

Mount Scar Cygnets Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	153459
Inspection date	05 July 2007
Inspector	Bridget Copson
Setting Address	Swanage County First School, Mount Scar, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 2EY
Telephone number	01929 426570
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Registered person	Mount Scar Cygnets Playgroup
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 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?

Mount Scar Cygnets Playgroup opened at its current premises in 1980. It operates from within a portacabin in the grounds of Swanage County First School, near the centre of Swanage, Dorset. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 until 15:00, during term time only. Children have use of two play rooms and the school outdoor play areas.

There are currently 51 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 47 children receive funding for early education. The playgroup supports children with English as an additional language.

The playgroup is run by a committee which is primarily comprised of parents. The committee employs seven members of staff, most of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well-protected from the risk of cross infection due to the effective procedures staff implement to maintain a clean and hygienic environment. For example, they disinfect all table tops before break and meal times, the premises is cleaned everyday, staff wash their hands regularly and clean most play provision in the holidays. Children learn about managing their own personal hygiene well through good hand washing routines and discussing aspects of health through theme work.

Children are learning about the importance of healthy lifestyles. They enjoy a nutritious range of healthy snacks at break times, such as a choice of fresh fruits and bread sticks, which they eat very well. They bring in their own lunch boxes and are encouraged by staff to eat the savoury and nutritious foods first. Staff supervise all break and snack times to ensure children's individual dietary needs are met. Children also learn about healthy eating through themes designed to explore healthy foods and diets. They help themselves to drinks of water throughout the day from a dispenser to ensure they do not get thirsty. Children's health and fitness is promoted well through many different activities everyday within the school outdoor play areas. Staff also organise indoor activities, when weather is poor, to ensure children benefit from daily exercise.

Children's health and medical needs are met efficiently through well-organised record keeping. This ensures records of any accidents, incidents and medication are kept and signed by parents for consistency of care. All staff hold appropriate first aid certificates. A first aid kit is kept on the premises, and regularly checked. This all supports staff in caring for children effectively in the event of an accident.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for within generally well-maintained premises. They are protected appropriately by staff who have systems in place to keep them safe and secure in most areas of the provision. However, the front door is damaged and cannot be locked. As a result, staff cannot monitor access to the premises to further protect children. Staff report such issues immediately to ensure they are addressed. Staff carry out risk assessments each year to monitor safety and update them as areas are highlighted and addressed. Children learn about safety through some practical activities, such as using craft tools safely and learning safety rules when out of the school premises. They also practise the evacuation procedure, but this is only occasional and not recorded for assessing the effectiveness. As a result, this does not support staff or children in learning how to respond appropriately in the event of an emergency.

Children's welfare is safeguarded appropriately by staff who have some systems in place to protect them. For example, they keep a written record of all visitors and accurate details of staff and child attendance. Staff are also aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection issues and the procedures involved. Two staff have attended training courses to support them in acting in children's best interests. However, not all aspects of staff's suitability are vetted thoroughly to further safeguarding their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happy and very excited. They quickly seek out staff, friends and toys to play with. They choose from wide range of resources in both playrooms and also choose further activities from posters displaying what is stored in the cupboard. They use their imaginations well in the 'Cygnet's Café' and home role play environments which provide many real life props to support their play. They also play with many different small world sets, manipulative toys and create their own work from the free-expressions craft activities.

Children feel secure within their red and blue base rooms and key staff. They are familiar with the daily routine which is structured to allow them to make maximum use of all the facilities on a rota basis. Younger children's learning and development is planned appropriately and prepares them well for their transition on to the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children's learning and development is promoted appropriately by the staff who have a generally good understating of the Foundation Stage curriculum and what they intend children to learn. Children's learning is planned using activities linked to changing themes with a focus on specific stepping stones. For example, children are currently exploring 'the seaside'. They role play in a boat with life-jackets, play with a small world harbour scene and make fish and post cards. They also play fishing games, collect beach resources for the interest table, read linked stories and learn related songs. This all supports them in making simple connections in their learning.

Staff work with children in small groups throughout the day to provide a greater focus on their learning. They promote discussion and encourage children to communicate and make decisions through problem solving. However, everyday activities do not ensure opportunities to re-enforce what children have learnt through previously planned activities, especially aspects of mathematics. Children's progress is monitored appropriately by key workers who observe them at play and record their achievements in their 'learning journals'. However, these are not completed frequently for all children to show an accurate record of what they can do. In addition, they are not used to plan their next steps or to inform future planning. As a result, children are not being encouraged to develop to their full potential in all areas.

Children enjoy the challenge of new experiences and focus well on things that interest them. They are forming early friendships with others whom they seek to play with during the day and enjoy sharing news and showing their work to staff with pride. Children are developing good independence. For example, they self-register, help themselves to water, choose and tidy up toys and manage their own lunch boxes. They also take on areas of responsibility as helpers. Children sit and listen very well during discussion times and are confident in communicating their thoughts and feelings. They enjoy listening to stories at group times, but do not otherwise access the books independently to develop a greater enjoyment of books. Children write for different reasons in both play rooms. For example, making lists and notes in the role play areas, mark making with chalks on the tarmac, marking their creative work and completing snack lists at break times. Some children are also starting to write letters of their name correctly.

