



Hallow Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205269
Inspection date	31 January 2006
Inspector	Valerie Fane

Setting Address	Hallow Parish Hall, Main Road, Hallow, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR2 6PH
Telephone number	01905 641834
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Registered person	Hallow Pre-School
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

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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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Hallow Pre-School Playgroup is a committee-run group that was registered in 1979. It operates from the committee room and kitchen in the village hall in Hallow and has an enclosed area for outdoor play. The playgroup serves the village of Hallow and the surrounding area.

The playgroup is open from 09:15 to 14:45 Monday to Friday in school term times.

There are currently 39 children on role. Of these 24 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and children for whom English is an additional language.

Eight staff work with the children. Of these six have appropriate qualifications to Level 2 or above. The nursery receives support from a mentor teacher from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children become increasingly independent as they are encouraged to use the toilet unaided and learn to wash their hands afterwards and before snacks and lunchtime. They gain a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in the sun as they wear hats, use sun cream and play under the group's gazebo when they are outside. They are protected from cross infection because the group has a clear policy not to accept children who are ill that is signed by parents as part of the admission form. Staff are also vigilant to ensure that younger children learn not to drink from one another's cups at snack time.

Children gain a good understanding of the principles of healthy eating and drinking as they help themselves to a selection of different fruits at snack time and can have a drink of water at any time from the water cooler. They are encouraged to bring healthy lunch boxes because their parents are given a selection of leaflets with ideas for different foods that they could include. Children's learning is reinforced well by staff through spontaneous conversations: for example that 'drinking milk makes you big and strong', and circle time discussions linked to the current theme.

Children discover the benefits of a healthy lifestyle as they play outside twice a day in most weathers and make extensive use of the outside area during the summer months. Children of all ages develop excellent climbing and balancing skills as they use the big climbing frame with increasing confidence. Staff are always available to support and encourage children who are less confident to help them to learn new skills. Children improve control of their bodies and their awareness of space as they ride bikes and pedal cars around small traffic cones. In the summer they develop their social skills through outdoor play as they use the group parachute on the adjacent field.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children would not be cared for safely in the event of being lost or uncollected because most staff and parents do not have access to the written procedures. Children's welfare is not adequately safeguarded because some of the staff and the committee are not familiar with the correct procedures to follow if an allegation of abuse was made against a member of staff or a volunteer.

In other respects, children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. There are clear procedures in place for their safe arrival and departure and other users of the village hall are excluded from the playgroup rooms during the sessions with reminder notices posted on the access doors. Children know how to protect themselves in an emergency because they all practise the emergency evacuation procedures regularly and have benefited from a visit by the local fire brigade, who taught them how to get out of a smoke-filled room. Children's safety has recently been enhanced because the new Health and Safety officer has carried out a thorough risk assessment that has resulted in new guards for the storage heaters so that children do not burn themselves. Further improvements are scheduled for the next few months. Children access the outdoor area safely because it is securely fenced and has an excellent all-weather surface. They learn to wear their socks and shoes in the hot weather because it becomes hot in the sun. All children use a wide range of high quality equipment that is well-maintained. Their opportunities to self-select are limited by the constraints of using a village hall, but they go to the storage area with staff to choose the activities to be put out for the afternoon session. Older children know that they can ask for a particular activity at other times during the free play sessions.

Children who are at risk of abuse are safeguarded well because the named person for child protection has undertaken recent training and has a sound knowledge of the symptoms of abuse and the correct procedures to follow if she has concerns about a child's welfare. Children gain an awareness of ways to protect themselves from abuse as they learn not to talk to strangers and to be confident to share any concerns they have with staff or with their parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children throughout the playgroup benefit from the warm and friendly environment. Younger children play with a wide variety of toys and join in activities that stimulate their learning and development. They explore the texture of cornflour as they let it run through their fingers and develop their hand control as they make patterns in it with their fingers. They use the play dough with enthusiasm: learning to use the rolling pins and cutters to make shapes. They improve their conversation skills as they talk to staff about what they have made. Individual children make good progress because staff plan activities with reference to 'Birth to three matters'. They include targets for specific children in their planning and evaluate those targets to inform their plans for the following week.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children benefit from the staff's sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage that they use to inform their planning, assessment and evaluation of activities. Most children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff develop a detailed awareness of each child's capabilities through regular observations of their play and development and use these to inform planning for the following week. However, there is a lack of challenge for the older and more able children in some areas of learning: particularly in

mathematics. There is no formal recording of the development of the youngest 3-year-olds but most children in the Foundation Stage are monitored using the school transfer forms that record their progress in the six areas of learning every half term.

Children enter the playgroup with enthusiasm and confidently select activities. They become engrossed in their play: often developing co-operative role play with their friends as they use the dressing up clothes or decide to turn the whole playgroup room into a bus. They improve their construction skills as they use a variety of construction toys such as Stickle Bricks to make models that they then use in their imaginative play. They further develop their creativity through an interesting range of planned art and craft activities. They make mosaics of fish and other sea creatures using different types of paper to form a big wall display and create their own three-dimensional aquariums. They then use their increased knowledge of sea creatures to create their own underwater pictures using a wide variety of different types of paper for their collages and developing hand control as they use scissors to cut the paper.

