



Castle Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218111
Inspection date	13 December 2006
Inspector	Valerie Thomas
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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

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Castle Pre-school Playgroup opened in 1996 and operates from one classroom in Castle County Primary School. It is situated in the rural area of Mow Cop in Staffordshire. A maximum of 12 children may attend the pre-school group at any one time. The group is open from 08.50 to 15.15 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and from 08.50 to 11.30 on Tuesdays and Fridays during school term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 22 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school group currently supports children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school group employs three staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The procedures implemented to help children develop good personal hygiene are effective. Children learn about 'Jimmy germs' and know that if they put their dirty fingers in their mouth, the germs will go in their tummy, have a party and will make them poorly. The consistent routines ensure that children always wash their hands before their snack and after using the toilet. The clear procedures for sick and infectious children help prevent the spread of infection and there is a list of exclusion periods displayed for parents. Consequently, this helps children remain healthy.

There are clear procedures for the recording of accidents and all records are shared with parents. Clear instructions are obtained for medication to be administered. Parents are informed verbally when it has been given although they are not asked to sign the record to acknowledge the entry. Written consent from parents to seek emergency medical advice is obtained although it is not in place for all children. This does not ensure that children's medical needs can be fully met.

Children benefit from staff and parents working together to promote healthy eating. At snack time children are encouraged to drink milk or water and children are able to help themselves to water throughout the session. Staff encourage parents to send in fruit and yoghurts for snack and the group provide wholemeal toast if parents prefer. Children bring in packed lunches which they sit and eat together. This helps children develop a positive approach to healthy eating.

Children enjoy good opportunities for physical exercise and playing outside in the fresh air. They are excited and have lots of fun as they trundle along in the cars, moving their feet really fast as they follow their friends down the slope. They enjoy being able to run around in the open space as they push the truck along and some children are upset when it is time to go home as they are enjoying playing with the tractor. This helps children to develop their physical skills and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Safety within the setting is promoted well. Security is good as the main door to the school is locked at all times and staff are vigilant in ensuring the door to the pre-school room remains closed. Risk assessments are completed regularly and any trips that are undertaken are always assessed to ensure children's safety. Inside all radiators are protected and cleaning materials are stored safely. Staff ensure that the outdoor area remains secure at all times using a padlock to fasten the gate. This helps children remain safe.

The room used by the pre-school is welcoming and the wide range of safe good quality resources are stored so that most are accessible and allow children to make choices. Children are able to use the toilets within the school however, nappy changing is completed in the room used for play. This does not fully promote children's welfare.

Children benefit through staff consistently setting clear safety boundaries with good explanations of what could happen. As a result, children know that they need to line up by the door and walk to the bathroom as they may fall and learn that they should not stand by the door or hold on to the handle as they may get their arm trapped if it is opened. This encourages children to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe.

Children are well protected by staff that have a good understanding of child protection issues. They fully understand the correct procedures to follow for reporting concerns and have a clear understanding of signs and symptoms that may alert to child abuse. The procedures are displayed to ensure all staff are aware. This helps to protect children from harm or neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have lots of fun as they take part in planned and free choice activities within the setting. They have good relationships with each other and work together as they use the tools to mend the chair. Younger children become engrossed in play as they push the truck on the carpet and build with the train track. They concentrate well as they match the colours on the jigsaw pieces and are pleased with themselves when they complete it. All children join in well when practising Christmas songs for the trip to the church. They are very enthusiastic and excited as they jump up and down and play the instruments to the song of 'Santa's very busy'. They thoroughly enjoy taking part in the music and movement session. They jump up and down with glee clapping their hands and swinging their arms as they warm up and stretch up tall. They take part in a yoga session lying on the mats, bending and touching their feet, excitedly saying they are stretching like an animal. The wide range of activities provided helps to ensure children's interest is maintained and stimulated.

Relationships between staff and children are positive. Comfort is given to children who are upset and good support is given to children who become tired and agitated. Staff sit with children and engage in their activities to focus their attention. Children's self-esteem and independence is developed well as they receive lots of praise from staff as they help to tidy the toys away and give out the cups for snack. Consequently, children are confident and are eager to help.

Younger children's progress is assessed against the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework. Staff observe children as they play and use this information to inform records. Although planning does not reflect the framework activities are adapted for the younger children to meet their needs. The wide range of activities offered ensures children are achieving.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the Foundation Stage and a good understanding of how children learn and progress. Planning is currently under review as it does not always contain sufficient detail to outline what the expectations are for the activities on offer although staff are aware of what learning can be promoted. Also it does not differentiate for the different abilities of children and this has the potential that their learning needs will not be fully met. Staff use effective methods to maintain children's interest, sitting with them, asking questions and extending their play in most areas. However, children are not fully challenged in areas of mathematics. There is a clear system for recording children's progress through regular observations. This information is then linked to the stepping stones and staff record children's knowledge of colour, shape and numbers. However, records are not used to inform planning to identify the next learning target for children. Behaviour is well managed. They explain to children what they need to do and encourage them to share and play together positively. The room is organised appropriately and offers a stimulating environment with a good range of resources to promote children's learning in all areas.

Children's attitude to learning is good and their concentration is evident as they join in with activities. They concentrate well as they thread the little animals on the string and initiate their own play as they pretend to be mechanics at the garage. Children behave well most of the time. They line up quietly so that they do not disturb the school children and wait patiently for their turn on the bike. Children speak clearly and fluently and engage in conversations with adults and their friends. They tell staff that they are going to Liverpool in their car and confidently tell staff that a wren is a bird. Children's literacy skills are developing well. They link sounds to letters successfully as they stand on a letter when they line up to go outside. They know that 'S' is for Santa and learn that 'g' is for glitter. Children handle books well as they sit and turn the pages and pretend to read the stories.

