



Crossways Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	139331
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Inspector	Janet Armstrong
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Registered person	Crossways 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

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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 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?

Crossways Playgroup opened approximately 27 years ago and operates from the village hall in the rural village of Crossways, 6 miles from the county town of Dorchester. The playgroup is committee run and provides sessional care for 24 children from aged 2 to under 5 years.

The playgroup is open Monday to Friday, term time only from 09.00 to 12.00. A lunch club operates from 12.00 to 12.55 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They are registered

to receive government funding for three and four-year-olds. There are currently 28 children on roll, of whom 19 are funded. The playgroup caters for children with special educational needs.

The hall is divided into two areas. One, including toilet facilities, is used solely by the playgroup. The other area is used for physical activities. Staff have access to the kitchen, storage room and adult toilets. There is an enclosed outdoor play area included in the registration.

The playgroup employs a qualified play leader who holds NVQ level III in child care and education. She is supported by three members of staff, of whom two have a recognised child care qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean environment where positive systems are in place to reduce the risk of the spread of infection. For example, a cleaning rota is in place to monitor the hygiene of the toilet areas. This means that children are able to visit the toilets independently. Children learn about managing their own personal hygiene through washing and drying their hands themselves. Regular daily routines mean that children recognise when they need to wash their hands. For example, after messy play and using the toilet and before snack and lunchtimes. However, their hand washing is not always effective as they do not always have access to soap and some children just dip their hands into the water. Children do not always have access to tissues to wipe or blow their own noses. This increases their exposure to cross infection and illness. Appropriate documentation and records are held detailing the children's individual health, dietary and medical needs. Two members of staff hold a recognised first aid certificate and appropriate procedures are followed when dealing with any accidents. The person-in-charge is clear on the correct procedures to follow should any medication need to be administered to support a medical need. However, there is no written procedure in place to inform parents or staff. This compromises children's health and well-being. Staff follow effective procedures when changing nappies. This minimises children's exposure to the risk of the spread of infection.

Children's introduction to a healthy lifestyle is appropriately supported. They learn about healthy foods through topics and activities, such as preparing fruit salads and cooking. They recognise that the fruit they eat at snack time is good for them. However, they are given a biscuit first. This means that the messages given to children about healthy eating are inconsistent. Children's physical development is promoted well. They have daily opportunities to develop their physical skills through access to a wide range of equipment, such as ride on toys, climbing apparatus, balls and balancing equipment, where they learn to balance, climb and pedal with control and co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play safely in a well-organised environment. Sufficient consideration has been given to the areas that children use to ensure that their safety is maintained at all times. This allows children to explore their environment freely. The premises is in a reasonable state of repair and equipment and play provision are well-maintained. Formal risk assessments are completed infrequently. However, staff check the environment, furniture, equipment and play provision on a daily basis to ensure that they are safe for use. Good consideration has been given to the layout of the room. This allows children to play and move around the play room safely. Children are taught safe practices. For example, they learn to use equipment, such as tools and scissors correctly. This means children are able to start taking care of their own safety. Children's safety is further promoted through written policies, procedures and documentation in place. For example, parents must give written instructions advising if someone different is collecting their child and a record of visitors is maintained to identify all adults present. Security of the premises is adequate. A bolt prevents children from leaving the play room unsupervised. A door alarm on the main entrance raises staff's awareness of any visitors to the hall. Children practise fire drills on a regular basis to enable them to follow appropriate procedures to evacuate the premises in an emergency situation. However, not all fire drills are recorded.

Staff have an appropriate awareness and understanding of child protection issues. They are aware of the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a child in their care. This helps to protect children from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, settled and confident. Regular routines and free access to a wide range of play provision and resources enables children to make independent and informed choices in their play. For example, when told that ride on toys are available in the hall, they discuss which tractor or bike they are going to ride. This provides children with a sense of security and continuity. Regardless of age, all children attending join in the themed and planned activities that are organised. Staff have a good knowledge of the individual needs of those children attending and support them well in their chosen activities. New children to the setting receive lots of comfort, reassurance and good levels of support. This helps them to settle quickly and experience the range of activities available to them.

Children under three years of age are developing high levels of confidence and independence as they move around the play room making free choices in their play. They have formed positive relationships with staff, whom they seek for reassurance and assistance. They are encouraged to participate in the planned activities linked to the Foundation Stage. Staff are able to adapt these activities and provide them with the appropriate levels of support that they need. However, their achievements are recorded in line with the early learning goals. Staff do not monitor their progress within an appropriate framework, such as the Birth to Three Matters to ensure that

they are making sufficient progress appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children's needs are not being identified within the planning. This means that staff are unable to monitor whether realistic learning opportunities and challenges are provided for children under three.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children's learning is appropriately supported by staff who have a mixed knowledge of the early learning goals and steps within. Staff work well together as a team. They deploy themselves well, constantly moving around the play room to support children in their chosen activities. They present as cheerful and interact naturally with the children. They ask some open-ended questions to challenge the children's thinking and understanding and make good use of language. For example, 'how many, what if and how?'. A new system for planning has recently been introduced. Short-term plans identify a good range of activities to cover the six areas of learning. However, the activities are not linked to the steps within the early learning goals to inform staff of the aims and show whether sufficient challenges are being provided. There is no long-term planning in place and insufficient evidence to show how and whether the different steps within the early learning goals will be covered over a period of time. Children's written assessment records identify some achievements made within the early learning goals. However, they are not linked to the steps within the six areas of learning and do not show the progress that children are making. They are also not used to help guide planning.

