

**Integrated Inspection by the
Care Commission and
HM Inspectorate of Education of
Almondbank & Pitcairngreen Playgroup
Perth**

14 March 2007

**Almondbank & Pitcairngreen Playgroup
The Old Schoolhouse
Pitcairngreen
Perth
PH1 3JN**

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001, requires that the Care Commission inspect all care services covered by the Act every year to monitor the quality of care provided. In accordance with the Act, the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education carry out integrated inspections of the quality of care and education. In doing this, inspection teams take account of *National Care Standards*, *Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16*, and *The Child at the Centre*. The following standards and related quality indicators were used in the recent inspection.

| National Care Standard | Child at the Centre Quality Indicator |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Standard 2 – A Safe Environment | Resources |
| Standard 4 – Engaging with Children | Development and learning through play |
| Standard 5 – Quality of Experience | Curriculum Children's development and learning |
| Standard 6 – Support and Development | Support for children and families |
| Standard 14 – Well-managed Service | Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance |

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale, and these words are used in the report to describe the team's judgements:

| | | |
|----------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Very good | : | major strengths |
| Good | : | strengths outweigh weaknesses |
| Fair | : | some important weaknesses |
| Unsatisfactory | : | major weaknesses |

Reports contain Recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any Requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be noted clearly and timescales given.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the head of service, staff and the education authority. Copies are also available on the Care Commission website: www.carecommission.com and HMIE website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you wish to comment about integrated pre-school inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of integrated pre-school inspections, you should write in the first instance to Kenneth Muir, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Our complaints procedure

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to either:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Complaints Coordinator | Hazel Dewart |
| Headquarters | HM Inspectorate of Education |
| Care Commission | Denholm House |
| Compass House | Almondvale Business Park |
| Riverside Drive | Almondvale Way |
| Dundee | Livingston |
| DD1 4NY | EH54 6GA |

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

A copy of the HMIE complaints procedure is available from the HMIE website at www.hmie.gov.uk or by telephoning 01506 600 258.

Crown Copyright 2007

Care Commission
HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Integrated Inspection by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education of Almondbank & Pitcairngreen Playgroup Perth

Introduction

Almondbank & Pitcairngreen Playgroup was inspected in November 2006 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. HMIE carried out this inspection on behalf of both organisations and consulted the Care Commission about its findings. The playgroup catered for pre-school children aged two-and-a-half to five years. It was registered for 24 children attending at any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 21.

The environment

Standard 2

The playgroup was situated within The Old Schoolhouse which also served as a community centre for the village. The playroom was well resourced and provided areas for children to play individually and in small and larger groups. Staff had use of a large community hall on two days a week for planned activities. The playgroup also had exclusive access to a secure, outside play area and garden.

The playgroup provided a secure environment for young children. Staff paid careful attention to all aspects of children's health and implemented appropriate procedures for the control of infection, food handling and risk assessment.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff had developed very good relationships with children. They knew them well and were sensitive to their individual needs. Children under three were fully included within the group of pre-school children. All children enjoyed a good balance of free-play and activities which were led by an adult. Staff talked with children, offering information on a range of topics. They listened carefully to them as they recalled experiences. Staff made effective use of questions to extend learning and encourage children to think more for themselves.

Staff planned a range of interesting topics and themes. They organised activities to encourage children to learn new skills and to develop their interests. Staff needed to make more effective use of their observations of children's play to build on interests and to meet their individual needs. They shared information about playgroup activities with parents and encouraged them to support children's interests at home. Staff used daily observations to track individual children's progress and to inform reports for parents. They needed to link weekly plans and daily

observations more closely to identify next steps in children's learning.

