staff maintain appropriate documentation to support their work. All regulatory information is in place and an operational file is a work in progress that staff add new sections to as they become familiar with fresh procedures, for example maintaining a complaints log. The committee and the staff work together to cover all the aspects of paperwork. The leadership and management of the nursery education are satisfactory. The staff prepare some basic information about the educational curriculum for parents and they conduct brief evaluations of some activities. The staff maintain close links with school staff in order to help the children with the transition to full time school.

Improvements since the last inspection

The staff were required to address five recommendations following the last care inspection and they prepared an action plan to monitor their responses. The children's safety is now better protected since access to the setting has improved. The staff now have a rota to ensure an adult monitors the entrance to the building and new locks have been fitted to improve security. Also relating to the area of safety is the use of risk assessments which the committee look at in some detail on an annual basis. Daily visual checks also take place which identify the majority of potential hazards to children's safety. Additional improvements have also taken place in how accidents are recorded in order to protect children's confidentiality.

Staff have responded to the recommendation to develop their knowledge and understanding of child protection by attending training and updating some of their policies. Documentation regarding staff employment has improved and the committee is better prepared for the recruitment and induction of new employees. The staff are now in a stronger position to safeguard children's welfare.

At the last inspection of the nursery education the staff were asked to improve the use of assessment profiles of children's development. The staff have been using records to monitor children's progress though they are keen to improve the systems currently in place. This point is carried over as a recommendation from this inspection.

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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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):

- regularly check first aid supplies to ensure they are not out of date
- provide children with access to fresh drinking water and improve the range of snacks on offer to provide children with a greater variety of healthy choices
- ensure consistent use of protective covers on electrical sockets

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):

- improve the presentation of role play areas to encourage early literacy and ensure children have daily opportunities to develop their mark making and name writing
- develop the outdoor area to provide a stimulating environment for children to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world
- review the methods used to assess children's development and use the information to plan their next steps in learning

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