

Hilmarton Pre-school Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY355474
Inspection date	02 June 2008
Inspector	Rachel Edwards
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Registered person	The Trustees of Hilmarton Pre School 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?

Hilmarton Pre-school Playgroup was first opened in 1972. It has operated from Hilmarton Community Hall since June 2007. It is run by a voluntary committee of parents. The setting serves the families of the village and nearby town of Calne. Registration is for no more than 24 children from two to five years. The playgroup opens up to four days per week during the school term. Sessions are from 09:00 to 14:45. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children who have disabilities or additional needs. The pre-school currently has 31 children on roll, of whom 19 receive nursery education funding. There are four staff members working with the children. All staff have early years qualifications, including one who is a qualified early years teacher. The setting receives support from the local authority early years team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are encouraged to be fit and healthy whilst at this pre-school. They play in clean surroundings, eat well and are encouraged to be physically active. Children understand why they must wash their hands and they learn to manage this very well on their own, although staff are always quickly on hand to offer help when needed. All staff have current first aid certificates and have specialist training when children with certain medical conditions attend, so that they would be able to respond appropriately.

Children enjoy and benefit from a wide range of healthy and nutritious snacks that encourage them to try new tastes and textures. The 'snack bar' is open for part of the session and children can choose when to come and eat, allowing them time to finish activities they are involved in. Snack time is also very sociable when staff and children have the chance to chat in a small group about their day. Children are able to help themselves to drinking water throughout the day and staff take drinks for the children when visiting the park on warm days. Children may bring in packed lunches and staff encourage parents to include healthy items.

Children play outside in the fresh air each day. They have the use of the nearby fully enclosed school playground; the community play park with larger climbing and balancing equipment and also the unfenced community playing field. They are all taken out for a short time each morning and afternoon to these areas, where they enjoy a variety of activities that help develop their large muscle control. Frequently staff use the paved area that is adjacent to the playroom for outdoor activities such as sand and water play but it is not possible to allow children the beneficial choice of playing inside or out at any time, as the area is not enclosed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children use suitable accommodation which is bright and welcoming. The room is used by other members of the community which means staff have to pack away and set up each day. They have worked hard and been largely successful in creating a child centred environment, where children are able to choose from a good range of suitable activities and resources and they are able to independently manage their own personal care, such as visiting the toilet or hanging up coats. There are displays of children's art but staff are restricted by their landlord in the amount of permanent or longer term displays, such as growing seeds that they can have. The group have their own entrance to the premises and the public do not have access whilst the group are present.

Children play in safety as staff constantly monitor the provision and minimise any potential risks. Effective risk assessments are undertaken for the playroom, outdoor areas, walks in the local community and visits further afield. Staff understand the emergency evacuation procedures and these are regularly practised with the children, which helps them understand how to keep themselves safe. Children are able to take small risks such as pedalling or running fast in the playground, this allows them to experience some sense of danger and so learn to manage their own safety. Staff only intervene when play gets overly boisterous and then they explain clearly how someone may get hurt.

Staff understand their role in safeguarding children's welfare. Staff have attended child protection training and all staff understand the clear procedures and lines of responsibility. Volunteer helpers who have not been cleared are not left alone with children at any time.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy coming to pre-school. They develop close relationships with other children and the adults who work with them. The youngest children are very well supported by staff as they settle in and become familiar with the daily routine. They are confident to choose from the wide range of activities on offer and resources that they can reach for themselves. They play well together and are able to share and take turns amicably, for example, children decide how to lay out the train track and then work co-operatively to build it. Staff are experienced and use their good understanding of the Birth to three framework and Foundation Stage curriculum to plan a balanced curriculum that enables children to learn and develop through purposeful play both inside and outside. Staff are skilled at interacting with children and asking questions that encourage them to think and make connections in their learning. Whole group times, when all the children come together for stories or circle time, are not always successful as the activities are sometimes inappropriate for the youngest children, who quickly lose interest.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff contribute towards providing a range of activities and an inviting environment that support all areas of children's development well and help them make generally good progress towards the early learning goals. There is a good balance between activities that children initiate themselves and those that adults organise, perhaps to teach new skills or develop a particular area of learning, such as using scissors or operating a computer programme. Children make particularly good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills. They speak confidently and with growing fluency both in large and small groups. Staff model conversation and questioning skills so that children follow their lead, for example, discussing the meaning of 'poisonous' whilst making model snakes. A listening activity is planned each day, which helps older children begin to distinguish sounds in words and link these to letters. Children are interested in text, for example, as they 'write' orders in the café or very successfully attempt to write family names with magnetic letters on the wall.

