

Barton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221740
Inspection date	11 March 2008
Inspector	Caroline Wright
Setting Address	Barton School, School Lane, Barton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB23 7BD
Telephone number	07811 083250
E-mail	
Registered person	Barton 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?

Barton Playgroup is run by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the playgroup. It opened in the 1980's and operates from a purpose built building. It is situated in the grounds of Barton Primary School in Barton, Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 20 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12:00 with an optional lunch club from 12:00 to 13:00, during school term-times only. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 17 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The playgroup currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup employs two members of staff, one of the staff in the setting holds appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating. They make 'wash your hands' posters to display in the bathroom and constant reminders from staff help them to remember. Adults remind children of the importance of washing your hands to 'get rid of naughty bugs' and children talk with understanding about 'germs that get in your stomach and make you sick.' Staff act as good role models, wiping down surfaces before serving snack and after children have eaten to help children to stay healthy. All areas of the premises are suitably clean and this further promotes children's ongoing good health.

Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. They are able to run around and exert themselves, on the school field or in their own outdoor play area, so that they learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. The soft play climbing frame and ball pool provide children with daily opportunities to develop large physical skills indoors. Children are aware of changes that occur in their bodies due to physical exertion and comment 'I'm hot' or 'I'm tired' when they have been running around outside or dancing to music when they play 'musical statues'. They handle small pieces of construction toys competently and expertly use scissors, pencils and glue sticks with manipulative dexterity. Staff organise interesting topics such as 'our senses' to help children to learn about how their bodies work. They use magnifying glasses and make binoculars with recycled household materials, talking about how 'you look through them with your eyes and they make things look bigger'.

Children learn about healthy eating during discussion with staff at snack time. The healthy eating policy encourages parents to provide a piece of fresh fruit for children to share at snack time. Children are given a drink of water or milk in the middle of the session so that they remain well hydrated and healthy. Visits to the playgroup by the dental hygienist and the nurse help them to learn about the importance of caring for their bodies in the future. Children enjoy cooking activities such as making gingerbread men and talk with staff about the importance of healthy eating in the future. They know that it is good to drink milk to encourage 'really strong bones' and to 'make you big and strong'. However, opportunities for children to develop new physical skills at adult led activities such as snack time are missed.

The needs of children under three years are well met by adults who have a sound understanding of child development and how young children learn. If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the playgroup, up-to-date records are in place to make sure that good care is given. Staff are well qualified in first aid and good information is gathered from parents to help them to care for children with existing medical conditions if they need to.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move around safely under the constant supervision of the playgroup staff. They learn how to keep themselves safe, waiting for their turn to come down the slide on the climbing frame so that they do not bump into each other. High locks on the entrance door prevents children from leaving the premises without adult supervision and members of the public are unable to enter without being invited. In addition, the playgroup has it's own outdoor play area, which is fully enclosed to promote children's safety outdoors. Children learn about staying

safe outside the setting, talking with police officers about personal safety. Staff build on these visits with the provision of role play activities and resources to enable children to dress up as police officers to practice what they have learned. Art and craft activities linked to Bonfire Night or Diwali provide staff with opportunities to talk to children about the dangers of fire and firework safety in a way that children can understand. In addition, visits by the road safety officer and 'Spike the hedgehog' help children to learn about road safety. Staff use resources such as zebra crossings and a 'lollypop' to help children to consolidate their learning through play based experiences.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a good understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff attend regular training and the designated person co-ordinates all safeguarding procedures. Staff keep records of any worries about children's welfare and are confident to refer these concerns to the appropriate professionals if they need to.