Children form excellent relationships with staff. They talk confidently about things they have done at home or previously at playgroup and freely use descriptive vocabulary such as 'wiggly' to describe their octopus. They enjoy looking at books alone and listen with interest to group stories linked to the current theme. They join in with the words and actions of favourite songs such as 'wind the bobbin up' and learn to recognise letter sounds and words as they identify their names at snack time. They use writing as a means of communicating in their role play and explore mark making in a variety of ways: drawing in a tray of cornflour or painting using cotton buds. However, they have limited opportunities to use pencils to begin to form recognisable letters.

Children develop mathematical skills through both planned and spontaneous activities. They count the number of cones they put out when riding their bikes and use a computer programme to learn about different shapes. They begin to recognise numerals as they trace their shapes in the cornflour and paint number stencils using cotton wool buds. However, more able children do not extend their understanding of number and all children have limited opportunities to compare numbers or to solve practical number problems.

Children gain a very good awareness of the world around them. The older children enjoy regular visits to a Forest School where they explore a different environment with increasing confidence. The change of environment provides an excellent opportunity for different children to take the lead in activities. They discover new textures as they play in the mud and experiment with different sounds as they make wind chimes out of pieces of wood. They continue their learning when they return to playgroup because staff help them to recreate the wind chimes in the playground.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children gain a positive view of other cultures and diversity as they play with toys such as dolls and musical instruments that increase their awareness and as they take

part in celebrations of different festivals from around the world. They make candles for Diwali or make lanterns and taste Jewish food at Hanukah. They become aware of their local community through regular visits to the 'Minifish' club at the village church and through involvement with the primary school where they use the computer suite each month and join the reception class for special occasions.

Children behave very well at playgroup. They play together with consideration for one another and are helpful when it is time to tidy up. They respond well to the clear boundaries set by staff, who adapt their behaviour management strategies to meet the needs of individual children. They develop their awareness of right and wrong through stories at circle time; for example, a story about a fish who had to learn to share his shiny fins with his friends to be accepted by them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from their parents' involvement in playgroup through the playgroup committee and the availability of staff to talk to parents at the beginning and end of each session. Parents receive very good information about the group before their child starts and are told about current topics via the notice board. They are involved in the completion of the nursery transfer records when their child is ready for school but they have limited involvement in their child's learning while they are at nursery unless they are available to help at sessions and receive little detailed information about their child's progress unless they specifically request it.

Children who have special educational needs receive very good care. Staff are quick to identify such needs and fully involve parents in the development of individual education plans. They liaise with outside agencies where necessary to learn the best strategies to help a child and provide appropriate activities such as regular use of the sound lotto to help children with speech and language delay.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children are not adequately safeguarded because the staff do not consistently obtain the names and addresses of children's parents on the admission forms and they do not keep an accurate record of the names of visitors and their times of arrival and departure. Children make the best possible use of available space because staff organise the premises well both indoors and outside. Most legally required policies and procedures are in place. These are often comprehensive and most of them are known to staff so that they contribute to children's health, safety and well-being. However, there are some gaps in the consents that are obtained from parents, such as permission to take photographs of children in playgroup. This compromises children's privacy. The complaints log is not yet in place but the supervisor has a good understanding of the information that would have to be recorded. The registered body is aware of the need to notify Ofsted of changes to the committee or to senior staff.

Leadership and management of the playgroup is satisfactory. The newly appointed committee is beginning to understand its responsibilities as the registered body.

Committee members are building good relationships with staff and the staff work together extremely well as a team. Children benefit from the group's long term commitment to encourage all staff to undertake a relevant childcare qualification because this has enhanced their practice. The committee and managers have a clear view of the strengths of the group and are committed to building further on those strengths but have not been sufficiently rigorous about following up previous recommendations and actions. As a result children do not always have access to a balanced nursery education. Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Care inspection the playgroup were required to develop the procedures for lost and uncollected children and to update the child protection procedures. They were also recommended to provide parents with information about staff responsibilities and the Ofsted telephone number for complaints, to ensure that low level electric sockets are not a hazard to children and to request written permission from parents for emergency medical treatment.

Overall, the group has made limited progress. Children's safety has been improved to some degree because all the required policies are now in place or have been updated and low-level sockets are all protected. However, not all staff are fully aware of some of the policies and procedures so these would not necessarily be followed and further actions have been set to improve staff awareness. Children would not receive the best possible care in the event of a serious accident or illness because staff do not obtain written permission from parents to obtain emergency medical treatment for their child.

At the last Nursery Education inspection the key issues were to develop the visual identification and labelling of play and activities including more opportunities for children to use and see numbers, to enhance the experiences within every day activities for children to explore other cultures and diversity and to extend the information for parents about the Foundation Stage.

Children benefit from improved links between school and home because parents now receive detailed information about the Foundation Stage and can support their child's learning at home. However, a further recommendation has been set to improve the opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning in playgroup. Children now develop a good awareness of numbers through a variety of activities and use a selection of toys that introduce them to other cultures and diversity.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004.

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

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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 satisfactory.

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:

- ensure that staff and committee members have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or a volunteer
- ensure that the name, address and telephone number of a parent is kept on the premises
- ensure that staff and parents are aware of the procedures that will be followed if a child is lost or uncollected.

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

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

- improve the range of challenges offered to older and more able children: in particular the opportunities to solve practical number problems and the opportunities to use writing as a means of recording and communicating and to begin to form recognisable letters
- improve opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning and development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk