

Milton Mount Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113602
Inspection date	05 February 2008
Inspector	Lisa Jane Cupples
Setting Address	Milton Mount Community Centre, Milton Mount Avenue, Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 3DY
Telephone number	01293 884312
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Registered person	Milton Mount 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - special measures.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Milton Mount Pre-school is a community group managed by parents whose children attend the setting. It opened in 1992 and operates within Milton Mount Community Centre which is situated in the Pound Hill area of Crawley. The pre-school has the use of a large hall, with toilet facilities and a kitchen area. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12:00 during school term time only. The pre-school offers additional afternoon sessions as numbers increase during the academic year. All children have access to an outdoor area.

There are currently 38 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 34 children receive funding for early education. Children come from local and surrounding areas and attend a variety of sessions. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs three members of staff on a full time basis. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a level three qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children's health is not assured in the event of an emergency because staff have not obtained written parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment or advice and no staff employed hold a current first aid certificate. Staff ensure all accidents that occur on the premises are recorded and the parents sign the records, although confidentiality is not maintained. Children are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times to help prevent the possible spread of infection, although no explanation is shared with the children to help them learn about the importance of good personal hygiene. Staff accompany the children to and from the toilets and do not encourage them to access the facilities independently to develop their self-care skills.

Children are offered drinks at snack time; however they do not have access to fresh drinking water at any other time during the session. Children are not actively encouraged to increase their knowledge of healthy eating through discussion or daily routines. Staff provide biscuits and apple slices everyday for snack, with no discussion about why some foods are good for their bodies and children are not offered a range of alternative healthy options. Snack time is not organised well as children sit on chairs in a large circle and wait for staff to tidy away the equipment. Staff then hand out the children's drinks and the snack and the children wait again while staff set up the main activity for the second part of the session. Children struggle to sit still for this length of time and, as a result, some children become bored and begin pretending to fall off their chairs. Staff discuss the children's allergies, medical and cultural needs with the parents and record the information on their registration forms, ensuring their needs are being met.

Children have insufficient opportunities to play in the outdoor environment. Staff do not use the outdoor play area during cold weather and in the summer months, children generally only access the area to have their snack. No equipment is provided outside to promote the six areas of learning, hindering the children's outdoor play experiences. Children's spatial awareness is not promoted during activities. For example, they squash together, vying for the best position on the mat at registration time and push each other as they line up to use the indoor climbing frame.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Staff talk to the children about how to keep themselves safe during their play. For example, children are reminded of the safety rules when using the climbing frame during registration time at the start of the session. However, this is not monitored by the staff and the children do not follow the rules. Children, therefore, use this equipment in an inappropriate and unsafe way. Other staff do not notice and the situation deteriorates further as the children jostle each other as they climb the ladder and queue up waiting for their turn. The continued overcrowding of the apparatus, failure to implement the safety rules and lack of adequate supervision poses a danger to children and compromises their safety during this activity. The written risk assessment covers the use of the climbing frame, although it does not include information about restricting the number of children using the apparatus at any one time. Staff also talk to the children about road safety and set up an activity after snack time. However, all learning

opportunities are missed as the children begin running around and staff fail to expand on the discussion at snack time.

Children are cared for in a secure environment because staff implement risk assessments formally on all areas used by children and identify any hazards, taking steps to minimise them. For example, heaters and plug sockets are covered and all cleaning materials are inaccessible to children. Children have access to an extremely limited range of resources each session. Staff set up the tables following the rota and put construction materials on the mat. Children have no opportunities to self-select resources to promote and extend their own ideas, to increase their independence or decision-making skills effectively. The pre-school has a wide selection of suitable equipment and resources available, however, insufficient use is made of them on a daily basis and they are poorly organised, hindering the children's learning opportunities across all six areas of learning.

