

Merton Poppets Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511077
Inspection date	06 November 2007
Inspector	Marie Thompson
Setting Address	Romsey Close, Popley, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 9HB
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Registered person	Merton Poppets 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Merton Poppets Playgroup opened in 1991. It operates within Merton Infant School grounds situated in a residential area. The pre-school largely serves families within the local community. The premises consist of a large room with access to kitchen/ office area and toilets. There is an outside play area with additional access to the school playgrounds and garden area.

There are currently 34 children from two years nine months to five years on roll. There are 28 children in receipt of nursery education funding. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens for eight sessions a week during school term times. Sessions run from 09.05 to 11.35 every morning and also from 12.35 to 15.05 on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoon.

The playgroup is run by an elected committee of present and past parents and members of the host school staff.

There are four staff who work with the children, three of whom hold early years qualifications and one member of staff working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The provision to help children be healthy is good. The setting is cleaned daily to minimise the risk of infections. The hygiene practices are of a good standard and children wash their hands before snacks and after messy play activities. Children develop very well because staff follow effective procedures and practices which meet the children's physical, nutritional and health needs. The good adult support and guidance helps children gain good understanding of hygiene and help them to become independent in their personal care. There are some excellent pictorial reminders in the toilets to help the children to remember to wash their hands and all the facilities are easily accessible at child height.

Children develop physical control in daily indoor and outdoor experiences. Staff have a keen knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework, and their very good understanding of each child's stage of development means that the youngest children are confident to try out new skills, ask for help when needed and set their own limits in a safe environment. The children are developing a positive attitude to physical exercise. The children enjoy going into the outside play area each day to get some fresh air. However, the staff do not consistently make sure all the children are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions. Some children went outside without a jumper or coat even though it is a very cold day. The children have lots of fun singing songs in a circle such as 'This is the way we walk to pre-school' and 'the farmers in his den'. They enjoy running on the spot, doing Jumping Jacks and hopping to keep warm in the cold weather. They are becoming very confident at walking on the stilts, following the footprints or throwing and catching balls together. If the children cannot go outside, the staff make sure the furniture is pushed back to enable them to dance to music or musical movement to the 'Sticky Kids' CD. The children have a fantastic time stretching up tall, clapping hands and swaying from side to side. There is lots of laughter as they sing, 'If you are happy and you know it' and 'Five peas in a pea pod press' along with the tape. The children march and crouch as they 'walk through the jungle' as elephants and frogs and snakes.

The children receive appropriate first aid, which is recorded and countersigned by the parents. Children are only administered medicine that has been authorised by their parents.

The pre-school operates a 'café' system at snack time whereby the children take responsibility for deciding when they would like their snack. The children take their name and put it into the box so that the staff know they have had their snack. They are able to help themselves to milk or water and are becoming very proficient at pouring their own drinks. They have a choice of snacks including fruit, crackers and bread sticks. The children particularly like making their own fruit kebabs using a selection of different fruits. Children are encouraged to clear up after their snack, which develops their sense of responsibility and pride in their surroundings.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The provision to protect children and help them stay safe is good. The children have sufficient space to move around the premises freely and comfortably. Risks of accidental injury to children

are minimised because staff are vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Frequent fire drills take place including staff and children. The setting is appropriately insured and the certificate is displayed. The premises inside and out are cleaned and maintained on a daily basis.

Staff have good understanding of how to achieve a balance between allowing freedom and setting safe limits. They also understand how to involve children effectively in organising their environment. This allows children to acquire some sense of danger and knowledge about how to protect themselves from harm. Good routines and gentle reminders help children learn about safety within the setting. Staff are vigilant of the children's safety at all times. The staff are aware of health and safety issues when providing equipment for the children. The premises are very secure and there are good procedures in place to prevent unwanted visitors from gaining access.

Children feel confident and secure in their environment through good deployment of staff working directly with the children. Children use equipment which is of a good quality and appropriate to their age and stage of development. Those learning English as an additional language are safe and fully included because of the sensitive adult support and well-planned resources and activities. The children have opportunities to explore safely in their environment because rules and boundaries are set that meet the individual needs of the children and are agreed by the staff and the children. Regular communication with parents contributes to the children's safety.