The annual risk assessment of the premises addresses any potential hazards to children's safety. This is subject to ongoing review to promote children's welfare and safety on a day-to-day basis and staff are pro-active in making changes to improve children's safety indoors and out. A wide range of written policies and appropriate procedures are in place, including regular fire drills, to help children know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation of the premises. Children select resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development; these are checked regularly by playgroup staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, confident and enjoy their time at the setting. All children engage eagerly in the range of interesting activities that are provided such as hand printing with ink and pads or play with cornflour and pasta to learn about texture and explore their senses. Children's experiences are enhanced by the skilful interaction of the qualified members of staff who use their clear knowledge and understanding of child development to plan activities that help children to learn. They expertly support young children's learning when they help them to build a 'robot' with the 'Big Builder' set, talking about the difference between screws, nuts and bolts as they help children to join the pieces together successfully. They extend children's language skills sensitively, refining children's attempts at the new words they introduce, listening with interest to children's conversations so that young children become confident communicators. The supervisor makes daily observations of children to monitor their progress and uses these to inform development records. However, there is no key worker system in place and observations of what children enjoy are not used to inform the planning of activities. As a result, some group activities such as snack time, do not maintain children's interests and lack challenge for more able children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children use their imagination in a wide range of situations such as the role play 'music shop' or 'playgroup bank' as they explore musical instruments and write 'cheques' to pay for their purchases. Children use numbers in their play and count groups of items reliably. They talk about words that mean 'big' expertly informing staff that 'massive, huge and enormous mean very big!'. They calculate how many children are present at snack time and know that 'four and one more makes five'. Children show an interest

in activities that help them to learn about shapes and notice that 'the window is a rectangle shape'.

They communicate effectively and use a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas and talk about what they know. They use language effectively to respond to their sensory experiences, telling adults that the rice feels 'scrunchy' and the fur feels 'soft and gentle like a cat'. Children talk with understanding about what they do at home and use language well to talk through their thoughts and anticipate what will happen next. For example, they tell adults, 'when I'm big I'm going to school in my new black shoes'. They have opportunities to learn about patterns and changes in the natural environment when they collect leaves and conkers for their artwork or plant vegetables and flowers in the playgroup garden.

Children look at books alone as well as with adults in the well resourced book corner. They turn pages from front to back carefully and listen with interest to stories. Staff capture children's interest in stories with their expert story telling techniques. As a result children to develop an enjoyment of books and learn early reading skills. Children enjoy singing songs at circle time, moving their bodies to the rhythm and joining in with finger rhymes. Children draw pictures and give meaning to their marks. They write their names using pencils and paper. They have a very good understanding of sounds and letters, recognising initial sounds in familiar words such as their own name.

Staff working with children have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and clear curriculum plans enable them to know how activities contribute to children's progress. They plan a suitable range of activities over time so that children access a broad and balanced programme of learning opportunities. The manager monitors children's progress towards the early learning goals and uses the stepping stones to track development. However, there is no key worker system in place and observations of what children enjoy and can do well are not used effectively to inform planning. As a result, some activities such as snack time, lack challenge and interest for children. Children who prefer to learn in the outdoor environment are unable to access the outdoor play area independently. Consequently, opportunities for children to extend their learning independently and to develop new skills are missed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show a very strong sense of belonging as they greet adults and each other upon arrival at the playgroup. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They work extremely well together, co-operating with each other during group activities and taking turns at games such as dominoes or 'Hungry Frog'. They help to pack away resources before snack and know that 'we mustn't throw toys or they will get broken'. Adults carefully explain what they expect children to do in a way that the children can understand, to help them to behave well. Staff encourage children to respect each other's needs and to use conventions such as 'please' and 'thank you', acting as positive role models themselves. Children devise the playgroup 'rules' for good behaviour and agree that 'we will not get cross and take turns and share'.

However, children are unable to access the outdoor play area independently. Instead, access to outdoor play is limited to set times in the day. This affects children's ability to pursue their own interests and extend their knowledge and skills in their preferred learning environment. In addition, the organisation of the session limits children's ability to engage in sustained thinking and affects the behaviour of some children.

Children access a suitable range of resources that reflect diversity, to help them to learn about other members of society through their play. They talk with each other about their families and engage in activities that help them to learn about other lifestyles; circle time discussions enable them to talk about what they do at home so that they learn about each other's family cultures and traditions. They take part in a range of cultural festivals that reflect the diverse backgrounds of those who attend the setting and help them to learn positive attitudes towards the beliefs of others.

