



Plymstock Community Centre Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	117216
Inspection date	18 January 2006
Inspector	Leoarna Mathias
Setting Address	6 Memory Lane, Plymstock, Plymouth, PL9 9GH
Telephone number	01752 403 312
E-mail	
Registered person	Plymstock Community Centre Pre-School
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 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Plymstock Community Centre Pre-School has been running in Plymstock Community Centre since 1975. The group has use of the main hall and kitchen area at the community centre, as well as a patio area to the rear of the building. There are shops and a library close by. Plymouth city centre is a short distance away.

The pre-school operates from 09:15 hours to 12:00 hours Monday to Friday during term times. An extra session from 12:30 hours to 15:15 hours runs on Wednesday afternoons. On Tuesdays and Fridays a lunch club operates between 12:00 hours and 13:00 hours. There are currently 36 children on roll, including 25 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. Children with special educational needs or English as an additional language can be supported, though none are currently in attendance.

The committee that runs the community centre is also responsible for the pre-school and employing the staff. There are currently six part time members of staff employed. Three hold the Diploma in Pre-School Practice, one holds the PPA Foundation Course, one is working towards an NVQ 3, and the remaining staff member holds an NVQ 2. The group is also supported by a number of regular volunteers. The pre-school receives support from the Local Authority, and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is generally well promoted by staff who implement appropriate procedures for managing medical conditions or incidents and for being aware of children with special dietary requirements. Three members of staff are first aid trained, and all staff use documentation, such as medication or accident recording systems, correctly so as to further promote children's health. Children are taught to wash their hands after toileting, but hand washing before snacks is inconsistently promoted. However, children enjoy access to healthy items during snack, and, when staying for lunch, are encouraged to eat the healthy items in their lunch boxes first. Children move with confidence around the setting, making good use of the physical play equipment on offer, such as climbing frames, footballs, bicycles and basketball hoops. Their safety when using this equipment is, on occasion, compromised through inadequate staff supervision. However, the children are developing their physical skills generally well, and are able to contribute to discussions about keeping their bodies healthy and strong.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children are cared for in a clean, spacious environment and have access to resources that are in good order. Staff have a positive approach to fire safety, holding regular fire drills and ensuring that fire equipment is regularly checked. Similarly, visitors to the group are clearly recorded, promoting the security of the children. Risk assessment systems are in place, and do identify potential hazards to the children. However, staff do not implement action plans identified by the risk assessment process; for example, children are too often unsupervised when using large equipment such as climbing frames, putting them at risk of serious harm. Children's

well being while they attend the setting is generally well promoted, as the designated member of staff for child protection issues has attended regular training and is clear about the procedures to be followed should she or another member of staff have any concerns. The child protection policy mostly meets the requirements, however, it does not include a procedure for dealing with an allegation of abuse against a staff member, which prevents staff from fully promoting children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Although most children settle to activities and form relationships with the staff, a significant proportion of children have their enjoyment of the session limited through both poor organisation and staff's failure to focus in on their individual needs sufficiently. Although staff endeavour to target their planning at a younger age group, many activities are not well enough adapted to ensure that children under three have full opportunities to learn and develop.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Staff have improved their knowledge of the curriculum since the last inspection, though some areas remain under-emphasised in written plans. A pleasing range of resources is on offer at most sessions. However, the organisation of the session as a whole, and of individual activities in particular, limits children's participation and enjoyment. As a result, children do not always show real interest in what they are doing, and are not encouraged to persevere and concentrate in meaningful ways. Children do respond well to the praise and encouragement they receive, and are beginning to share and take turns. They also, on occasion, make good contributions to group discussions, such as 'how we keep healthy'. Nevertheless, their behaviour can deteriorate when their interest is not engaged, and staff do not always respond to this deterioration promptly or appropriately, preventing children from learning how to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Children are making limited progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. There are isolated examples of good practice where a staff member encourages a child to think, but in general, children are allowed to work within comfortable limits and many naturally arising opportunities to progress their understanding are not taken up. Children readily chat with each other, and listen reasonably well during story time. They are, however, not consistently encouraged to talk about the activities they are participating in or to contribute their ideas. Books are poorly displayed and do not attract children to make regular independent use of the book corner. Writing and painting materials are available at each session, but children are not routinely encouraged to attempt simple hand writing tasks, such as writing their name on pieces of art or craft work. Children respond well to counting and using numbers when playing hopscotch, but large group activities are not used to consolidate children's counting abilities or familiarity with numbers. Resources that promote their understanding of weights and measures, such as sand and water, are regularly on offer, but staff do not maximise children's use of them through the

purposeful questioning. Children regularly access simple operational toys and information technology, and are given adult support during these activities. They also take part in regular community and charity events as well as enjoying visits from local community officers, such as the police. However, coverage of other peoples' cultures and beliefs, of place and time is uneven in written plans, limiting children's opportunities to gain an understanding of the wider world. Art and craft activities are overly adult directed, and poorly set up, so that children's are discouraged from sustaining their interest, consolidating their abilities to use tools and equipment, and from exercising their designing and making abilities. Their use of tools is better promoted during free play. Children also enjoy music making and have regular opportunities to sing. Similarly, they make relatively good use of role play and dressing up equipment, and play co-operatively in these areas. However, opportunities to express their ideas and make choices are limited.

