



Coleford St Johns Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 101728
Inspection date 18 January 2006
Inspector Angela Cole

Setting Address Bowens Hill Road, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 8DU

Telephone number 07833 912453

E-mail

Registered person Coleford St Johns 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

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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Coleford St Johns Playgroup has been at its present location since 1994, and is a parent committee-run playgroup with charitable status. Most of the children come from the rural community around Coleford and go on to attend St Johns Primary School. The playgroup operates from a playroom in a separate building within the grounds of the school. Children use the infants' toilets and have occasional use of the school playground, field, garden, hall and adventure playground. A maximum of 24

children from 2 years to under 5 years may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup opens each weekday during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 12:00. An afternoon session is offered when there are sufficient children.

There are currently 18 children aged from 2 years 9 months to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with special educational needs. No children speak English as an additional language. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are three part-time staff members, who were all in post at the time of the last inspection, who work with the children. All have early years qualifications to level three and one is working towards a qualification. When numbers increase, parents are encouraged to become involved with daily activities. The setting receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority and is a member of the Forest of Dean Playgroup and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The children learn effective hygiene as they know to wash their hands frequently, for example, after toileting. Because of the restrictions of the older premises, children use a communal bowl to wash in the playroom and see the staff change the water frequently. The children are cared for appropriately in the case of accidents as first aiders are always present. Appropriate health records are shared with parents to ensure the continuity of the children's care. Staff obtain the relevant written consent to administer medicine or seek emergency treatment whenever this is necessary and parents are fully aware of the medication and first aid the children receive.

Children may ask for drinking water at any time. They learn some aspects of a healthy diet as most drink milk and eat nutritious, plain or savoury biscuits for their snacks. Staff occasionally vary the menu to include items that link with the current topic, including soup and bread rolls in winter. Staff liaise closely with parents over children's dietary needs so they only have access to foods they may eat.

The children's physical development is supported satisfactorily. They have some opportunities to exercise outdoors when the weather permits. They also participate in vigorous indoor activities in timetabled, hall sessions and on large equipment in the playroom, such as a climbing frame. They gain competent skills as they learn to independently dress, serve their own snacks and care for their belongings.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children move freely in an environment that is well maintained and provides them with safe play areas. Children are secure as staff identify possible risks and minimise

these competently. Those with special needs are safe and fully included through staff's consistent and sensitive support. Staff rotate the resources each day so young children only have access to developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. These are of good quality and are checked regularly to ensure they are in good condition and safe for children's play.

Children learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe as they regularly negotiate steps on the way to the school facilities. They hear regular reminders to give themselves space to move, for example, in energetic ring songs. Children safely experience a controlled sense of danger as they experiment on large physical equipment.

The children's welfare is given high priority and they are safeguarded by the staff's clear understanding of child protection issues. This care is underpinned by comprehensive policies and procedures to support staff to take appropriate action in the event of any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy warm interaction with staff members so they settle to their chosen activities and sometimes concentrate for long periods of time. Adults frequently talk with the children at the activities. However, when arranged in a semi-circle for snack, the youngest ones miss out on conversations with staff seated at a distance. Staff have a growing awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and of how young children progress and develop. They enjoy combining movement and describing their ideas as they balance with staff on the caterpillar tunnel. They begin to make sense of the world by imagining going on a 'bus to see the animals. Children eagerly participate in creative activities, for example, helping to make the play dough for the group.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make sound progress towards most of the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. For example, their creative development is effectively valued so they enjoy exploring colour in free painting and using charcoal on white paper. After snack-time, staff often introduce interesting textures, such as shaving foam for the children to explore in the time available. Children make effective use of their imagination in play with construction and small-world toys, for example, as they go on 'safari'. Children steadily develop in relation to their starting points when they first join the playgroup. In mathematical development, they use some numbers in their conversations, for example, to say that two goals were scored. They enjoy listening to number stories, such as 'Hungry Caterpillar', though do not regularly count up or down to the next verse of number songs for themselves. Children solve some problems in routines and at activities, though they are not sufficiently challenged to extend their learning, for example, to compare the numbers of people or animals they have counted. Children gain a secure understanding of shape, space and measure through practical exploring at varied activities.

