



Elmtree Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY311206
Inspection date	11 October 2005
Inspector	Angela Cole

Setting Address	Bishops Cleeve Primary School, Tobyfield Road, Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL52 8NN
Telephone number	01242 673814
E-mail	
Registered person	Elmtree Playgropup
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 satisfactory. 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?

Elmtree Playgroup opened in 1995 and operates from the Elliott building in the grounds of Bishops Cleeve Primary School. It is situated in the centre of Bishops Cleeve on the outskirts of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The playgroup has 1 base room with toilet facilities, and use of the 2 school halls, library, information, communication and technology suite, special educational needs room and staff rest areas. There is immediate access to an enclosed, outdoor play area with grass and

impact absorbent surfaces. The playgroup has shared use of the school's hard-standing playground, playing fields and picnic area.

A maximum of 20 children aged from 2 years 9 months to under 5 years may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 29 children aged from 2 years to under 5 years on roll. Of these 22 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup is open during school terms on Mondays and Thursdays between 09.00 and 15.00 and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 09.00 and 12.30. Children attend from the local community. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with special educational needs. No children speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs 5 members of staff and 4 staff, including the play leaders, hold recognised childcare qualifications. Currently 1 member of staff is working towards a qualification. The playgroup has close links with the primary school, area special needs co-ordinator and Playgroup and Toddler Association fieldworker.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children gain satisfactory independence in self-care skills such as dressing and tidying after themselves. They enjoy physical exercise and learn about the importance of activity in a healthy lifestyle as they join in free play and organised activities on the playground and walks around the school grounds.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment. They learn the importance of personal care and hygiene through routines that include regular hand washing, but the use of shared towels does not help to prevent the spread of infection. The staff follow established practices to care for children when they are unwell which help them feel secure and comfortable. They keep a complete record of any medication given, though accident records are not all signed by parents.

Children help themselves to water at any time and choose their mid-session healthy drinks. They enjoy a varied and balanced menu but occasionally they select a snack that includes less nourishing small cakes or tarts. The group suggests suitable foods for picnic boxes and takes close account of parents' wishes to meet the children's dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play safely as staff are proactive to take appropriate steps to minimise potential hazards, such as a swinging door. They discover boundaries through reminders about potential risks, including the use of ribbons as swords. Staff are extremely vigilant so children move around the premises carefully and negotiate

steps safely. Children also learn to keep themselves safe through discussion, for example, not touching growing fungi.

Regular communication with parents contributes effectively to children's safety, particularly regarding the adults who collect children and the security procedures required on the extensive school premises. Children safely use equipment that is appropriate to their age and stage of development. They increasingly select activities from a wide range of good quality toys and resources that meets the required safety standards. Children know when and how to ask for help, for example, to safely use a range of scissors.

The staff safeguard and promote children's welfare and have all the required procedures and documents in place. Most staff members hold current first aid certificates and have a secure understanding of child protection in line with the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children make good progress in all areas of their development through the stimulating range and balance of activities. They achieve well as staff are aware of how 2-year-old children learn and effectively use their growing understanding of the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage'.

New children receive good support so they gain the confidence to explore the play opportunities, both indoors and outdoors. With skilful adult help, they settle to become involved and to enjoy their time at the setting. Good quality adult-child interactions effectively support early communication skills. Over time, children experience a broad range of activities that support their mathematical thinking, imagination and creativity. For example, the youngest children engage in activities based on stories about 'Elmer' and have fun playing different musical instruments. Children begin to make sense of the world through regularly exploring the school environment, including an autumnal walk around the grounds.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children learn through interesting play and persevere to complete a range of stimulating activities that are appropriate to their needs. They access an increasing range of high quality toys and equipment that supports their learning across all areas. This includes attractive resources made by staff, such as laminated leaves to explore shape and colour. Staff make sure most group activities are of an appropriate length so children respond positively and learn at social times together. They are sensitive to the needs of younger children so they still feel included and join in at their own pace. All staff, including key workers, closely observe, record and evaluate what children do so they plan the next steps to enable children to achieve well in all the areas of learning. Children receive clear explanations so they feel confident, for example, at changes of routine and when moving to use the school computers.

Children confidently communicate their ideas and begin to negotiate in their play using the different words they learn. They gain good listening skills and immediately understand instructions, for example, they successfully join in new physical games. They listen intently to stories and eagerly respond to questions about the pictures. Children spontaneously choose books to 'read' and closely examine reference books to extend their knowledge, for example, about growing bulbs and trees. They readily make marks to represent their ideas, including the drawing of a hedgehog's prickles. Frequent use of gesture and simple sign language enables children with special needs to participate fully in activities and to make good progress.

Children gain good confidence to use numbers in their conversation, for example, 'my mummy is nearly seven'. They work well together, responding enthusiastically to act out number songs and counting the number of children remaining. Children occasionally solve number problems in routines, including setting out one cup per child at snack time. Staff react positively to the children's interests with helpful comments and open questions. These encourage children to be inquisitive, for example, they are fascinated by a still worm and absorbed in planting bulbs. Adults challenge children appropriately and encourage them with warm praise so they make good progress. The adults' enthusiasm effectively encourages children to be creative so they move imaginatively, sing enthusiastically and enjoy role-play, for example, in 'Percy's workshop'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have positive attitudes to learning and are eager to show their work and have pride in their own achievements. They concentrate to complete tasks such as cutting out and move smoothly between activities. They develop good personal independence to dress and help tidy away.

Staff know all children well so they are highly supported as individuals. Families are warmly greeted by the team in premises that are made welcoming by attractive displays of children's work. Children relate well to all the staff whose awareness of different children's needs ensures the quieter ones also receive appropriate attention. Staff put their training to good use so children with special needs benefit from effective support in liaison with parents. Children are skilfully encouraged to be well behaved, for example, to share coloured pencils and take turns on wheeled vehicles. Staff provide good role models for polite, considerate behaviour and offer frequent, meaningful praise to effectively promote children's self-esteem. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Children receive skilful support to join the group and staff keep families fully informed about their settling-in, sometimes using video tapes. Parents access detailed information about the setting and its educational provision, so the children's care and learning is enhanced through parents' understanding and interest. The playgroup actively seeks their views through discussion and strong committee involvement. Parents effectively share information about children's progress in their developmental records and in regular conversation.

Active family involvement through valuable computer rota help and sharing of artwork and models, helps the children to make good progress in their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The children's care is well supported by the calm and purposeful atmosphere generated by caring and conscientious adults. The play resources and new premises are already effectively organised to meet the children's needs and staff. The routine and structure of the sessions provide a good balance of play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

Most legally required documentation regarding the children's care is in place and is regularly reviewed which contributes to their health, safety and well-being. For example, the systems for registering children, staff and visitors are clear and detailed. The playgroup has good regard for keeping children's records and personal information confidential.

Leadership and management are good. The setting implements clear, written aims to support the care of children. Following the recent move to new premises, the group is revising its policies and procedures to ensure the children's safety and welfare. Children currently benefit from care by an established, consistent team of staff, though the systems to appoint and check future staff and to ensure their continuing suitability are not sufficiently robust. The staff attend training for their own professional development and work well together to encourage children to extend their play and learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by the 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):

- promote children's good health by ensuring they have sole use of towels and that the record of accidents is signed by parents
- make sure proper procedures are in place to appoint and vet staff and to ensure their continuing suitability.

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):

- extend the use of daily routines to foster relevant learning for the children including an interest in number problems.

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