

Crowland Community Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	253607
Inspection date	28 February 2008
Inspector	Carly Mooney
Setting Address	The Wheatsheaf Rooms, North Street, Crowland, Lincolnshire, PE6 0EF
Telephone number	01733 210510
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Registered person	Crowland Community 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?

Crowland Community Playgroup has been established for 40 years. It operates from a hall in the centre of Crowland, Lincolnshire. It serves the local community. The play group operates each weekday morning from 09.00 to 11.30 and in the afternoons from 12.15 to 14.45 term time only.

The play group is registered for 24 children at any one time from two years to under five years. There are currently 58 children on roll. This includes 35 funded children. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The play group employs four staff. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean and adequately maintained environment. Staff follow effective hygiene routines to ensure children are protected against the spread of infection. For example, they wipe down surfaces and wash their hands before handling food. Children learn the importance of maintaining their own personal hygiene, as they independently wash their hands after using the toilet and clean their hands with wipes prior to eating. All staff hold current first aid certificates, they record accidents and keep a well-stocked first aid box to be able to deal with any medical emergencies appropriately.

Children are offered a selection of healthy snacks which ensures they are well nourished, including toast, crackers and fruit. Children are provided with drinks during snack time and can pour their own drinks throughout the session as they require. Parents provide a packed lunch for children attending a rising fives session. This encourages them to develop their social skills and become familiar with school routines. Parents are encouraged to provide their children with healthy food options. Children's dietary preferences are respected and catered for, with staff attending relevant training to be able to meet children's needs.

Children enjoy some physical activities which promotes their health and physical skills. They have a small opportunity each day to spend time in the fresh air and older children participate in adult directed PE sessions where they enjoy hopping, running and jumping. The outside play space is small and as a result children do not have sufficient space to manoeuvre equipment such as bicycles, cars and scooters successfully. Staff do not always use the outside space positively as an extension of the indoor learning environment. Children are given some opportunities to develop their fine muscle skills, as they use knives to spread their toast, push stickle bricks together and mix melted chocolate with spoons.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are fairly welcoming, with some children's work displayed to give them a sense of belonging. Most children arrive confidently, although resources are not always set out on their arrival to help settle those who are upset. The indoor play space is used adequately to allow children to play freely, be active or participate in quiet activities such as looking at a book. Children have independent access to a varied range of safe and suitable equipment which is in good condition and stored at children's height.

Children are safe within the play group due to effective systems in place to identify and minimise any risks. For example, regular risk assessments of the premises and outings in the community are carried out. The premises are secure with a door chain and buzzer system in place if the door is opened. The outdoor area is fully enclosed with soft flooring to protect children from bumps and scrapes. A high staff to children ratio ensures children are well supervised at all times. Regular fire drills practised with the children enables them to learn about keeping themselves safe in the event of an emergency.

A child protection policy is in place and all staff have attended child protection training, which ensures children's safety and well-being are the main concerns of the group, although at present

the procedure to be followed should there be an allegation against a member of staff is not clear and therefore children's welfare is not fully protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally settle well at the play group and staff are caring and supportive as they leave their parents and carers. Once settled children are happy and confident to access the resources and approach staff with ease. Children happily engage in activities, such as role play and construction. However, the structure of the session means that child-led activities are limited and arts and crafts such as making items for mothers day are very adult-led. Children have only small opportunities to express their creativity freely in activities such as free painting or water play. The routines do not always give younger children the freedom to explore their environment at their own pace and large group activities such as story time do not always benefit and meet the needs of all children. However, children are able to play with a suitable range of toys and resources, which are appropriate to their stage and age of development. Staff are familiar with the 'Birth to three matters' framework and make reference to it within their planning, although how activities are adapted for the younger children is not always clearly shown.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning is in place which shows clear learning intentions. However, focused plans are mainly arts and crafts based and do not give equal consideration to all six areas of learning, although the areas are generally covered by the resources provided on a daily basis. Plans are not always clear as to how they can be adapted to suit younger or more able children and evaluations of activities to support children's learning are inconsistent. Generally, staff are involved in children's play and support them in their learning such as playing a customer at the hairdressers. They recognise some opportunities to extend children's learning such as spontaneous music making with the pots and utensils from the play kitchen, encouraging them to describe the sounds they make. Children's assessment records are in place and tracking sheets are used to show the stepping stones children have achieved. However, evidence to support this is limited and does not clearly identify children's next steps for learning.

Children are displaying increased confidence within the setting and respond well to adults and their peers. Children have opportunities to be self-sufficient throughout the session which adults encourage. For example, they spread butter on their toast and change their clothes for a PE session. They work well together in small groups such as snack time learning to share the resources and wait their turn. Children are familiar with changes in the routine and know when music is played it is time to tidy away.

Children talk freely to staff and their peers about their home experiences such as a new baby. Most children enjoy looking at books, although some children are disruptive in large group story times which disturbs those who want to listen. There is a superb choice of books available including story and reference books, although the book corner at present is not very inviting. Children have the opportunity to choose books from a mobile library van that visits regularly. There are some labels and writing around the room which helps them to see writing for different purposes and they are encouraged to make marks during their play, for instance, a child 'writes' down peoples orders in the café role play. However, the mark-making area is uninviting and poorly resourced which means it is rarely accessed by the children. Most children are able to count confidently from one to ten and sometimes beyond and are beginning to recognise numbers as staff give them opportunities to see and use numbers during their play such as on

an inflatable dice in the outside area. Children learn to count in routine situations such as snack time where they count how many plates and cups they need for each table. They are introduced to simple calculation by singing songs, such as ten green bottles.