Staff do not yet fully understand the importance of using teaching strategies that encourage children to persevere at activities, or to think. Similarly, they do not use time efficiently, organise the session well, or explain the purpose of activities to children, and as such children disengage from the learning process. Observation and assessment systems have improved since the last inspection, and staff are aware of the individual needs of the children who attend. However, staff do not always use fully the knowledge they gain about children's abilities when observing and assessing to help children progress. Staff also evaluate their own practice, but too often their comments are generalised, and do not focus in on what did not work, or what they could have done better. As a result, they are not always able to identify for themselves the impact their practice is having on children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Key worker systems ensure that each child is well known to at least one adult at the setting. However, this does not always lead to children's needs being met by the staff team promptly or successfully. For example, though staff are aware of children who are having difficulty settling in or in sustaining their attention on activities, they do not organise the session or their own deployment in order to give such children extra support. Similarly, resources that promote children's understanding of difference and diversity are scarce within the setting, preventing children from developing a full appreciation of the wider community within which they live. Nevertheless, the designated staff members for supporting children with special educational needs receive regular access to training, and have effective relationships with both the outside agencies who support them and with the parents of children about whom they have concerns. Children behave reasonably well, though the behaviour of more active children deteriorates as a result of poor session organisation that does not fully meet their physical play needs. Therefore, when taken overall, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is not fostered.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Good relationships between parents and staff are in evidence, with regular informal discussions held between key workers and parents, promoting continuity of care between home and the setting. Parents also

receive regular newsletters. Information about current topic planning and formal feedback about children's educational progress is not consistently provided to parents, limiting their capacity to further children's learning at home. However, parents are encouraged to participate in the session, and many respond well to the open-door policy of the group.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Ratios of suitably qualified adults to children are good across the provision, and staff have opportunities to access regular ongoing training, increasing their confidence as they work with the children. Registers and personal information sheets held on the children are accurately kept, promoting some security and continuity of care for the children. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, but amendments that will ensure all are in line with the expectations of the National Standards are unnecessarily delayed, and the complaints, child protection and staff vetting policies in particular continue to be in need of revision.

The leadership and management of the group is inadequate. Some progress has been made since the last inspection, but a significant number of issues remain unaddressed. Good use is made of local authority support, but this does not always translate into improved practice within the setting. Evaluations of adult practice lack critical detail, failing to identify what has gone less well and how change might be introduced. As a result, children continue to experience teaching that is too often lacking in challenge or fails to engage their full interest. The current supervisor acknowledges that keeping abreast of change in both the requirements of the National Standards, and in the latest thinking within pre-school education, can be difficult, though she is well supported by her staff team. As a result, the setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of the quality of care the group was asked to promote children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual development through better staff deployment and more effective use of praise and encouragement. Staff do now ensure that they are working directly with the children more of the time, though they do not always use these opportunities to further children's learning. They do, however, make better use of praise and encouragement which supports the development of children's self esteem. They were also asked to carry out regular risk assessments and ensure children were safe through close supervision at all times. Risk assessment systems are now clear and formalised, and centre staff carry out daily premises checks. However, children continue to be unsupervised for significant periods of time when using large climbing equipment, and as such are at risk of serious harm.

At the last inspection the group was further asked to ensure that all staff were aware of children with special dietary requirements. Documentation systems have been improved to ensure that all staff are now aware of these children's particular needs.

They were also asked to improve record keeping and documentation systems, and although some have improved, others, such as the complaints and child protection policy, remain incomplete, limiting the ability of staff to fully promote the welfare of children. Finally, the group was asked to improve the availability of resources that promote difference and diversity, and to make clearer the procedures for identifying children with special educational needs. The group has made good use of the support of the local authority and training to ensure that their procedures for identifying children with special educational needs are now appropriate. However, they have not improved the availability of resources that promote difference and diversity, limiting children's opportunities to gain an appreciation of the wider community in which they live.

At the last inspection of nursery education the group was asked to improve staff awareness of the curriculum and use this knowledge to ensure that written plans promote children's learning effectively. Staff's understanding of the Foundation stage curriculum has improved, and this knowledge is used to produce clearer planning. Nevertheless, some areas of learning, such as promoting children's understanding of other cultures and beliefs, remain under-emphasised. Furthermore, staff do not always use this increased knowledge to better inform their day to day practice with the children, and so children's learning is not fully promoted. The group were also asked to make better use of observations in planning the next steps in children's learning. Observations are now gathered more regularly, and a clearer link between this information and plans is evident. However, assessments of children's progress can be overly general, and in particular, not focus in sufficiently on what children have not yet achieved. Finally, the group were asked to improve their use of time and resources across the session. During morning sessions there is a good range of resources on offer. At afternoon sessions, resources are fewer in number, limiting children's abilities to make choices between activities. Time continues to be used ineffectively; the poor organisation of some parts of the session, such as tidy up time, snack, and large group activities means that they take up a disproportionate amount of time, and limit children's access to a session that promotes their learning across the curriculum.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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 children using large equipment, such as the climbing frame, are closely supervised
- devise an action plan demonstrating how the setting will give children greater access to resources that promote difference and diversity
- ensure that a procedure for dealing with an allegation of abuse against a member of staff is included in the child protection policy.

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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve the organisation of all sessions, including afternoon sessions, to ensure that all children are more effectively engaged in their learning and that all children, and more active children in particular, have their individual needs met (applies to care also)
- improve the rigour of evaluation of adult practice, curriculum delivery and the use of time to ensure that more effective teaching strategies are used and all parts of the curriculum receive even coverage.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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