

Stone Cross Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507910
Inspection date	22 May 2008
Inspector	Alison Weaver
Setting Address	Stone Cross Memorial Hall, Dittons Road, Stone Cross, East Sussex, BN24 5ET
Telephone number	01323 769053
E-mail	
Registered person	Stone Cross Pre-School 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?

Stone Cross Pre-school has been running since 1952. It operates from one large room and a smaller room in a community hall in Stone Cross. The hall is situated near to local amenities and a primary school. A maximum of 30 children may attend at any one time. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.15 until 11.45. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The committee also runs a sister group nearby, which takes children from three years of age.

There are currently 42 children from two to under four years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The setting employs six staff. Of these, five of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff working towards a recognised qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in an environment that is maintained to a satisfactory level of cleanliness. They learn about the importance of good personal hygiene through the daily routines such as washing their hands after messy play and after using the toilet. Children are reminded to wash their hands before they do any cooking activities. The use of a shared bowl of water for hand washing is less effective at minimising the risk of cross infection.

Staff promote children's health by some effective hygiene procedures. For example, they wear disposable gloves and aprons when changing children's nappies. The majority of the staff are trained in first aid so that they can give the appropriate care to children if they have an accident. There are suitable arrangements in place for sick children. Staff obtain information about children's individual health and dietary needs from parents so that they can care for the child appropriately.

The staff introduce topics such as 'All About Me' to promote children's understanding of healthy eating and the need for exercise. They make fruit kebabs and grow tomatoes that they can eat at snack times. Children eat other healthy snacks such as crackers with cheese, fruit and raisins. The snack menu keeps parents informed about what their child is having each day. The children sometimes help to prepare their own snacks, such as, spreading butter on their crackers. Staff do not always sit with the children at snack times to take advantage of the learning opportunity to discuss what is good to eat and to develop their social skills.

Children can help themselves to a drink whenever they get thirsty as a jug of water is left accessible to them. This helps prevent dehydration in the children. However, there is no clear system to ensure that used cups are not reused by another child. Instead, staff have to rely on noticing when a child has used a cup and then removing it for washing.

Children make satisfactory progress in physical development. They enjoy plenty of opportunities where they develop their physical skills. Children show good coordination, moving confidently and safely on soft play equip. They enjoy playing outside on the trikes and scooters. However, at times the lack of effective organisation of the use of the outdoor area limits children's opportunities to develop their physical skills. Children's fine motor skills develop as they use a basic range of tools and smaller equipment. For example, they learn to use knives and scissors.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a safe and secure environment. The use of a door buzzer alerts staff and helps ensure there is no unauthorised access to the children. It also helps prevent children leaving the premises unnoticed. Overall, staff supervise the children appropriately. The building used by the children is maintained to a satisfactory standard. Staff make the two rooms attractive and welcoming for the children with a selection of colourful posters and pictures. They make effective use of space in the large hall by creating a variety of different play areas including an area for more physical play and a cosy book corner. Children enjoy playing with a wide range of equipment that is appropriate to their age and stage of development. The equipment used is kept clean, safe and in a good state of repair. Some of the furniture is less suitable for the

very young children who attend the setting. For example, the table heights make it difficult for these children to play easily at a table top activity.

Staff carry out effective daily safety checks and regular risk assessments to ensure that the environment is safe for children. The necessary safety equipment is in place, including socket covers and safety gates. However, the carpet pieces with curling ends are a tripping hazard. The use of the small room and the outdoor area is a safety concern as at times there is insufficient space available for the children and the area is not well organised to meet their needs.

Staff and children regularly practise emergency evacuation so that they know what to do in the event of a fire. Before going on outings, staff carry out formal risk assessments to ensure that children stay safe. All the required procedures and documents are in place to help protect children. Staff are aware of the possible signs of abuse and know what to do if they have a concern about a child. The staff attend child protection training to update their knowledge.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy coming to the group as staff create a warm and friendly environment for them. The children arrive happily and confidently leave their parents. Children relate well to the adults and freely approach them for help or to talk with them. They make their own choices from a wide variety of interesting and stimulating activities set out for them in the large hall. Overall, children are well occupied although the use of the small room is less effective as insufficient activities are made accessible to them. In general, staff spend their time interacting with the children to support their play. However, on a few occasions children miss out on the benefit of adult support to extend their play as some staff are involved in other tasks which take them away from the children. The group makes effective use of the Birth to three matters framework to plan and provide activities that meet the needs of the younger children and help them develop. Younger children enjoy the action songs and playing with the instruments. They have fun exploring with the paint and looking at books with an adult.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff plan and provide a balanced curriculum that helps children develop and achieve in all areas of learning. Effective use is made of the focus activity plans to enable staff to carry out an activity effectively. There are clear learning intentions identified for the activities and vocabulary to use with the children. Staff regularly observe the children to assess their progress and record their achievements in the profiles. However, staff generally do not use these records of children's progress to inform future planning and help ensure that individual children are challenged and extended appropriately.

The group has a key worker system in place to help support individual children. Staff generally interact well with children and use open ended questions to encourage children to extend their thinking and express their ideas. Staff allow children the opportunity to solve problems for themselves by not stepping in too quickly to give support. A few times, slightly weaker staff deployment impacts on the time spent directly with the children. Staff have not yet developed the outdoor area as a learning environment for the children and instead tend to just use it as an extension of the small room.

Children are secure, confident and happy in the group. They show an interest in new focus activities and soon ask to join in. Children play well on their own and with others. They become absorbed in activities, such as, the play dough and soft play. They develop their independence in everyday routines, such as, taking their shoes off when using the soft play, going to wash their hands after messy play and pouring their own drinks. However, there are few opportunities for children to self-select resources or to be involved in helping staff in their tasks. Children generally behave well and follow instructions.