Children have high levels of confidence and personal independence. They have formed positive relationships with staff and each other, whom they seek out in their play. They make free, independent choices in their play, accessing all areas within the setting. They take care of their own toileting needs. Children are generally well-behaved. They are learning what is right from wrong and why. However, some children's behaviour deteriorates at snack time and opportunities to develop their social skills are missed.

Children use their language with increasing confidence to express their thoughts, needs and ideas. They make positive contributions towards conversations and discussions with those around them. Children enjoy books. They use them correctly, using the pictures to retell familiar stories. They have access to mark making materials, and enjoy colouring and drawing. Some are able to form recognisable letters to write their own name. However, planning lacks sufficient detail to show how children's progress will be supported.

Children learn to count up to ten and beyond through regular routines and activities, such as identifying the number of children present and how many chairs are needed at snack time. They use their counting skills in their play. For example, to identify how many heart shapes they have made with the play dough. They have a good introduction to shape, size and comparison through a range of activities to identify bigger than, smaller than, taller than, the same. However, planning lacks sufficient detail to show how and whether children will be introduced to and their progress supported in solving simple number problems.

Children explore and investigate through a range of activities. For example, they enjoy sand and water play and explore what happens when they are added together. They use magnets to explore the effects of attraction and look at how cake mixture changes when it is cooked. Although, there is insufficient detail in the planning to show how these are achieved. Children have a good introduction to the natural world in which they live through a range of planned activities, such as planting and growing seeds and looking at insects, birds and animals. They have a good introduction to a wide range of festivals and celebrations that include Chinese New Year, Mothers and Fathers Day, Jewish festivals, and St Davids Day. Children have limited opportunities to learn about modern-day technology.

Children move with confidence and control in their environment, avoiding furniture and others at play. They show good spatial awareness in the large hall where they manoeuvre in and around others, at speed on their trikes and bikes using the pedals to propel themselves. They have high levels of skill and co-ordination and use the large-scale equipment with the enjoyment to balance, jump, kick, throw and climb. Children are developing good hand-eye co-ordination and fine manipulative skills through regular use of tools and materials. They use one-handed tools, such as scissors and play dough tools with increasing skill.

Children explore texture, colour and form through a good range of adult-led and self-chosen creative activities, such as painting, junk modelling, cutting and sticking and baking activities. Planning lacks sufficient detail to show how and whether children are sufficiently introduced to music, sound and rhythm. Children use their imagination extremely well in role-play and small world play to act out imagined and familiar situations. They become engrossed in their play and include others as they act out different roles. For example, a child waves his 'magic wand' at a small group of children and says 'tadda, I've just turned you all into frogs!'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual needs are met well through the appropriate documentation in place and ongoing discussions with parents. Staff know the children well. They are sufficiently supported by written information provided by the parents detailing the children's particular needs. Regular communication with parents ensures that both parties are kept well informed. This provides children with continuity of care. A written complaints procedure is in place. However, it has not been updated in line with the new regulations. This makes it difficult to ensure that any possible complaints made by parents are effectively managed.

Children have a very good introduction to their local community. Photographs on the wall identify key local places within the village. They receive regular visitors, such as the vicar, health visitor and policeman. Biscuits, and gift boxes are put together and distributed within the village. The local parishes are kept informed of the playgroup activities through regular input into the local magazine. This provides children with a sense of belonging and develops positive community spirit. Children have an appropriate introduction to the wider world in which they live. Regular use and access

to a range of play provision and themed topics introduces them to positive images of diversity and a range of varied celebrations. Children with special educational needs are supported well. The playgroup co-ordinator works well with parents and other professionals to positively support and promote their development.

Children are generally well-behaved. They learn right from wrong through consistent messages and guidance from staff. Children are encouraged to say please and thank you. They learn to share, take turns and to consider the needs of others. However, some children's behaviour deteriorates at snack time where they become noisy and disruptive. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. There are effective systems in place for sharing children's progress with parents. Regular meetings with parents ensures that they are kept up-to-date. They receive written reports twice a year detailing their children's progress through the early learning goals. Once a year, parents are invited to an open day where they can discuss with their child's keyworker any issues, progress and achievements. Parents are also aware that they can access their children's records of assessment at any time throughout the year, and many do so. Informal discussions with parents enable them to be involved in their children's learning and share what they know about their child.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a well-organised and safe environment. Good use has been made of the space to provide children with different areas for them to freely access to support their play and learning needs. Routines have recently been successfully reorganised to accommodate the needs of those that attend. This allows children to be active, energetic and use up excess energy at the start of every session enabling them to focus and concentrate during the rest of the session. However, the organisation of snack time does not effectively promote children's social skills and positive behaviour. They sit on chairs in a large circle. Some children get up and walk around whilst eating and drinking. Some become noisy and disruptive, others become excited and shuffle around on their chairs and on the floor. There are missed opportunities for them to learn social skills, for example, sitting nicely at a table, displaying good table manners and initiating and joining in, in small group conversations.