Children understand and use numbers appropriately. They count up to five and recognise numbers confidently. They are able to match number to object as they count the stars and press the keys on the computer to link to the program they are completing. However, they do not often compare numbers when they count how many boys and girls there are or how many cups are needed at snack time. Opportunities for children to develop their exploration and investigation skills are good. They plant sunflower seeds to observe how they grow and have a box of items such as stones and fir cones that they can explore. Great importance is placed on taking children out into the local community which helps them to develop a sense of place. They visit museums to look at old toys, farms to look at animals and walk to the local Mow Cop Castle.

Children's fine manipulative skills are good. They use one-handed tools competently and show good control as they paint their pictures and are able to thread small dogs on to the string to make a long necklace. Children move their bodies well to music and are enthusiastic as they march along calling out 'ready, steady, go' before they gallop and tiptoe around the room. They have lots of fun as they travel at great speed in the cars outside and are very adept at negotiating pathways around each other. Children are confident in naming a range of colours and are able to find the blue and red animals in the tray. Children's imagination is very well developed and they spend lots of time engrossed in this type of play. They use the circular plastic trays as a driving wheel for their car and many of the children go on an imaginary trip

to Liverpool. Children dress up as reindeers and Santa in Santa's workshop. They tell their friends to be quiet and to go to sleep as they shake the bells telling them Santa is coming. Consequently, children's social skills are good as they are regularly involved in group play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Great importance is placed on developing children's confidence and self-esteem with lots of praise and encouragement during the session. Children are chosen as helpers to give out the cups at snack time and they are often told 'well done' for their efforts. Children behave well for most of the time and respond positively to boundaries set by staff. They line up well when it is time to go to the bathroom and say 'please' and 'thank you' when waiting for their snack. They play very well together and give toys back when asked by staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There is a suitable range of resources to raise children's awareness of diversity and these are supplemented with the use of the mobile library and accessing 'cluster' boxes from the Early Year's Unit. This helps children to develop their understanding of others. Different festivals are celebrated, such as Diwali and children visit the local church to take part in the school's Christmas celebrations singing songs such as 'Who is coming on Christmas night'. This helps children to develop their knowledge of the wider world. Good support is given to children attending with learning difficulties and there is an identified member of staff who has received training. Children benefit as staff work in partnership with parents to ensure any specific needs are met.

Positive relationships with parents are promoted effectively. They are made aware of how the setting operates through the prospectus, all policies are displayed on the notice board and monthly newsletters are sent home. There is a clear complaints procedure in place and a record of any complaints is kept. Children's individual needs are fully discussed and recorded with parents and daily discussion keeps them informed of their child's well-being. In addition progress records are shared with parents and they are asked for their comments on their child's abilities. Consequently, children are settled and their needs are met well.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. They receive information on the educational programme provided and are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning. Parents have sent photographs in of their pets and some have brought their puppies in for all of the children to look at. In addition children are encouraged to take reading books home to share with their parents. This enables parents to be involved and enhance their own child's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a good level of qualified staff who work with the children and many additional training courses are attended. For example, 'Busy brains, busy bodies', 'Birth to Three Matters' and

'Learning through role play'. This commitment to training helps to broaden children's experiences and contributes to the good quality care provided.

There are effective recruitment procedures in place which ensure all staff are appropriately vetted. Most required documentation is in place and all records are stored securely to ensure confidentiality. This helps to promote the welfare of children.

Children are happy and have a fun time in the setting. They receive good support from the staff to meet their needs and the clear routines help them to feel secure. Staff are calm when settling children who are upset when they arrive and give comfort when needed. They work well together as a team to ensure practices implemented benefit the children at all times.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Constant reviews of practice take place through staff discussion and advice from external agencies. In addition questionnaires are given to parents to identify where improvements can be made. Staff fully understand what works well with particular children to ensure they are making good progress. Links formed with the teaching staff of the school help children to make the transition from the pre-school into formal education. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to improve the medication procedures; ensure accurate recording of hours attended by children, staff and visitors and review the policies and procedures to ensure they meet the National Standards. In relation to the education the setting was asked to increase the opportunities for children to join and assemble materials using their own initiative; ensure children are made aware of the time they have left to complete an activity and to further develop the assessment procedures ensuring they are shared with parents.

Medication procedures have been improved as written consent to administer medication is now obtained from parents and records are kept of any medication administered. Written consent to seek emergency medical advice is in place for most children. However, it is not in place for a few of the children. This does not ensure their medical needs can be fully met and therefore it remains a recommendation of this inspection. Accurate recording of attendance for children, staff and visitors is in place. This helps to promote the welfare and safety of children. All policies and procedures are revised and meet the National Standards. Consequently, children's welfare is safeguarded.

Children have good opportunities to construct and staff encourage children to think how to assemble materials as they make fireworks and Christmas puddings. As children engage in activities staff are very aware of the time factor and always tell children when they have five minutes left to finish what they are doing. Assessment procedures are improved. Staff make regular observations of children to assess their progress and records are shared with parents. The improvements made help children to make good progress towards the early learning goals.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 written consent to seek emergency medical advice is in place for all children and that parents sign the medication records to acknowledge when medication has been administered
- seek advice to ensure that areas used for nappy changing meet environmental health standards.

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 with the review of planning and ensure short term plans contain sufficient detail to give clear guidance and differentiation to meet children's individual abilities. Use information gathered from assessments to help plan for children's individual learning
- provide increased opportunities for children to develop problem solving skills.

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