Children are very well protected by staff members who have a clear understanding of child protection policies and procedures and who give high priority to the children's welfare. The staff have attended relevant training which increases their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children. The staff are able to effectively and efficiently deal with all child protection concerns, and there is documented evidence to support this.

Children's development and well-being is effectively promoted through the well organised space. They have a good range of accessible toys and resources, which help them to develop their own ideas in their play and learning. A good range of safe and well-maintained furniture, equipment and resources meets the varying development needs of the children attending the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's development and well-being is effectively promoted through the well organised space. The children access a good range of choice in toys and resources to develop their own ideas in their play and learning. The good range of safe and well maintained furniture, equipment and resources meets the varying development needs of the children attending. The children's work is displayed around the pre-school which gives them a sense of achievement and pride in their accomplishments.

Children enjoy their time at pre-school. This is apparent by the sound of laughter throughout the session and the children's happy faces. They arrive happy and confident and quickly settle into the routine making their own choices about their play. Support from friendly staff helps the younger children settle and become familiar with their surroundings and the daily routine. Children are interested in activities and involved in their learning and good relationships with staff are evident. Practitioners know children well and talk to them about their family and what

they have been doing at home. This interaction, and the implementation of a successful key worker system, helps to secure relationships between children and staff developing a strong sense of trust.

Younger children develop very good communication skills as they contribute to group discussions and become competent learners. For example, they self-select activities such as dressing up, drawing and shape blocks helping to increase their manipulative skills. The children have made some lovely spiders and collages which are displayed on the walls and they enthusiastically point out which one is theirs. All the children made rockets for firework night using crepe paper which they 'flew' around the room. Children enjoy opportunities to express imagination through role-play and telling stories. The home corner is often transformed into a bakers, an explorers den or a shoe shop. The children experience a range of media and materials, encouraging them to explore their senses, such as soil, corn flour and a mix of dried pasta, rice and noodles. The children learn how to fill the cups using different size spoons and guess how many big spoons of soil it takes to fill the cup compared to the small spoons. They enjoy squelching their hands into the corn flour and watching what happens as they pull their hands out. Practitioners talk about how each child is progressing and plan their next step for development. They recognise the value of play in a child's development and introduce a range of experiences, enabling all children to learn to play and work together in large and small groups as well as independently. The interaction between the staff and children during structured activities is fluid and the staff generally use some opportunities to extend discussion about the activity. There is a happy buzz of activity within the pre-school.

Children are adept in their physical skills. They move confidently during activities both indoors and outdoors. They have good co-ordination and awareness of others, particularly when they are dancing in the main room, they spread out so that everyone has a chance to join in without bumping into each other. The children are confident at balancing on the stilts, following footprints and walking around the cones when they play outside. Children take part in a wide range of activities in all areas of learning, which help to develop their fine and gross motor skills. They are able to control pencils, scissors and paintbrushes with a good range of activities to develop their manipulative skills. All the children relish their time on the computer and are very competent at using the equipment. They play very well together in small groups and are purposefully engaged in activities such as the car mat, the home corner and puzzles.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good individual progress because practitioners have a secure understanding of how children learn effectively and use their self-chosen play to extend their learning. They adapt some of their questioning techniques, according to the age and ability of the child, and implement a varied range of teaching methods to introduce a good range of activities and experiences to all children. However, the practitioners do not always fully extend the stimulation and challenges for older children within the planned and free play activities, through open ended questioning and an extension of the basic principles of the activities. Practitioners encourage children to lead their own learning and this is successfully achieved by a well developed routine, with a good balance of child and adult initiated activities. There are lots labels on objects in the pre-school for the children to see. Therefore the children learn the meaning of words in association with everyday objects like, 'chair', 'door' or 'table'. This is reinforced by the use of pictures accompanying the words which accommodates all the children in the pre-school.