The pre-school operates from a community centre hall. The premises are shared, although the pre-school has sole use of the building when the pre-school sessions are running, helping to safeguard the children. The building is secure and the main door to the hall is kept locked. Other areas, such as the storage cupboards are inaccessible to children, providing a safe play environment. Staff set up the hall before the children arrive and a resource rota is implemented to ensure children have use of the full range of equipment across the term. Staff have the use of one notice board in the hall and are not allowed to permanently display the children's work in any other areas. Staff do not use any alternative methods to display and value the children's work. As a result, the learning environment is bland and uninviting; there are no opportunities for children to recognise numerals, letters, colours or shapes. Staff do not display photographs or posters of any kind to promote diversity in the physical environment.

Parents receive written information about the staff's role with regard to protecting the children in their care and suitable procedures are implemented for the safe arrival and collection of children. However, the child protection procedures are not fully developed and parents are not given information about the Local Safeguarding Children Board. No staff have completed child protection training, although they were able to discuss an appropriate course of action if concerns are identified to safeguard the children. The procedures do not include how children's existing injuries are to be discussed, recorded and monitored and staff are unaware of the importance of implementing these procedures to further protect the children who attend.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Children arrive happily to pre-school and confidently leave their parents. They enjoy talking to the staff about what they have been doing as they look to see what activities are out for the session. They enjoy their time at the setting and most children make friends easily. However, children are not engaged in purposeful activities to promote their learning and many wander around aimlessly, with little or no interaction from the staff or their peers. For example, children do not always sufficiently participate and the staff team fail to notice because they do not keep an overall eye on the session when they work on the focus activities. As a result, children become restless and this has a very negative effect on their behaviour. The activities and resources provided are extremely limited and prevent the children from participating in a broad and varied learning programme that reflects their individual needs during each session.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning are inadequate. Children fail to make sufficient progress in their individual learning because the quality of teaching is poor. Staff have an extremely limited understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn through play. The staff team plan two focussed activities every session to ensure the children complete work for their individual folders or to take home. These activities are linked to the theme for the week and children are encouraged to complete them. They are often collected by staff to go and do them, even when they are busy with other activities, although staff say the children do not have to do them if they choose not to. Staff record what the children can do in their progress records but do not use the information to identify the children's next steps and no dates are recorded to show when the children achieved the entries made. The insufficient curriculum planning shows what resources will be used to cover specific stepping stones for the week, although it is not linked to the children's next steps of learning. The planning does not include information about the children's individual needs, show differentiation, the planned learning intentions for children or the adult's role. Consequently staff are unaware of the learning intentions and have no focus; so many learning opportunities are continually missed. The use of time, space and resources provide no challenges for the children and are poorly organised; the children are easily distracted and only complete the focussed tasks when they work closely with the staff. Children's free-play is not supported effectively, greatly hindering their progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff concentrate on the focussed activities and fail to notice what is going on around them. They miss the learning opportunities that arise during free-play and children are left to their own devices. For example, children become disruptive and behave inappropriately and the staff do not intervene because they are completely unaware. Staff also fail to question the children effectively during activities and do not encourage the children to problem-solve. For example, children play with the construction equipment and a member of staff sits with them. The children are having difficulty constructing the model they want to make and ask 'how do we fix the wheels on?' The member of staff smiles and puts the wheels on for them, failing to make the most of the potential learning opportunities, such as encouraging the children to think about how the wheels attach, the colours, shapes and positioning of the sections.

Children flit from one activity to another without achieving anything, often disrupting other children's play. Staff do not notice and the behaviour continues throughout the session. For example, one child walks to an activity, takes the role-play food away from another child, runs down the hall and throws it on the floor then goes and hides two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle another child is trying to complete. Children are used to this happening and do not even bother to tell the staff, they simply move to another activity or wander around to find something else to do.

Children personal, social and emotional development is not promoted well in the pre-school. There are limited opportunities for them to develop good self-care skills, as they are accompanied to the toilet and their drinks are poured for them at snack time. They have few opportunities to self-select resources or develop their decision-making skills because the choice of resources is inadequate. Children sit down at registration time and listen for their names. They quickly become distracted and the staff do not try to regain their attention. Several children spend the whole first free-play session running around the climbing frame, hiding underneath and jumping from the top of the side section and staff do not try to engage them in worthwhile activities to promote their learning.

