

Marcham Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY364409
Inspection date	16 May 2008
Inspector	Gillian Little
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Registered person	Marcham Pre-School Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Marcham Pre-School Playgroup was established in 1968 and is run by a voluntary committee of parents and carers. The playgroup moved to new premises in 2007 within Marcham Church of England School, near Abingdon. The group have the use of a room within the school and there is access to an outdoor play area. Children attend from the village and the surrounding rural communities.

The playgroup opens on weekday mornings from 09.00 to 11:45 during term time with an optional lunch club from 11:45 until 13.00. Afternoon sessions are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 13.00 to 15.00.

A maximum of 20 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 34 children on roll between the ages of two and five years. Of these, 23 children receive funding for nursery education.

The playgroup employs four staff of whom two hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to play outdoors on a daily basis as they have free access to the outdoor area for part of the day. Staff ensure that children have correct clothing for all weathers and encourage them to wrap up in raincoats and wellingtons in wet weather. Children enjoy pedalling cars and bikes around the playground and moving around an obstacle course. They have access to a good variety of equipment both indoors and outdoors which encourages hand to eye coordination. Younger children are able to rest and sleep according to their own routines, cuddling up to staff when they are tired or sleeping in a quiet corner of the playgroup.

Children receive a healthy diet and have regular meal and snack times. They enjoy a variety of fruits at snack time along with healthy carbohydrates, such as bread sticks. They bring their own packed lunches from home, and the playgroup ensures that parents have clear information about suggestions for healthy food. Children have access to drinks at all times and staff are fully aware of their dietary needs and preferences to ensure that their individual needs are met. Children demonstrate that they are used to the routines at snack and lunch times, independently collecting their plates and settling easily at the table.

Children's risk of infection is minimal as the premises are clean and children have easy access to liquid soap and paper towels when washing their hands.

Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that children receive appropriate care in the event of an illness or accident. For example, staff hold appropriate first aid qualifications and tend to accidents efficiently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are able to play comfortably in an attractive environment as the premises are welcoming with good facilities and space. For example, the large, bright room, which is an integral part of the school building, is well maintained with easy access for children to the outdoor area and cloakroom. Children use a wide range of suitable and safe equipment which is easily accessible on low-level tables, low-level shelves and the floor.

Children are able to play safely under the close supervision of staff who effectively ensure that there are appropriate numbers of staff both indoors and outdoors depending on how the children use these areas. The inviting outdoor area is fully enclosed, free from hazards and has separate areas for energetic physical activity and quiet activities, helping to prevent accidents. Effective fire prevention and evacuation procedures are in place to ensure children stay safe in the event of an emergency. For example, staff practise evacuation regularly with the children to ensure that they are familiar with the procedures. Children's risk of injury is minimal as staff generally assess risks well and take precautions to prevent accidents. For example, staff carry out risk assessments both indoors and outdoors on a daily basis and the school has good security arrangements in place. However, staff do take their hot drinks into the playroom during snack time and, although they are vigilant and allow their drinks to cool beforehand, this contradicts the safety policy and poses some increase in the risk to children.

Children's risk of harm from others is minimised as staff are familiar with possible symptoms of abuse, have a suitable understanding of their role in child protection, and all adults working with children have appropriate background checks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children show a keen interest in what they do and develop a range of skills as there is a wide range of activities available. For example, they enjoy exploring play dough, sand, a garage and cars, the home corner, magnets and a doll's house. They enjoy and engage well in activities led by staff, such as cooking muffins, listening to stories and joining in with songs. They explore their environment freely and some children can concentrate for sustained periods. Staff ensure that children have good opportunities to follow their own interests and allow younger children to drift away from group times depending on their individual needs. Staff achieve a good balance between child initiated activities and group times, and ensure that sessions flow well. Staff plan well for the outdoor area ensuring that all areas of learning are available, as well as physical activities. Staff are kind and caring and often spend their time talking to children about their play and generating discussions.

Children are happy and settled as they are able to develop warm relationships with the staff and other children. They mostly play well together and staff encourage them to develop positive social skills.