Children are eager to learn and concentrate well showing good perseverance with activities. They co-operate and negotiate roles, for example when acting out their imagined ideas in role-play and value one another's ideas. Children listen with interest to stories and are encouraged to interact with the story through discussion, questions and comments about the text and pictures. The children have a very good interest in books because the staff spend time reading to them in large or small groups and one to one. The book corner is welcoming with large scatter cushions for the children to sit on and a well stocked bookcase which is easily accessible to the children. Children independently use a range of tools and materials. They are able to freely access resources to practice writing or making marks, which represent their own ideas and enable them to learn that print carries meaning, such as writing letters, shopping lists, stories, instructions or numbers during their play.

Children gain confidence in using numbers and explore the use of numbers in a variety of everyday activities, such as dates and numbers of children. They enjoy counting songs with the accompanying actions. They learn about weight and measures through planned activities. The children are confident in using language regarding shapes and size in their everyday situations and activities. The children enjoyed 'fishing' the different coloured teddy bears out of the water play. The adult encouraged them to look for the big, medium and small bears and see how many they could collect in their cups. This activity was extended extremely well by asking the children to collect bears the same colour and size and count them back into the water. The focus table enables the children to look at specific aspects of learning. At the present time they are learning about colours so everything on the focus table is blue. They have painted some lovely shapes which are displayed on the wall. The computer is always on in the pre-school and the children take turns to go on it. They are very competent at using the mouse and working their way through the educational games such as, 'Reader Rabbit' and 'Ace Monkey'. The pre-school has lots of photo albums with pictures of the children taking part in activities and in the book corner is the 'Things we enjoy' photo album, which the children can look at and recall the things they have done. They do this with great excitement as they point to themselves and their friends in the pictures.

Effective use is made of time and resources to provide children with opportunities to engage in physical activities, including dance, musical movement, and explore creativity using a wide range of media such as paint, water, and sand. They learn about themselves and their families through discussion. However, there are limited activities and resources to raise the children's knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Therefore the children do not learn about the wonders of the world; the people, animals, countries or landscapes.

Practitioners observe and monitor children's progress regularly in a variety of different ways and this is used to identify individual targets for children to work towards. A realistic expectation of children and good individual knowledge helps them to consolidate their learning before moving onto the next stage. As a result, the curriculum is tailored to individual children's needs and abilities, which ensures effective support and sufficient challenges are provided to help children achieve their individual potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The provision to help children make a positive contribution is good. All children are welcomed and play a full part in the pre-school because the staff value and respect each child's individuality and family context. Their behaviour is good. Staff support younger children in sharing and taking turns. They have high expectations and set consistent boundaries for the children using

the pre-school's 'Golden rules'. This helps them learn to negotiate with others and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The children respond very well to 'Magic Hands' which is their signal to stop what they are doing and listen to the staff and act accordingly.

Children benefit a lot from staff who adopt a consistent and positive approach to behaviour management. They become aware of the pre-school's routines and procedures and know what is expected of them through response to the routine changes in the day. The children's achievements and efforts are rewarded with stickers and certificates which increases their belief in themselves and their self-esteem. The staff are excellent role models and the children emulate their behaviour. Children are given clear guidelines, know the routine well and are encouraged to take care of the environment. They are sensitive to the needs of others, share toys and resources readily and co-operate with each other. The children feel valued because the staff talk to them constantly and listen to and are interested in what they have to say.

The play and education provision is organised and monitored well to ensure that the children have access to a good range of indoor and outdoor activities. All toys and resources, including the home corner, the dressing up area and the book shelves, are at a low level and are amenable to children. The children's understanding of right and wrong is increased as they respond to gentle reminders to care for their environment, the pre-school resources and each other.