Children's listening skills are poor; they talk above the staff during whole group activities such as registration time. Children continually shout over each other and often miss the whole

conversation. For example, following snack time staff talked to the children about road safety. Some of the children begin pretending to fall off their chairs and laughing at each other while the member of staff carries on talking about the activity. Children are beginning to recognise letters during one of the focussed activities and they link the sounds, then decorate a worksheet with the letter of the week. Children have access to limited resources on a mark-making table and some children can form clear recognisable letters as they attempt to write their names on their work. There are no other opportunities for children to practise their emergent writing skills for a variety of purposes, such as, writing notes or shopping lists in the home corner.

Children are able to count everyday objects, although when staff count the number of people present at registration time the children loose interest. There are no opportunities for children to recognise numerals in their physical environment on a daily basis and problem-solving skills are not appropriately encouraged as staff often just complete tasks for the children and do not ask open-ended questions to extend their learning. Children do not have access to a computer and have extremely limited opportunities to explore their local environment. Outside play is limited to snack time or occasional water play during warm weather only. Children have insufficient opportunities to explore media and materials for themselves as they are not freely available during the sessions. Art and craft activities are provided daily, although they are very adult led and prescriptive, restricting the children's opportunities to express their imaginations and explore their creativity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is not fostered. Staff show little understanding of how to promote equality of opportunity through their practice. For example, they fail to ensure all children are actively engaged and focused in purposeful activities and do not plan and cater for children's individual learning needs. A few resources are available to reflect diversity, such as, puzzles and books. However, positive images of culture, ethnicity and disability are not reflected throughout the physical environment. Consequently, children receive few opportunities to recognise and value the similarities and differences between themselves and others. Children with English as an additional language are not supported effectively in the pre-school because staff make no attempt to obtain familiar words or phrases used by the children to help them settle in or to value their home language. Children have no interaction with staff or their peers for long periods during the sessions. The supervisor of the pre-school is the special needs coordinator. Although she has not completed any training in this area and has little understanding of the Code of Practice, appropriate procedures are in place to support the children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The pre-school has developed links with the inclusion team and staff have a positive attitude towards caring for all children.

Children's behaviour is poor because rules and boundaries are not implemented consistently by the staff team. When staff deal with unwanted behaviour no explanations are given to the children to develop their understanding of right and wrong. For example, children waiting to go on the slide are told 'no pushing' and then the member of staff moves away with no explanation of why this behaviour is unacceptable. Children's behaviour across the session is disruptive because they are bored, receive insufficient challenges and are not engaged in purposeful, worthwhile activities. Many opportunities to talk to children about their behaviour are missed and they are not helped to understand the consequences or take responsibility for their actions because staff deployment is ineffective and the behavioural issues go unnoticed. Those children who do behave well receive little praise or encouragement unless they are

completing a focused activity. There are no procedures in place to record incidents of unwanted behaviour or to share the information with parents to ensure a consistent approach with home.

Parents receive written information about the aims of the pre-school and some of the policies in the group prospectus. Parents are able to talk to the staff about their children's general well-being at the end of each session and staff use weekly diaries as an additional way to communicate with parents. Staff write in the diaries during the sessions, usually when the children complete their folder work, enabling parents to share in the activities the children have been involved in. Parents are also invited to come into sessions and help on the parents' rota; they also play an active role on the committee. The complaints procedure for parents is displayed on the notice board, however, it includes incorrect contact details for Ofsted and the pre-school do not have a complaints log in place to share with parents on request.

