

Bright Sparks Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	102941
Inspection date	16 January 2008
Inspector	Heather Tanswell
Setting Address	Breage School, Trewithick Road, Breage, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 9PZ
Telephone number	01326 573641 or 01326 563093
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Registered person	Bright Sparks 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?

Bright Sparks Playgroup has been registered for more than ten years. It is a committee run pre-school, operating from the main hall in Breage School, a rural village between the towns of Helston and Penzance, in Cornwall. A maximum of 16 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:10 until 11:40 during term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed play area.

There are currently 13 children from two to four years on roll. Of these 11 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves surrounding towns and villages.

The pre-school employs four staff. All staff have early years to NVQ Level 2 or 3, three staff are currently working towards an additional qualification. The setting receives support from an advisory teacher from the Local Authority Family Services and the Pre-school Learning Alliance(PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well cared for on clean and tidy premises. Staff carry out daily routine cleaning tasks to ensure the premises and resources are hygienic for children to use. In particular, tables are carefully wiped clean before children sit down to eat and drink. Children receive prompt and proper care when accidents occur. Staff hold current first aid certificates; know how to treat minor injuries and appreciate the importance of reporting to parents promptly to keep them informed about their children's health and well-being. Children understand simple health and hygiene routines and know they must wipe their nose when it runs, and wash their hands after visiting the toilet. However, they share a bowl of water for hand washing after craft activities and before snack, which poses a risk of cross infection.

Children benefit from eating healthy foods, in sufficient quality for their growing needs. The nursery provides snacks of fresh fruit such as apple and orange accompanied by a cracker. Children help themselves to what they want and sit in small groups alongside a member of staff who ensures children eat well and learn about making healthy choices. The setting provides drinks of milk or water to quench their thirst at snack time. However, the only drinks available throughout the session to keep children hydrated come from home. Staff and the committee are not working effectively with parents to ensure they contain only healthy options. There are clear procedures for ensuring staff are aware of children with specific food allergies, cultural or religious requirements.

Children have opportunities to take part in a varied range of activities out in the fresh air, which helps to promote their good health and develop their physical skills and stamina. They go out into the playground or field where they climb, slide, ride on wheeled toys and play ball games. Children also walk to places of interest such as the library, as well as a local park where they enjoy access to more vigorous play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into the bright and colourfully decorated play spaces, which staff check each day to ensure they are safe for children to play in and free of hazards. Electric sockets are covered and furniture moved into place before children arrive. Children choose from a selection of toys and resources, which are brought out each day and checked regularly for safety and cleanliness, and maintained in good condition. Children are safe in emergencies, as evacuation procedures are practised each half term, so that new children learn the routine alongside more experienced children and adults.

The outside playground is checked to ensure there are no obvious hazards before children go out to play. The climbing equipment is fitted securely onto a special surface to ensure the risk of injury following a fall is minimised. However, playground gates are not secured before children go out to play. As there are times when staff are busy bringing out resources when children cannot all be seen. Children push bikes at great speed down the sloping playground before stopping abruptly at the bottom in front of a bench and stone wall. Staff have not conducted a rigorous risk assessment on the use of the playground or provided safety equipment such as helmets, to ensure children learn how to keep themselves safe from harm as they play.

Children are safeguarded from abuse or neglect because staff know how to implement the setting's detailed and up to date child protection policy. There are appropriate systems in place for ensuring that authorised adults only collect and look after children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and happy in the pre-school. They choose from a variety of activities laid out ready for them. They dig in sand, scoop up pasta shapes, manipulate dough, draw and paint pictures, and act out scenarios from their home life experiences. Children show pride in helping tidy away, encouraged and rewarded by staff for their efforts. Children of all ages take great delight in the large group activities where they join in with action rhymes and songs, moving their bodies and musical instruments rhythmically, and listening intently to their favourite stories. Children also enjoy looking at books on their own and as a quiet activity alongside their friends.

Children receive individual attention, develop close relationships with considerate staff, and are generally keen to join in with activities. They begin to sequence numbers up to ten as part of their play led by staff who count aloud how many children are present. Activities include time to play outside each day, with planned visits to local places of interest such as the beach, farms, garden centres, parks and the local parent and carer toddler group. As a result, learning is fun and children begin to socialise with other groups of children and adults, which develops their self-esteem and confidence.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children sit, listen and concentrate well in adult and child initiated activities. They answer questions and sometimes make suggestions about what songs they would like to sing next. Adults engage children in conversation through questioning. However, their opening remarks are often related to planned outcomes rather than children's interests, which means the exchanges are short and not inspiring children to talk about what they are doing, have done, or plan to do next.