Children have some opportunities to learn about themselves and each other through some planned activities. There are some resources and activities that promote equality and reflect positive images of diversity including gender, culture and disability. The children enjoy using the multi-cultural puppets and musical instruments and had great fun when the home corner became an explorers den with magnifying glasses, maps and flags. There are some very nice posters around the room which depict people from different countries and with different abilities. The pre-school welcomes visitors occasionally such as 'The Interactive Music Workshops' although the pre-school is aware this is an area that needs to be developed further. The children learn about some festivals and celebrations such as Chinese New Year, Christmas and Easter. However, these are limited and are not extended to include a full range of festivals, celebrations and traditions. This limits children's understanding and appreciation of other people. The children's work is attractively displayed around the pre-school which gives them a sense of pride in their achievements. Children's individual labelled pegs provide them with a sense of belonging as they store their pictures and personal belongings. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Although there are currently no children with disabilities or learning difficulties attending the pre-school, the manager demonstrates sound knowledge of the fundamental principals of the Code of Practice. There are good systems in place to support children who have special needs. Close liaison with parents and outside agencies would ensure that all the children's needs are well planned for and met. The staff work with other professionals and parents to devise children's Individual Education Plan (IEP); as a result staff are able to set achievable and realistic goals for the children.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents contribute to children's well-being in the pre-school. Their views about the children's needs and interests are actively sought before the children start attending the setting and on a regular basis throughout the time they spend there. Staff ensure that all parents know how the children are progressing and developing. A clear and informative notice board, with relevant and up-to-date information, is accessible to all parents. The open door policy for parents to speak to staff informally on a daily basis works effectively. This is reinforced through newsletters and continual verbal feedback. The pre-school offers a

parents' evening once a term for the parents to come into the group and talk to the staff and look around the room and there is an open day for new parents to come into the pre-school and experience the activities their children will be joining in with, such as corn flour and play dough. Parents are well informed about the routines, curriculum and all aspects of the pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children's care is significantly enhanced by the pre-school's good organisation. The premises are well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is laid out to maximise the children's play opportunities.

The children make good use of the space that is available to them and have many opportunities to interact and socialise with each other. Individual recruitment and staff records are securely stored. The children benefit from the effective operational plan and staff levels are maintained at all times which helps children feel secure. The staff demonstrate an awareness of their roles and responsibilities, and most children are aware that one member of staff is responsible for them. Daily registration systems clearly state the time and date when children, staff and visitors are present.

The children's care and learning is reinforced by the effective deployment of staff and the good leadership and management of the nursery education. Staff members working with the children are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and consistently promote the children's well-being in line with the comprehensive policies and procedures. The required documentation is available at all times and this helps to promote a stimulating and safe environment for children.

Leadership and management is good. The manager provides purposeful leadership and has a sound grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-school. The staff regularly review and reflect on their practice and plan activities accordingly for the coming weeks. This approach contributes to meeting the needs of all the children. The whole staff team, regardless of their individual roles in the setting acknowledge that they also have a responsibility for leadership and management. To help protect the children, the manager makes sure all staff members receive a comprehensive induction. The staff are aware of the policies and procedures and during their staff appraisals any training needs are discussed and addressed. This enables the staff to consolidate their skills and knowledge. Therefore children's learning and development is enhanced. The team members work effectively together and are happy. Therefore, the children feel safe and secure in their environment and make good progress towards the early learning goals. There is a good commitment to staff improvement, training and development, which enhances and maintains the very good care, learning and well-being of the children. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Children Act inspection, the group were asked to ensure records of children and staff attending and hours of attendance are clearly recorded at all times and to review parents' complaint procedure to identify Ofsted as body for registration and inspection and point of contact for complaints. The group has improved the children's records and the registration and recording system for staff attending and hours of attendance so that they are clearly recorded at all times. They have reviewed and updated the parents' complaints procedure identifying

Ofsted as the registering body for regulation and inspection and the point of contact for complaints.

At the last nursery education inspection, the group were asked to clearly record children's progress to reflect their development on the stepping stones and the next steps needed to ensure progress, to review planning to show grouping of children and to reflect children's individual needs and interests and supports their ongoing development, to extend the opportunities for children to partake in indoor physical activities and for older/more able children to practise emergent writing, familiar words and to use and recognise numbers in every day situations. The group have improved systems for recording children's progress which reflect their development on the stepping stones and the next steps needed to ensure their progress. They have reviewed their planning to show the grouping of children and reflection of their individual needs and interests and to support their ongoing development and the opportunities for children to partake in indoor physical activities and for older/more able children to practise emergent writing, familiar words and to use and recognise numbers in every day situations have been extended.

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 sure children are consistently dressed appropriately to play outside
- provide a range of resources and activities which promote different festivals, celebrations and traditions

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):

- provide greater stimulation and challenges for older children within the planned and free play activities

- increase children's knowledge and understanding of the wider world

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