The partnership with parents of children who receive funding for early education is inadequate. Parents receive no information about the Foundation Stage, except through the prospectus which mentions the six areas of learning, although no detail is included. Parents have access to their children's progress records towards the end of the summer term and the newsletter states that parents can see the records at any time on request. However, the records are not dated; they are simply highlighted and colour-coded to show which term, so parents are unable to see when their children actually achieved the stepping stones. This does not help the parents to recognise how children learn through play or encourage them to become fully involved in their children's learning. The pre-school uses a key worker system and a list is displayed on the wall, although parents are unable to say who their children's key workers are. Parents are unable to discuss their children's next learning steps because staff do not identify them or plan the curriculum to meet their individual needs. Therefore, parents are unable to build on their children's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children are happy and enjoy the time they spend in the group. However, the deployment of staff and use of space and resources fails to ensure children are safe, actively engaged in all aspects of the session and that effective learning takes place. Children are not fully protected because procedures to recruit, appoint and induct new staff are insufficiently robust. Systems to establish the ongoing suitability of those already working in the setting are not fully developed, particularly with regard to assessing their practice. Ratios are met; however, staff fail to work together as a team and do not oversee the session appropriately, leading to the children's poor behaviour. Insufficient procedures are in place to monitor staff performance and development. Although annual appraisals are completed, there are no systems in place to identify their individual training needs and no staff currently hold first aid certificates. Consequently, all those working with children lack knowledge and understanding around the Foundation Stage curriculum and the National Standards, which impacts on the care and learning provided to children. As a result, the setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Some records are not in place or lack sufficient detail. For example, the accident and medication records are recorded together and visitors sign in the diary but do not leave contact details. Staff do not obtain written parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment or advice and there are no procedures in place to monitor accidents or the injuries children arrive with. There is no complaints log in place and systems to ensure the confidentiality of documentation

is maintained are insecure. For example, entries relating to different children are recorded on the same page, enabling all parents to view the entries made.

The leadership and management of nursery education are inadequate. Overall, children's learning is significantly hindered because those working with them have no knowledge about the Foundation Stage curriculum and teaching is weak throughout. Learning opportunities continue to go unnoticed across the session and insufficient challenges are provided to children. The systems to plan are insecure and there are no procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of activities offered to children. Insufficient procedures are in place to observe and monitor children's individual progress and, consequently, experiences offered are not tailored to their individual needs and abilities. As a result, children fail to make sufficient progress and are not provided with opportunities to achieve their individual potential during their time at pre-school.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to ensure that current child protection procedures are obtained and to provide opportunities for staff to take part in an effective induction and appraisal programme. The pre-school has made poor progress since the last inspection. The child protection procedures are not fully developed and do not refer to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. New staff do not complete an effective induction programme and although annual appraisals take place, staff training needs are not identified.

At the last nursery education inspection no key issues were recommended.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - special measures.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop procedures to recruit, appoint and induct new staff and improve systems to ensure the ongoing suitability of those already working in the setting

- complete an appropriate first aid course that includes training in first aid for infants and young children
- improve the deployment of staff, and organise space and resources effectively, to ensure the safety, welfare and development of all children
- plan and provide a suitable range of activities for children, which are appropriate for their stage of development and based on their individual needs
- assess the risks to children in relation to the use of large apparatus and take action to minimise these
- increase staff's understanding of how to promote equal opportunities within the setting and provide effective support for children with English as an additional language
- develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour consistently, taking into account their age and stage of development, and introduce systems to record incidents of behaviour sharing this information effectively with the parents
- ensure parents are provided with the correct contact details for Ofsted and keep a record of complaints relating to the National Standards and any action taken
- develop the child protection procedure and implement procedures to record and discuss injuries children arrive with
- improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations and ensure all documentation includes the relevant detail and maintains confidentiality.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

The setting requires special measures to improve the provision for nursery education. The following urgent action is required:

- improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage to improve the quality of teaching and children's learning
- develop effective systems to plan and deliver nursery education and to observe and assess children's ongoing progress towards the early learning goals
- improve the use of time, space and resources to promote children's learning and use knowledge of individual children and information gained from assessment to plan for their individual needs
- introduce systems to monitor and evaluate teaching, the curriculum and children's individual progress ensuring effective learning takes place
- introduce systems for parents to be informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum, their child's ongoing progress and achievements, next steps for development and how they can help support this at home.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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