Children are confident speakers and join in at circle times. They chat readily about their families and their holidays. They approach adults to ask questions and seek support. The children begin to learn to recognise the link between sounds and letters in circle times when their names are called out. They enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. Children have a variety of opportunities to practise mark making including chalking, painting and colouring. They also use sand and shaving foam activities to develop their arm movements and make marks. Staff use labelling around the rooms to help children begin to understand that printed words have meaning.

Children count confidently and join in the counting at circle times. They find the number symbols for the day. They often choose number activities during free play. Children learn to recognise shapes and sizes. They measure themselves using blocks.

Children explore the natural world as they look for mini beasts outdoors. They learn about growth as they plant and water tomatoes, sunflowers and other flowers. They investigate using their senses and experience different textures, for example, as they play with gloop, peat, jelly and rainbow shaving foam. Children have the opportunity to use different forms of technology, such as, laptops, the Beebot activity, keyboards, calculators and toy tills. Children learn to explore using different tools and equipment, such as, binoculars, magnifiers and magnets. They learn about other ways of life and different festivals. They find out about other people as they welcome visitors into the group, such as, police and a lifeboat man.

Children learn to express themselves creatively in a variety of different ways. They enjoy the free painting activities where they explore the paint using brushes and their hands. However, the use of colouring sheets restricts their creativity. Children enjoy making music and exploring sounds. They have fun making their own shakers, listening to the different sounds and guessing what is in the shakers. The role play area is very popular with the children and they enjoy setting the table and making meals from the items they have bought in their shop.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff obtain information about each child's individual needs and home backgrounds from parents. They use this information to help children settle and ensure their needs are met in the group. Staff respect the wishes of parents particularly with regard to language and religion. Where necessary, they work closely with outside agencies to provide support for the parent and child who do not have English as their home language. They obtain resources and equipment that will aid communication and help the child feel included.

Children are helped to acknowledge and value differences in a positive way. Staff plan a variety of different topics and activities to develop children's knowledge of the wider world. They celebrate different festivals such as Divali and Chinese New Year. Children have access to a satisfactory range of resources that reflect diversity.

There are suitable arrangements in place to care for children with additional needs. The group is very proactive in the way it works with parents and professionals to ensure that they have everything in place before a child starts in the group. They look closely at the ways a child communicates and what resources are needed to care for the child. The use of home visits and risk assessments help ensure that the child is fully included and can play safely. Where necessary, they create individual learning plans for the children to help them develop and make progress.

Staff have appropriate strategies in place for dealing with any inappropriate behaviour. Children generally behave well and respond positively to staff. They learn to share and take turns as they play together. Children benefit from the praise and encouragement given by staff. Their achievements and positive behaviour are rewarded by stickers. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to settle their children into the group and share any concerns they have with staff. The notice boards and information table are used to keep parents informed about general childcare issues as well as giving access to the group's policies and photographs of children's activities. Staff display some of the plans so that parents know what children will be learning about and enjoying during the week. Staff use daily diaries for the new children in the group to keep parents informed about their child's time in the group. Parents have regular opportunities to see their child's folder and profile. They meet with the key worker to discuss their child's progress. However, there are few opportunities for parents to contribute to children's learning by extending activities at home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The setting is generally organised satisfactorily so that children can move freely and make choices from a varied range of activities in the large hall. However, when using only the small room and outdoor area at the same time the group does not meet the required space ratios. This results in children not having sufficient activities available to them and there being limited space to play both indoors and outdoors.

All of the required documentation is in place, meets regulations and contributes to children's health, safety and wellbeing. There are satisfactory recruitment and induction procedures in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. There are a range of appropriate policies and procedures that help support staff in their role. Overall, staff work effectively as a team and the majority of their time is spent working directly with the children but there are a few times when children are given less support from staff.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection there has been a new staff team in place who work closely with the committee to improve the setting. The staff are keen and motivated, showing a willingness to learn from Early Years professionals. Staff's ongoing development is promoted through yearly formal appraisals and ongoing training. Staff are encouraged to improve their skills by attending short courses on childcare issues to help develop the nursery education provision. They regularly evaluate the curriculum and the planned activities to identify areas for improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

There has been a complete change in the staff team since the last inspection when a number of actions were set for both care and nursery education. The group has worked hard to improve the quality of care and nursery education they provide. They have accessed support and advice from the local authority to address the actions and improve the provision.

Staff deployment has been improved, although there are slight weaknesses on occasions. But overall, staff work with children and interact effectively with them to support and extend their learning. The resources have all been sorted out to ensure they are suitable, age appropriate and have all the parts in place. The majority of the time children now have access to a wide variety of stimulating activities at each session. There are identified learning intentions for activities and the planning is clear. This ensures that children enjoy play with a purpose. Staff are aware of the need to adapt activities to meet the differing needs of children. As yet, they are not using the children's records to help ensure that individual children are being challenged and extended. Staff regularly assess and evaluate the plans and activities to ensure they are promoting children's overall learning and development.

The action with regard to behaviour management has been met. A number of staff have attended a course on how to manage behaviour and all staff are clear about correct strategies to use with children. This ensures that there are clear boundaries for children and that they learn how to manage their own behaviour.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve staff deployment to ensure that they interact fully with the children at all times (also applies to nursery education)
- ensure there is sufficient space and that it is organised effectively when using both the indoor and outdoor area at the same time.

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 use and organisation of the garden to provide a stimulating outdoor learning environment (also applies to care)
- continue to develop the use of children's records to inform future planning and to ensure that all children are challenged appropriately and moved on in their learning.

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