All children benefit from suitable attention so they learn and this is particularly so for children with special needs who receive much one-to-one support. Children often concentrate on speaking and listening to adults and other children at the activities. They learn about linking sounds to letters by recognising initials of names and enjoy sharing books in small and large groups. They often paint and draw and make good use of writing materials to record their 'telephone messages'. Children meet some new ideas so they do not always work within their current limits of their understanding. For example, they discuss clothes for different weathers and learn about changes as they colour dough ingredients. They enjoy visitors who bring, for example, a range of unusual animals, insects and reptiles. Children make their own designs from construction toys, including magnets, and show a sound interest in technology as they competently use the computer mouse. Children gain an active interest in time and place to become familiar with routines and with seasonal changes as they explore the school grounds.

Staff have a growing knowledge of the Foundation Stage so the teaching satisfactorily meets the requirements and needs of all children. The adults plan a balanced range of activities and experiences as they rotate toys that cover aspects in the six areas of learning for children to access as they wish. They closely observe the small number of children on an informal basis and often respond to their interests during that session. However, the recorded assessment of their progress is not on-going or clearly linked to the planning through the stepping stones. Plans are often repeated from year to year, so are not based on the interests of these children. One stepping stone is included for each activity so staff are not aware of variable approaches to challenge children at different stages of learning, for example, in some aspects of mathematical development. Staff use some effective methods in their teaching. Through their relaxed approach, children have time to explore resources and complete activities to their own satisfaction, particularly during the first half of the session. Staff soundly focus on learning through play. Children choose which activities they go to, so they are often focused, able to resist distractions and persist for some time.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle quickly into the playgroup and relate well to the caring adults. Their individual needs are suitably met as staff know each child well. Those with special needs receive much one-to-one support in liaison with their parents and other agencies.

Children choose their activities from the satisfactory range set out and increasingly access other toys from low-level storage as they gain confidence. The staff provide sufficient resources to positively represent individuals from the wider community as well as those who attend. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. They play well in pairs and small groups, sharing the equipment, such as toy trains. They sometimes take turns in everyday tasks that give them responsibility, such as serving their own snacks. Children behave appropriately because of the staff's kind and firm approach and they respond to reminders to say 'thank you'. Spiritual, moral,

social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Children benefit from the staff's friendly, open relationship with the families. This results in regular informal sharing of information between parents and staff to enhance the children's development. However, parents do not contribute towards the formal assessment of the children's learning. Some do not know about the Foundation Stage framework and are not actively invited to share the progress their children make towards the early learning goals. The staff provide suitable continuity of care between the playgroup and the child's home as parents give all required permissions and children are cared for in accordance with their wishes. Parents say the staff are approachable and they are pleased with the care of their children and how they progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The robust systems to recruit, vet and check the continuing suitability of staff ensure children are effectively protected and cared for by staff. Informal discussions enable staff to continue their professional training so they have a sound understanding of how children develop and learn. Though display boards are high, the staff make the older Elliott building welcoming with some toys and activities that are attractively set out for the children's play. Children choose to play individually, in pairs or in small groups. They are helpfully encouraged to join whole group activities, such as circle time, when they are ready. The high adult-child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play for most of the session. However, the preparation and organisation of the mid-session break vary so younger children are not supported to be fully involved.

The setting regularly reviews its policies and procedures so these satisfactorily promote the children's well-being in practice. For example, the group has set up a log to record any complaint and this is compliant with Ofsted's requirements. Staff are aware of how long to keep most records, though the written parental consents for administering medication are not retained for the required period.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Children benefit from the staff's strong commitment to improvement and development through their informal monitoring of the provision. They have particular concerns with regard to the planning and assessment so children progress steadily towards all of the early learning goals. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended the playgroup improve procedures for children's hand washing and for seeking parents' permission on an aspect of the children's healthcare. Staff now ensure children use separate towels after washing their hands before eating. All parents are now approached to seek their permission for emergency medical advice or treatment. These aspects are both fully implemented and have a positive effect on the provision for the children's health.

The previous education inspection included a point for consideration concerning the sharing of children's progress with all parents. The staff continue to offer to share the children's assessment sheets with all of the parents who are given the opportunity to come and look at the records. However, the staff are not proactive in ensuring that each child benefits from the two-way sharing of their progress with the parents.

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 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):

- consider the organisation and preparation of snack time to develop young children's independence, concentration, language skills and social relationships
- ensure that all records relating to day care activities are readily accessible and available for inspection at all times.

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):

- continue to develop planning and assessment procedures to make sure that staff are clear about stepping stones and how to adapt activities for children of different ages and ability. Ensure this information is used effectively to plan what children need to learn next, including appropriate comparing and calculating in mathematical development

- provide parents with detailed information about the Foundation Stage and actively involve them in recording and sharing the progress their children are making towards the early learning goals.

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