



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 508117

DfES Number: 522544

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	16/06/2003
Inspector Name	Lindsey Pollock

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup
Setting Address	Lowson Street Darlington County Durham DL3 0EY

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	The Committee of Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup Committee
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup Committee
Address	Lowson Street Darlington County Durham DL3 0EY

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup opened in 1999. It operates from two rooms adjacent to Harrowgate Hill Methodist Church. The pre-school serves the local and surrounding areas.

There are currently 28 children aged from two to four years on roll. This includes four funded three year olds and one funded four year old. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are no children with special needs or with English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens five days a week during term time. Sessions are from 09.30am to 12.00pm.

Four full time staff work with the children. Two are working towards an early years qualification. The pre-school receives support from the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

How good is the Day Care?

Lowson Street Pre-School Playgroup provides satisfactory care for children. Staff work together as a team to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere for children, their parents and carers. Most policies and procedures are in place and are understood and followed by all staff ensure that children are cared for in a safe and caring environment. The supervisors are aware of what needs to be improved and are committed to developing their practice.

Staff are aware of risks to children's health and safety. They ensure the physical environment is safe and secure. Risk assessments are undertaken to ensure children's safety both indoors and outdoors. Staff promote the good health of children by taking positive steps to prevent the spread of infection. They raise children's awareness of good hygiene practices. Appropriate measures are taken if a child becomes ill.

A range of activities and play opportunities are provided which develop childrens emotional, physical social and intellectual capabilities, however the organisation of space and grouping of children can sometimes have a negative impact on their learning and cause problems with behaviour. Staff meet childrens needs through sensitive and appropriate interactions that promote childrens self esteem. Childrens progress is monitored by staff who are beginning to use this information to help them plan. Staff have built positive relationships with the children and take an interest in what they say and do.

Staff recognise that children benefit most where there is a trusting and mutually supportive partnership between themselves and parents. Parents are welcomed in to the playgroup. They are given general information about the care their children receive.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Actions were made at the last inspection with regards to supervisors qualifications and several safety issues.

Supervisors will complete level 2 qualification in July 2003 and intend to commence level 3 training in September 2003.

Actions regarding safety have mostly been met - the action regarding radiators is currently being addressed.

What is being done well?

- Staff have built positive relationships with children who leave parents confidently and happily.(standard 3)
- Children are encouraged to learn about and follow good hygiene practices. (standard 7)
- Staff value all children as individuals and children with special needs are sensitively supported. (standard 9)
- Parents feel welcome and are verbally informed about children's care. (standard 12)

What needs to be improved?

- the staff qualifications so that requirements are met; (standards 1&2).
- the committees understanding of their responsibilities and of the National Standards; (standard 1)
- the organisation of staff, space and resources to ensure that children are grouped appropriately and can develop independence; (standard 2)
- the procedures for ensuring that records and policies contain all required, up to date information. (standard 14)

Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?**The Registered Person must take the following actions by the date shown**

Std	Action	Date
1	develop and implement an action plan that sets out how supervisors will achieve a level 3 qualification	01/09/2003
2	develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a level 2 qualification in childcare	01/09/2003

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
1	ensure that the committee fully understand their role and responsibilities to ensure that National Standards are met
2	group children appropriately, taking into consideration their age, abilities and needs
5	organise toys and activities so that children can develop independence by self selection
14	ensure that all records and policies are in place, contain correct, required information and that confidentiality is maintained at all times

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Lowson Street pre-school Playgroup provides a warm, safe, and friendly environment where children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Children satisfactorily progress in their personal, social, emotional, creative, mathematical and physical development. Satisfactory progress is made in communication, language, literacy and in knowledge and understanding of the world.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Staff are enthusiastic, provide good role models but do not have a secure knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals. Although some planning is in place this is not thorough and detailed. The overall grouping is ineffective in supporting learning and progress in adult directed activities. This results in more able children not being sufficiently challenged. Time and resources are not always effectively used to fully support children's learning particularly in communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Staff are approachable and have good relationships with parents and carers. However, overall there are significant weaknesses. Parents do not receive good information about the Foundation Stage and children's learning. Neither are they kept informed about their children's progress in relation to the early learning goals.

The leaders show enthusiasm and are keen to develop the quality of education provision. There are significant weaknesses overall in the effectiveness of leadership and management. The system for monitoring and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the education provision has significant weaknesses and as a result limited progress is made in addressing areas of weakness within the provision.

What is being done well?

- Staff are welcoming, friendly, approachable and caring towards the children and have formed good relationships with them and parents.
- Staff are enthusiastic and keen to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Children have good relationships with staff who they approach confidently and are beginning to form relationships with their peers.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones in relation to the early learning goals;
- planning so that children are grouped effectively to maximise learning and are provided with sufficient challenge;

- procedures for the assessment of children's learning and progress;
- information for parents to ensure they are fully informed of their child's progress and are involved in their learning;
- resources and teaching methods so that children make progress in all areas of learning.

What has improved since the last inspection?
N/A

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children make satisfactory progress in personal, social and emotional development. They relate well to staff and are beginning to develop relationships with their peers. They clearly enjoy their time at the playgroup and show growing independence and confidence as they choose activities. On occasions children's behaviour disrupts learning and as a result children do not always listen and cooperate with each other during planned activities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children's progress in communication, language and literacy is limited because of the significant weaknesses within the programme. Children speak confidently with adults and their peers. They use books correctly and independently. However, there are few opportunities for children to further develop writing and early reading skills and missed opportunities for children to use print in activities.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children's progress in mathematical development is limited. Most children can count to ten confidently and show some awareness of the use of mathematical language. However, progress is limited because teaching does not plan for regular opportunities for children to build on their knowledge and skills. The older children receive insufficient challenge and are not encouraged to problem solve in meaningful ways.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children's progress in knowledge and understanding of the world is limited. Some children are beginning to talk about their life experiences. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their computer skills, find out about the world in which we live and begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of others. Children do not receive opportunities to explore and investigate why things happen and how they work.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children's progress in physical development is satisfactory. They are beginning to develop fine motor skills and handle small equipment with confidence. They move with confidence and control and are beginning to develop a sense of space. There are insufficient opportunities for children to develop, build on existing skills and to develop new ones.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
	Children are making satisfactory progress in creative development. Children have access to some role play materials and enjoy initiating their own games. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to express themselves and use their senses to communicate their own ideas. Children do not receive sufficient challenge because of limited resources.
Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.	

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable but has some significant areas for improvement. Children progress towards the early learning goals is limited by some significant weaknesses. The next inspection will take place in one to two years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- Increase staff's knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage.
- Develop planning so that all areas of the curriculum are covered.
- Ensure children are grouped effectively to maximise learning and receive sufficient challenge.
- Provide more opportunities and accessible resources for children to recognise print, develop early writing skills and to learn and understand about the world in which we live.
- Implement more rigorous systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the educational provision and staff.
- Develop ways of providing parents with information about the Foundation Stage, children's learning, their progress and attainment in relation to the early learning goals and involve them in their child's learning.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.