Features of the programmes for children aged three to five included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was very good. Children were happy, secure and comfortable with the daily routines. They selected from a wide range of resources, played cooperatively, and shared ideas and equipment during their play activities. Staff made good use of praise to develop children's confidence and build self esteem. They encouraged children to be independent in their own care, for example when washing their hands and brushing their teeth. Children were learning to follow simple rules, care for the environment and to respect each other.
- The programme for communication and language was very good. Staff had created an attractive, cosy area where children accessed a good range of story and reference books. Children visited the local library regularly and were encouraged to choose books from the playgroup to take home on a weekly basis. They listened carefully to stories read by staff and chose books to look at independently and with their friends. Staff provided very good opportunities for children to learn about print and make marks. For example, children 'signed' themselves in at snack time, recognised their names on the registration cards and wrote in their scrap books and diaries. Many children recognised their names and experimented writing letters and symbols.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was very good. Staff planned a variety of activities to encourage children to learn about nature. They planted vegetables, cared for them and harvested them to make soup. Children used the many resources in the garden area to explore and investigate. They collected materials at home in their 'little green fingers' boxes and brought them to playgroup to discuss with staff and other children. Staff provided a range of materials to support the development of early mathematics skills. Children counted and grouped pebbles and fir cones. They measured and estimated using sand and assorted containers. Children were developing a good understanding of information and communications technology (ICT) using the computer and programmable toys.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. Staff provided paints and some collage materials. They encouraged children to mix colours on the easel in the garden and some children discovered how to make the colour brown. Children used pre-cut shapes to design their own cards. Staff needed to extend the range of materials available to children to offer more freedom and creativity and choice. Many children experimented with sound and rhythm using a selection of percussion instruments. However, some resources were displayed too high for children to reach them independently. Staff had created an attractive role-play area with a good range of dressing-up clothes and a selection of puppets for children to play with imaginatively, recreating and inventing situations.

- The programme for physical development and movement was good. Children had daily access to the outside play area for energetic play. They were developing their skills learning to pedal, push and pull a range of wheeled toys. Staff provided large climbing apparatus to give children opportunities to climb, balance and slide. Staff planned weekly sessions in the community hall for music and movement and to play games. Children were developing good control of their hands and fingers using a variety of appropriate tools, puzzles and construction materials.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

Staff had very good relationships with children and their families. An effective key worker system ensured that parents could contact a member of staff who knew their child well. Staff kept parents well informed about the life of the playgroup through daily exchanges of information, very useful handbooks, monthly newsletters, regularly updated notice boards and the very good use of photos of children at play. Parents were involved in the daily sessions through a rota system. Staff provided clear guidelines to help parents to understand their role when they were on rota duty. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and those interviewed during the inspection, were satisfied with the quality of the service. A few would like more information about their child's progress and to be more involved in the life of the playgroup.

Staff had established effective links with the local authority and support agencies. They had accessed individual support for children who required additional support in their learning, including appropriate training to support children with communication difficulties. Staff organised regular review meetings and involved parents in planning appropriate support for their child. They needed to further develop assessment documentation to clearly identify appropriate support and next steps in children's learning.

Staff had established links with other pre-school services to support children moving from one stage to another. They completed local authority transition records and had also developed a programme of visits with the local primary school which helped ease children's transition to the next stage in their learning.

Management

Standard 14

The peripatetic manager provided good leadership. She worked closely with the parents' committee and administrator to manage the smooth running of the playgroup. She was enthusiastic and committed to the provision of high-quality care and education for pre-school children. The manager, administrator and parents' committee had clearly defined roles and remits. They carried out their individual responsibilities effectively. The manager had created very good teamwork with the dedicated play staff.

Staff were involved in a formal system for development and review and had access to regular training opportunities. They had an understanding of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice and were aware of the implications for the

service. Staff were fully aware of child protection procedures and further training was planned.

The manager and staff had worked together to produce an improvement plan which identified clear areas for development. Staff had attended appropriate training sessions and were making good progress towards identified targets. The manager involved staff, children and parents in the evaluation of some aspects of the service. They completed questionnaires to help to evaluate specific areas of provision, for example children and parents were invited to comment about the quality of the 'storysacks' and 'maths bags'. However, the manager and committee had not developed systematic procedures to monitor playroom practice and the quality of children's learning experiences.

Key strengths

- The warm, welcoming and purposeful learning environment.
- High-quality staff interactions and positive relationships with children.
- Very good programmes for emotional, personal and social development, communication and language and knowledge and understanding of the world.
- The hardworking and enthusiastic team and the commitment of the manager, play staff and parents' committee to the provision of a quality service.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

There were two recommendations made in the previous Care Commission singleton report. The playgroup had addressed both recommendations satisfactorily.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should further develop planning and assessment procedures to clearly identify next steps for children.
- The manager and parents' committee should continue to develop rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of children's learning experiences.

Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors have asked the pre-school centre and education authority to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report. Where requirements are made, the action plan should include timescales to deal with these. The plan will be available to parents and carers. In liaison with the pre-school centre and education authority, Care Commission Officers and HM Inspectors will monitor progress to ensure improvements are in line with the main findings of the report.

Jane Mason
HM Inspectorate of Education