Children initiate their own play, especially in the role play area. They find the things they need to 'mend' the tap and put on a puppet show for an appreciative audience of friends. They practise counting every day at register time and are beginning to recognise significant numbers, such as their age. They use numbers in their play, for example, counting money in the pretend café or as they march along. Staff help children in developing their mathematical understanding, for example, as they look closely at similarities and differences between the objects they are sorting or the prints they make with painted feet.

Staff routinely observe and assess children's development and progress, although they do not encourage parents to contribute to these records to build a full picture of children's interest and abilities. Although staff interact very well with children, they do not frequently meet to discuss children's progress nor make full use of this information to guide planning so as to include activities that are relevant to children's interests and adapted for different abilities. This means that on occasions, older and more able children are not always sufficiently challenged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are welcomed into the group. They demonstrate a strong sense of belonging as they quickly hang up coats and change shoes before greeting friends and settling to play at an activity of their own choice. The clear routine helps them settle and feel secure so that they quickly help with tasks such as tidying up and eagerly come to eat once the snack bar is open. All children are encouraged to take part in all activities and those who are less sure are given time to watch before joining in, for example with the foot painting and printing. Children learn about their local community through activities such as shape walks around the village and they sometimes have interesting visitors such as mums with new babies or a postman dad. They have very good links with the local primary school, which most children will go on to attend and this makes their move to school less stressful. Children learn about the needs of others, for example, when they raise money for charitable causes. They play with resources that reflect the diversity of people but activities are not frequently provided to extend children's knowledge of the wider world. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children are generally very well behaved, except at whole group times when the discussion or story is not pitched at the right level for all children, so that some become bored and distracted. At other times staff manage children's behaviour well. They give clear guidance and explain the consequences of poor behaviour, for example, they explain 'it will hurt if you throw sand in someone's eyes' and children respond well to this clear guidance.

The partnership with parents is good and parents speak highly of the provision. Parents are well informed about most aspects of the pre-school through regular newsletters, easy access to all policies and procedures and notice boards. However, they are not made aware that they may ask to see the complaints log. Staff are available for informal discussions each day and twice each year there are organised parents' evenings to discuss children's progress. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning, for example, by helping out at sessions, when they are able to see first hand how their children learn through play and children also take home simple reading or picture books to share with parents. However, parents are not invited to share what they know about their children to add to the ongoing assessments of their children's development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The pre-school employs a team of well qualified, experienced staff and maintains a high ratio of staff to children, in addition there is a voluntary parent helper at most sessions so that children receive high levels of individual attention. However, the supervisor is not present for several sessions during the week, which affects the continuity of management and the communication between staff. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that individuals running the group or working with children are suitable to do so. A range of policies and procedures are in place and are generally followed by staff to promote children's welfare and learning. However, a record of concerns has not been made available to parents and this is a breach of regulations.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff are receptive to advice from outside professionals and make changes to improve their practice, for example, they have introduced a cafe style snack time to give children more time to finish activities they are involved in. They plan a broad curriculum but do not effectively evaluate how successful

activities have been in helping children progress towards the early learning goals. They do not always clearly identify what children are to learn from activities and staff do not routinely meet to discuss children's progress so that activities are not routinely guided by children's interests and are not always pitched at the right level to maximise their learning. However, since staff are skilled and experienced, they still manage to question children very effectively and guide their play to ensure that most children make good progress in all areas of their development. The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable as this is the first inspection since registration.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration Ofsted received one complaint relating to National Standard 6: Safety, National Standard 10: Special Needs, National Standard 11: Behaviour and National Standard 12: Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers. Concerns were raised regarding meeting children's individual needs, staff using inappropriate behaviour management techniques and sharing information with parents. Ofsted wrote to the provider asking them to investigate these concerns and report back. A response was received providing details of how children's individual needs are met and how information is shared with parents and recorded. The provider acknowledged that they needed to produce a special education needs policy to support all the children attending the playgroup. The provider implemented this change and remains qualified for registration.

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):

- develop the role of the key person
- ensure that the complaints procedure fully complies with regulations, especially in relation to making the complaints record available to parents on request
- ensure there is an appointed manager in charge of sessions, with a designated deputy to cover for periods of sickness, holiday and short absences

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):

- explore ways of enabling children to safely enjoy free flow indoor/outdoor play (also applies to care)
- ensure that staff discuss and effectively use children's assessments to guide planning, so that activities follow their interests and children of different abilities are appropriately challenged
- develop the planning so that it is clear what children are intended to learn from activities and evaluate activities to help improve future practice

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