A suitable system is in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff work with parents and other professionals to support children's learning and to promote ongoing progress. A good system is in place to support children who speak English as an additional language. Adults gather key words from parents when children arrive at the setting so that they can help children to build on their existing language and become confident communicators.

Good information is gathered by adults when children first start at the setting to help them to settle easily and to become confident members of the pre-school. Extensive information is available on the noticeboards in the entrance area and parents are invited to join the management committee so that they are well informed and can influence the way the setting is run. The pre-school supports and takes part in a wide range of community activities to help children and families to become part of the wider community. However, some policies and procedures relating to information for parents need review.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Positive relationships contribute to the progress of children who receive funded early education. Parents receive good information about nursery activities and how they can extend on these at home. Daily discussions and good communication with staff enables parents to share information informally on a daily basis and comment on what their children do at home. Regular written reports enable parents to be well informed about their children's progress. The prospectus contains information about the early learning goals to help parents to be informed about how activities in the setting help their children to learn.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the playgroup promotes positive outcomes for children. All areas of the playgroup environment are attractive and provide enough space for children to move around independently. The induction programme for new staff ensures that everyone is aware of procedures for child protection and knows about safeguarding children. All of the legally required documents which contribute to children's health, safety and well-being, are in place. However, these are not reviewed regularly and as a result some of them do not reflect current requirements or promote equal opportunities for all children and families. For example, the setting's admissions policy indicates that the playgroup is not accessible to some children who wear nappies.

The voluntary committee has set up a good system to ensure that all members of the team are well qualified and experienced. In addition, they make sure that all adults are subject to a rigorous vetting process and are suitable to have contact with children. Staff engage in a wide range of training to enable them to provide interesting activities that help children to learn. However, the organisation of the session is not effective in promoting sustained thinking or in developing positive attitudes towards learning. For example, children are expected to pack

away resources, even when they are actively engaged in purposeful play, to prepare for snack; they are then kept waiting for extended periods of time without being engaged or challenged. During this time, some children become unsettled and disruptive.

Leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. The staff and committee have regular opportunities to meet and share information and exchange practice ideas. In addition, the playgroup team access support from the advisory teacher in the local authority to identify areas for further development. A questionnaire for parents helps the playgroup staff to identify any areas for additional improvement and reflect upon playgroup practice. However, there is no key worker system in operation to support children's learning and inform planning and assessment procedures. As a result, although regular observations of children take place, records are not updated frequently enough to enable staff to plan activities that build on children's current interests and skills. This affects learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the playgroup agreed to develop an effective procedure for recording and administering medication to children; keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children and make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the procedure to be followed if they have a complaint and include the regulator's contact details. Staff now receive written permission to administer any medicines to children and record the administration. In addition, parents sign to acknowledge that they have been informed of the dosage at the end of the session and these records are maintained on site. This protects children from accidental overdose. A written procedure to inform parents of how to make a complaint is available for reference in the entrance area. However, the address of Ofsted is incorrect and the procedure does not meet all of the requirements set out in National Standard 12 (partnership with parents and carers). This recommendation has been carried forward for further improvement following this inspection.

At the last inspection of nursery education the playgroup agreed to increase the opportunities that children have to improve their knowledge of writing and numeracy through everyday activities and resources. Children are now encouraged to make meaningful marks in the graphics area; write their names on their artwork and to write in role play situations. In addition, they count and use calculations in everyday routines, such as snack time. They use telephones and calculators to learn to recognise and use numbers in their play.

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 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):

- improve access the outdoor area to enable children to pursue their own interests and extend their knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum in their preferred learning environment (this also applies to nursery education)
- review written policies and procedures to reflect current requirements and to promote equality of opportunity for all children (this refers to the admissions policy and the complaints procedure).

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 organisation of the session to provide children with increased opportunity to engage in periods of sustained thinking; make sure they are not kept waiting for extended periods of time at group activities without being purposefully engaged and adequately challenged at all times
- set up a key worker system to support children and to inform the assessment and planning system: use key workers' daily observations of what children enjoy to plan the next steps for each child and inform planning for indoors and out; offer interesting and challenging opportunities for each individual to extend their learning across all areas of the curriculum (this also applies to care).

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