Children begin to understand the purpose of symbols and writing as they self register by choosing their illustrated name card. They are beginning to learn to recognise cultural and picture symbols such as commonly used words, numbers and illustrations of rain and the sun, as they complete the daily calendar and weather chart. However, staff do not plan to link rhyming and phonic sounds, letters, writing, words or numerals into their play so that children develop their early reading and writing skills. Although staff plan to topics, relevant to children, for example 'Bob the Builder', there are insufficient, interesting resources to enhance their play; for example, there are no bags of sand, measures, clipboards, or pieces of wood to make their play more complex and meaningful.

Children begin to solve problems as they find the odd one out in computer games. They are beginning to learn how to click the left mouse button correctly to make choices and progress through educational programmes. Children use their imagination in role-play as they act out scenarios from their home life experiences. They use tools such as paint sponges, pencils and scissors ably displaying good hand-to-eye co-ordination as they cut up dough, colour in pictures or spread paint. Children learn to match, note weight, size and shape as they play with dough, complete simple puzzles and play matching card games. However, these skills are not extended

in older and more able children as activities and routines do not provide sufficient challenge, given children's capability and starting points.

Staff have a sound knowledge of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. They know that young children learn through first-hand, practical experience, and manipulation, using their senses to explore and develop control of their emotions and movements. Staff value each other's strengths, weaknesses, and work hard to set up and clear away the room each day. They provide a range of activities that support learning across the curriculum. However, the lack of suitable low level and accessible storage means that children do not have access to a wide range of resources to support their play and growing independence or extend their learning following their own interests and/or ideas.

Staff plan a balanced daily routine that includes adult and child initiated work and play. Staff evaluate children's learning working well as a team to share relevant information. They make effective use of the planning and assessment systems to set realistic targets and plan ahead for individual children's learning and development in full liaison with parents and carers. As a result, children make sound progress in all areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children take part in activities that help them feel part of their own and the wider community they live in. Over the winter months, children celebrate a range of festivals such as Christmas, Chinese New year and Hanukkah. Children also visit the village parent and carer toddler group, which makes sure established relationships are maintained and a sense of belonging grows. Although there are positive images of children from other cultures on display, due to the lack of accessible storage, there are few accessible toys that children can use as part of their everyday play to help them recognise and value similarities and differences.

Transitions into the setting from home and into school are managed well as staff work in liaison with parents, carers and school staff, ensuring children's individual needs are known and respected. Children are content in the relaxed atmosphere, behave well and keen to help tidy away. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Information about the management of the setting helps parents understand how it runs. Children's care needs and personal information is recorded on enrolment and kept up to date by their key workers. The information gathered is used by staff to inform their practice and future planning of activities and targets. Parents are invited to attend regular private meetings to discuss their children's development and achievements. Regular newsletters and informal discussion also keeps parents up to date with their child's activities and daily routines.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Suitably qualified and experienced staff care for children. Staff attend training such as first aid, health and safety and a variety of curriculum topics to keep their knowledge up to date and inspire change. The operational plan contains clear, well-written policies and procedures to underpin good practice and ensure children's well-being. Ratios are met well at all times, which helps children feel emotionally safe and secure and begin to develop supportive

relationships with adults and other children. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Practitioners work together to plan a range of experiences to promote children's learning. Individual targets and planned learning intentions are based on developmental norms noted in government guidance documents and their knowledge of their individual children's stages of development. A system for recording observations of learning is in place and used to inform parents about their children's achievements. The staff and management committee are dedicated to meeting the needs of children and support one another well. They sometimes rely on help from outside agencies to identify areas for improvement in their practice to influence the quality of care and education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting agreed to conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying action(s) to be taken to minimise identified risks and ensure the premises are for the sole use of the facility during opening hours. It also agreed to develop an action plan that sets out how staff training and qualification requirements will be met and maintained during staff absence and emergencies and ensure committee members are given full information and guidance about their roles and responsibilities to enable them to carry out their duties. They also agreed to request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment.

The setting now conducts regular risk assessments, however action is still required to ensure that playground hazards are identified and addressed to keep children safe. The group now have time in the morning to set up ready for children. Although the toilet facilities are still shared with schoolchildren, staff manage this very well to ensure children's needs are met. Following a recruitment drive and staffs willingness to attend training, all staff now hold suitable qualifications and experience to care for young children. Existing members of the committee offer guidance to new members to ensure their roles are known and understood. Written consents are now sought for every child to ensure appropriate health care and treatment for children.

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):

- ensure children wash their hands hygienically to minimise the risk of cross infection
- conduct a rigorous risk assessment on the use of the outside play area to influence how staff supervise children and help them learn how to keep themselves safe and secure.

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):

- plan and resource a challenging environment so that children can access a wide range of resources, explore, make decisions and plan to work in depth following their own ideas,
- promote children's early literacy skills by encouraging conversation about what children are interested in and encouraging children's word play and emerging awareness of letters and sounds,
- use numbers and numerals in practical contexts so that children begin to predict, compare, combine and group numbers of objects.

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