Staff ensure that assessments of younger children show their progress within the Birth to three framework.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children's attitudes and behaviours are positive. They have good opportunities to develop independence, for example, collecting their plates for snack time and helping themselves to fruit. They have regular opportunities to mix with older children from the reception class during outdoor play and also during free flow sessions between the two classrooms. Children play well together during these times and there is a happy, busy atmosphere where older children support younger children well.

Children have daily opportunities to experience activities across all areas of learning. For example, they enjoy listening to stories read expressively by staff; they join in with the rhythms of the words using musical instruments or enjoy snuggling up with staff in the quiet corner to share books. They have opportunities to use a variety of tools for writing, drawing and painting. They enjoy counting numbers of children present at registration and they talk about the days and dates on the calendar. Staff encourage them to talk about positional language such as 'over, under and next to' to help them develop appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They have their own garden adjacent to the playgroup room and enjoy growing their own vegetables. They have access to a computer and other electronic resources to develop their understanding of technology. Children are able to explore the activities freely but there is little challenge for older and more able children. They generally engage in the same activities as younger children and this has limitations on their progress towards the early learning goals. In addition, children have few opportunities to learn about people from different cultures and backgrounds as staff do not include this in their planning.

Staff make frequent written observations of children's progress and update these into their development profiles regularly. They meet together weekly to decide on the following week's activities based on their observations of children's progress. However, written plans do not show how activities can be adapted to suit children at different developmental stages.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children begin to understand about responsible behaviour as staff use appropriate methods such as maintaining a calm atmosphere and talking to children about issues as they arise. Children receive recognition for good behaviour as staff reward them with stickers and verbal praise. Most children share resources well and staff support them appropriately where necessary. All children have equal access to the range of resources and activities available, and staff treat children with equal concern, for example, ensuring they all have a chance to be helper of the day. Children have some opportunities to learn about diversity as there are a few resources in the setting reflecting people from different backgrounds. However, staff do not routinely plan activities to further develop children's knowledge of diversity and this limits their knowledge and experiences. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are currently no children in the playgroup with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but there are appropriate procedures in place to support such children as necessary. For example, a policy is in place and staff have suitable training.

Children benefit from appropriate continuity between the home and the playgroup as staff develop good relationships with parents who receive a warm welcoming into the setting. Staff value parents' skills and encourage them to help out during sessions. Parents are complimentary about the playgroup and say that their children are happy and settled. Parents receive good verbal feedback from staff and have a range of information about the playgroup, such as a welcome pack and newsletters. For children receiving nursery education, the partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff encourage parents to become involved in their child's education as the welcome pack includes simple guidance on supporting children's learning, and children take books home regularly to share with their parents. Although the playgroup has taken some steps to inform parents that their children's development profiles are available for them to look at, not all parents are familiar with these, which limits opportunities for them to learn about their children's progress toward the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children overall are able to make sound progress as staff have a strong sense of purpose, keeping children safe, promoting good health and hygiene, and providing a wide range of activities and resources. Staff effectively promote positive social skills but do not plan activities to help children learn about people from different backgrounds.

Staff have effective skills and qualifications ensuring that they meet the qualifications criteria. They continue to update their knowledge and understanding by attending a variety of courses. Staff work well together to ensure that sessions run smoothly and they provide effective guidance to parent helpers. The adult to child ratio is maintained at all times to effectively support children's care and play.

Effective recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to ensure that all adults working with children are suitable to do so. For example, staff undergo an interview process and the committee take up appropriate references and background checks. Evidence of this process is maintained by the committee but is not always available for inspection.

All regulatory documentation is in place and supported by a good range of other policies and procedures, most of which work well in practice.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff work well together, planning activities as a team on a weekly basis and evaluating the outcomes to identify what has gone well and what could be improved. They are aware of their roles within the sessions to ensure that they can appropriately support children in their play. They ensure that children experience activities across all areas of learning within the Foundation Stage but there is a lack of challenge for older and more able children. Staff ensure that parents are aware of their children's progress but are not pro-active about ensuring that parents are familiar with their children's development files.

Overall, the playgroup meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- plan activities and experiences to help children learn about different cultures and people from different backgrounds (also applies to nursery education)
- ensure that evidence of staff recruitment is available on the premises for inspection.

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):

- ensure that staff develop ways of challenging older and more able children to further extend their progress towards the early learning goals
- take further steps to ensure that parents have access to their children's development records and are therefore kept fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

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