Older children are developing an understanding of numbers for labels and counting through completing snack charts. They can also name different shapes when completing puzzles and can grade items according to size. However, their mathematical development is not supported

well through regular activities to re-enforce their learning. Children enjoy designing and building things as part of adult led activities and through using their own initiative, such as finding junk items to make a musical instrument and deciding how to secure the parts. They are developing a good understanding of information and communication technology. For example, they complete simple programmes on the computers and know how to print off their work independently. Children do occasionally explore different festivals, however, they do not often learn about the cultures and beliefs of others.

Children move with control and co-ordination using the physical play equipment and during action songs. They benefit from a good range of equipment which they use in the different school outdoor play areas as well as indoors. They learn to use different tools with materials to develop their hand-eye co-ordination. They select items for themselves to extend their own play. Children enjoy music. For example, they explore sounds and rhythms using musical instruments and join in singing with enthusiasm. Children use their imaginations well in role play, lots of free-expression creative activities and with music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children demonstrate a sound sense of belonging and most see a positive reflection of themselves within the setting. For example, they find their own labels, take turns as helper and see their photographs and own work displayed. They are cared for with equal concern by staff who have systems in place to meet their needs appropriately. The group has two designated special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) who liaise closely with the school SENCO. This provides children with consistency when transferring into school.

Children behave well. They are learning what is expected of them and how to behave positively towards others. For example, they listen well when asked, are enthusiastic helpers and are learning to share and take turns well. Children are learning about what is right and wrong and will correct others appropriately. Staff manage any issues consistently to support them. They offer them lots of encouragement and praise to raise their self-esteem and confidence.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff have established appropriate working partnerships with parents for consistency of care. To support this, parents receive a brochure detailing staff, setting and curriculum information and a list of policies, including the complaints procedure. Parents complete records and consent forms to support staff in meeting their child's needs according to their wishes. They are kept informed through notices displayed and newsletters each term. However, the policies and procedures have not all been updated recently and, as such, do not provide them with accurate information regarding the provision, including the correct procedure for raising a complaint.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

Parents are provided with some opportunities to get involved in their child's learning. For example, information regarding themes and stepping stones are displayed in the window and parents are invited to meet with key workers briefly each term to discuss their progress. However, they are not asked to provide any information regarding their child's starting points on admission to support staff in forming early assessments.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a consistent team of staff, most of whom attend some additional training to update their knowledge and skills and to support them in meeting children's needs. The setting has appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures in place to ensure staff are suitable to care for children. However, this is not fully implemented to ensure all aspects of suitability are vetted thoroughly, namely health, to further safeguard children's welfare. Staff's on-going suitability is monitored through induction and annual appraisals.

Staff are deployed effectively, according to rotas, to provide consistency of care and ensure children's needs are met appropriately throughout the day. They provide children with time to play freely, according to their own choice as well as having more focused time with specific learning intentions. The setting has some systems in place to monitor the quality of care. For example, a detailed self-assessment, risk assessments, appraisals and links with the local authority. These systems do not ensure, however, that all aspects of safety are promoted well. In addition, their operational plan is updated as new information is received. However, this does not ensure all information is up to date to inform parents. Staff keep children's records and related information stored securely to maintain confidentiality, whilst allowing staff access to relevant information.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

Staff have some systems in place to monitor the quality of nursery education and its strengths and weaknesses. For example, staff meetings every half term and day to day communication. However, they do not have any other system of evaluating the quality of teaching and children's learning to ensure all aspects of their learning and development are promoted well. The setting shows a commitment to improvement. For example, the staff have established close links with the local school which most children attend. This supports children with their transition through school.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting agreed to continue to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities to support children in developing a positive attitude towards others in society. The setting agreed to maintain an accurate record of the times that children and visitors are present and to request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. Also, to revise the format of accident and incident records to ensure that information they contain is kept confidential.

The setting has made some progress in developing staff's knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities through two staff attending relevant training courses. They have disseminated this information to the rest of the team to use in supporting children in developing positive attitudes towards others in society. Staff keep an accurate record of all children and visitor's attendance when on the premises to promote children's safety and welfare. They obtain written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment to meet children's health needs. Staff use individual forms for recording any accident and incident to ensure that information they contain is kept confidential.

At the last nursery education inspection, the setting agreed to plan and provide further opportunities for older and more able children to solve problems which will extend their thinking and learning. Also, to develop procedures which allow the committee and staff to monitor the overall effectiveness of the setting in supporting children's learning and progress.

The setting provides opportunities for more developed children to solve problems which will extend their thinking and learning through planned activities and everyday experiences. For example, taking snack orders at break times. The setting continue to have limited procedures for monitoring the quality of children's learning and progress.

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.

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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):

- improve systems for keeping children safe, especially regarding access to the premises and practising the emergency evacuation procedure
- ensure all the policies and procedures are up to date, especially the complaints procedure, to ensure parents are correctly informed
- improve staff recruitment systems to ensure more robust vetting procedures are implemented for all new staff

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):

- improve systems of assessing children's progress to ensure information is used to plan their next steps and to inform future planning
- provide children with more regular opportunities to re-enforce their learning, especially aspects of mathematics
- develop systems of monitoring the quality of nursery education.

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