Children are beginning to learn about the world around them through first hand experiences, such as planting and growing cress seeds and Freesia bulbs. They are curious as they discover how an object can change from one consistency to another and back again as they melt chocolate to make a mothers day gift. Children participate in local community life and enjoy visits from people, such as a postman and policeman to further support their understanding of the world around them. There are some opportunities for children to experience technology in their play, for example, playing a simple game on the computer, which underpins learning in other areas.

There are limited opportunities for children to freely express their creativity on a daily basis. Art activities are usually adult directed with the end product looking similar for each child and messy play is not offered regularly. Children do however, enjoy role play, often imitating real life experiences such as visiting the hairdressers or café. They freely access resources to be able to dress up and are confident to participate in singing familiar songs as a large group.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are welcomed and valued by staff and as a result their self-esteem is fostered. They are helped to settle into the setting as staff work together with parents to ensure they have a sound knowledge of children's individual needs. This supports all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to integrate well into the play group. Staff also work closely with other outside agencies in order to further support children's needs where necessary. Some children's work is displayed to help children gain a sense of belonging and staff plan to further support this by providing named coat pegs. Children participate in celebrations of festivals, including Chinese New year and Diwali. Staff make good use of books to support this area of learning and resources such as posters and jigsaws show positive images of others.

Children on the whole behave well. A small group of children require adult support in activities, such as story time to ensure they do not disrupt it for others but in general children are learning to play cooperatively together and are able to share and take turns with equipment. Children show pride when showing their work. For example, a child writes her name all by herself and shows it to all staff who give her lots of praise to encourage her self-esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered.

A positive partnership with parents has formed which contributes to children's well-being within the group. Parents receive clear information about the setting and can easily access policies and procedures. A parents' notice board is informative and regular newsletters keep parents updated about events at the play group. Parents express that they are happy with the care provided for their children.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents receive basic initial information about the Foundation Stage curriculum in a parents' handbook and reference is made to the six areas of learning on the parents notice board. Planning of activities for each term is given to all parents as an overview of what their child will be learning and parents contribute in a variety of ways. For example, a father who is a postman visited the group to talk about his work. However, parents do not have regular opportunities to discuss their child's

progress through the Foundation Stage, although they are made aware that they can discuss any issues with staff through an open door policy.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are mostly happy and content in the setting. Staff and resources are organised to ensure that ratios are always met and that children have a safe environment in which they can eat and play in comfort. However, overall the session is not paced effectively to meet all children's learning needs as the majority of the session is adult directed, especially the rising fives. Therefore, children have limited opportunity to initiate their own play and learning. Children are cared for by staff who are suitably qualified and committed to improving their practice through regular training. Policies and procedures are in place to support the running of the setting, although current recruitment procedures do not include robust checking of staff's medical suitability, to protect the well-being of children. The required documentation is in place and generally organised well, with amendments needed to the child protection policy and children's daily registers. The recording of children's arrival and departure times is not monitored sufficiently to ensure an accurate time is completed for each child. Staff do not record their hours of attendance. Therefore, children's welfare is not fully protected. Overall, children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. Staff have developed close relationships and work together well as a team. The supervisor has a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and is committed to improving practice in order to provide a quality service to children and parents which meets their individual needs. She is relatively new to the role of supervisor and has taken her time to settle in to the position so that she can confidently address the strengths and weaknesses of the group in order to move forward. The provision for nursery education is monitored through regular staff meetings and parent questionnaires. Staff appraisals are due to be implemented in the near future to further support this and allow staff the opportunity to identify their own strengths and weaknesses.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two recommendations were raised regarding care. These related to the organisation of the play space and staff's involvement in activities to support children's learning. The room is now organised into clearly defined areas with sufficient floor space for children to be able to move freely during their play. Staff sit with children during activities and provide adequate support in areas, such as role play where needed.

Three recommendations were raised under nursery education. These related to planning, deployment of staff, organisation of activities and resources to stimulate children's learning and opportunities for children to learn about addition and subtraction. Planning of activities is in place which relates to the stepping stones, however further improvement is required and this has been raised as a recommendation in this report. There is a good adult to staff ratio so that staff can be deployed effectively, although the general organisation of the session and resources requires further development to provide a more child-led environment to stimulate learning. Children are now given ample opportunities to gain a greater understanding of addition and subtraction in routine activities.

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.

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):

- improve procedures to ensure records show children's and staff's actual hours of attendance
- implement robust procedures regarding staff's medical suitability
- ensure the child protection policy includes clear procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff
- review the daily routine so that it meets all children's needs, allowing for a balance of child and adult-led activities. (This also relates to nursery education)

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 planning to show how activities are differentiated between younger and more able children, clearly evaluated and provide a balance across the six areas of learning
- improve assessment records so that they clearly show how children are achieving the stepping stones. Ensure next steps for learning are identified and develop opportunities to share these with parents
- develop the outside area to provide a more stimulating learning environment
- improve children's opportunities to freely express themselves in messy play and art/craft activities
- improve the area for mark-making so that it is inviting for children to use and sufficiently resourced.

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