Most of the necessary documentation needed is in place to enable staff to provide children with appropriate levels of care. However, not all policies, procedures, systems and paperwork are effective, in place or up-to-date to support the children's development and general well-being. Staff work well together as a team. They feel well supported by management, where they are valued, respected and share tasks and responsibilities. Although systems are informal, these appear to work well and sufficiently support staff in their roles. Staff attend regular training courses to update their childcare knowledge and practice. They are due to attend the Birth to Three Matters training to enable them to provide children under the age of three with appropriate challenges and records of development. The setting meets the needs of

the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff receive good levels of support and encouragement from management. They all work together and contribute towards the plans, sharing their ideas for activities. The informal systems for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the nursery education are not effective. This means that some of the points raised at the last inspection are still issues affecting the children attending today. Although staff discuss at the end of each session how things have gone, there is no formal system for recording their comments to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated in the future. Management have not yet made effective use of the self-evaluation form, and again rely on informal discussions to identify any strengths and weaknesses. However, they recognise the benefits of such a system and intend to use it to help them move forward and make improvements.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure that at least one member of staff with a current first aid certificate is on the premises or on outings at any one time, to review the organisation of resources to ensure that children can use them effectively, especially in the role play and book areas, to ensure that toilet and hand washing facilities are hygienic, devise and implement effective systems for monitoring and recording assessments of children who may have special needs and ensure that all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, updated, and shared appropriately with parents, especially daily registers, the child protection policy and accident and incident records. They also agreed to develop systems for assessing children's progress in relation to the stepping stones and use this information to inform planning, to ensure that appropriate challenges are planned for the most able children, especially in literacy, mathematics and creative development, to review the organisation of whole-group activities and daily routines, identifying clear learning objectives and ensuring that they are used effectively to promote learning and to encourage appropriate behaviour and to establish systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the nursery education provided, including staff appraisals and the identification of training needs.

Most of these issues have been addressed well, but some with mixed results.

Two members of staff are now first aid trained and at least one is always present. Resources and access to play provision have been reorganised with effective results. This has promoted the children's personal independence well, allowing them to make free choices in their play. A cleaning rota is now in place to ensure that the toilets are clean for use and that water for hand washing is changed regularly throughout the session. However, children's hand washing routines are not always effective. Children with special educational needs are supported well within the setting with effective systems in place for monitoring and recording concerns, support and their progress. Parents have access to policies and procedures, including the daily register, child protection policy and accident and incident reports which have been reviewed and updated since the last inspection. However, not all procedures reflect the recent changes in legislation. Systems for assessing children's progress in

relation to the stepping stones and using this information to inform planning have not been successfully developed. Children's progress is still not linked to the stepping stones. Whilst key workers are aware of the extra support and challenge some children need, this information is not used to guide planning and inform other members of staff. Appropriate challenges are now provided in most areas of the children's learning, although these are not identified in the planning to inform staff. The organisation of whole group activities and daily routines were reviewed and adapted. However, these were not found to be successful in promoting children's learning and good behaviour and familiar routines were reinstated. However, similar issues continue to be an issue for the children currently attending, especially at snack time where some of the children's behaviour deteriorates and there are missed opportunities to develop children's social skills. Systems to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education, including staff appraisals and their training needs have not been entirely successful. There is no formal system in place to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education. This means that similar weaknesses identified from the last inspection continued to be an issue today. It also means that strengths and weaknesses of the activities provided are not identified and therefore cannot be addressed for future reference when planning, leading to the same mistakes being repeated, such as at snack time. Nor has the self-evaluation form being used to identify the strengths and weaknesses and monitor the quality of care and education provided. However, the informal systems in place for supporting and monitoring staff's effectiveness and their training needs work well. Staff work well together as a team, attending regular training courses and positively contributing to the daily routines and activities.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 Ofsted has received one complaint about this provider. The complaint, received in June 2004, related to national standard 3; care, learning and play, national standard 11; behaviour and national standard 12; working in partnership with parents and carers. The complaint regarded the activities provided for children and the consistency of behaviour management. An unannounced visit was made. The issues were discussed and documentation checked. From the information gathered the provider remains qualified for registration.

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):

- ensure that records are kept of all fire drills completed in accordance with the Fire Safety Officers recommendations
- draw up written policies and procedures for the administration of medication, recruitment and vetting of new staff and update the complaints policy and procedure to reflect the recent changes in legislation and share them with parents
- review the organisation of snack times to ensure that they promote children's positive behaviour, develop social skills and that learning opportunities are fully maximised.

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):

- develop planning to link the activities to the steps within the six areas of learning to show how children's development will be appropriately supported and challenged to promote their all-round learning and progress
- improve the assessment systems to show how children are developing and making progress through the steps within the six areas of learning and use this information to guide planning
- provide regular opportunities for children to access modern-day technology.

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