

**Integrated Inspection by the
Care Commission and
HM Inspectorate of Education of
A.C.E Playgroup and Busy Bees
Dumfries and Galloway Council**

16 November 2005

**A.C.E Playgroup and Busy Bees
Annan Community Centre
St John's Road
Annan
DG12 6AP**

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 Dr Bill Maxwell, 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 can write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.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.

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Care Commission
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Introduction

A.C.E Playgroup and Busy Bees was inspected in June 2005 as part of the integrated inspection programme by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education. The playgroup catered for pre-school children aged from two to five years. It was registered for 24 children. At the time of the inspection the roll was 30.

The environment

Standard 2

The playgroup offered a welcoming and secure environment. There was no enclosed outdoor play area available for the sole use of the service, but the neighbouring school's playing fields were used when weather permitted. Although there was adequate space in the playroom for the number of children cared for, it was not used effectively. A large piece of equipment in the centre of the room obstructed the staff's view of much of the room. The playroom was also crowded with an excessive number of play materials. Children used the sit and ride toys enthusiastically throughout the room, but this encroached on other activities. Examples of the children's artwork were displayed throughout the playroom with other photographic displays on the parents' notice board in the foyer.

There was a large selection of play materials and educational resources available, but some of these were well worn. There was little variation between the resources used in the playgroup and those used in the mother and toddlers' group.

Good risk assessments had been undertaken for trips. The risk assessments that were in place for play activities within the centre needed to be extended further. Although an infection control policy was in place, some practices observed were not in keeping with the policy. The practice of communal hand washing by the children in the playroom was continuing, although the previous Care Commission report had advised that it must stop.

Good opportunities were provided for children to learn about hygiene and keeping safe. Children had access to healthy snacks.

Quality of children's experience

Standard 4 & 5

In the playrooms, the staff were caring and interacted in a positive manner with the children. They knew the children well, but did not intervene effectively when children became boisterous. There were too many activities available at once, and choice was

difficult for the children. The morning programme consisted of general free play with some organised activities available to all of the children. When adult-led activities had been completed in the early morning, tables were left empty for the remainder of the play session. Children wandered from one activity to another. There were few activities which challenged the more capable children. A little time was allocated to group work, such as singing, late in the sessions when the children had become restless.

Records of the planning for each session were minimal and did not clearly indicate the relationship of activities to learning outcomes. The assessment of children's progress needed to be linked to more specific learning outcomes. Staff observations were not linked to evaluations of the children's work, and notes were inconsistent. Samples of the children's work were stored in folders which needed further development. A good tracking system was needed to pull together the pieces of information on the children which the staff held on file.

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

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was good. Children were happy, safe and secure. They were comfortable with the routines and simple rules of the playgroup. Staff made good use of praise to encourage children's self esteem. Most children were becoming aware of the needs of others. They cooperated, took turns and shared resources well with each other. However, children had no opportunities to develop independence or understand food hygiene by helping prepare snack.
- The programme for communication and language was fair. Staff provided opportunities for children to talk and listen to adults and each other. Children listened well in small group activities, but found listening difficult in larger groups, for example during the whole-group, story-telling session. Children talked confidently and were able to initiate good conversations. Most children were able to identify their own names when written. Children did not have sufficient opportunities to use the book corner independently. They did not experience a wide enough range of activities to foster an interest in print and develop their skills in early reading and writing.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was good. Staff encouraged children to develop their powers of observation using their senses. Children were learning about science through sand and water play and through baking. They were developing an appropriate understanding of simple mathematical concepts including matching, sorting, counting, and identifying simple shapes. However, children did not have sufficient access to information and communications technology. Opportunities for children to learn about other cultures needed to be developed further.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was good. It gave children the opportunity to role-play and develop their imaginations in various contexts. Children were engaged in a range of activities to express themselves

through art and craft. They were able to produce art work using materials of different textures. There were good opportunities for children to create their own models using a variety of cardboard material. Children enjoyed playing the musical instruments made available to them. Staff, however, needed to ensure that children had more regular opportunities to access musical instruments.

- Overall, the programme in physical development and movement was good. Children were learning to cooperate with each other through games and activities. They were developing good skills in throwing and catching. Children participated enthusiastically when moving to music. They had confidence in jumping and balancing when using the large indoor equipment. Opportunities for outdoor energetic play were limited. Children were developing good hand control through a range of activities including drawing, cutting and gluing.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

Playleaders provided good support for children and their families and were sensitive to individual circumstances. All parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire were very satisfied with the work of the playgroup. They thought that the staff were approachable. Some indicated that they would like more information about their child's progress. Parents were encouraged and supported to take an active part in the playgroup.

The playgroup had good arrangements in place for children transferring to primary school. Staff were aware of contacts with other agency personnel who would work with children requiring additional support in their learning. At the time of the inspection, there were no children requiring additional support enrolled in the playgroup.

Management

Standard 14

The manager was approachable and had a good relationship with staff, children and parents. Leadership was fair overall. The committee and manager needed to work together to define the managerial role to ensure the development of appropriate policies, tools and working practices.

Staff had formed good relationships with each other and worked to some extent as a team. However, there was little overview of the work of the staff, who all worked in their own areas. Team meetings allowed an informal exchange of good practice.

The staff and management committee had a positive commitment to further training. Almost all staff were qualified in childcare or education or were undertaking further training towards qualifications. The committee should extend the system of appraisals and provision of staff development to include the manager.

A range of policies and procedures, some of which had been reviewed this year, were in place, providing guidance to staff and parents. Most required customisation to apply directly to this service. The manager had a clear understanding of child

protection procedures, but other staff had not been trained in that area. All of the staff were aware of the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice.

Key strengths

- Positive relationships amongst the staff, parents and the local community.
- Friendly interactions between staff and children.
- Confident children who felt secure in the playgroup environment.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

The following recommendations made in the last Care Commission inspection report had not been fulfilled.

Training should be accessed for those staff who have not attended child protection training.

The manager should reorganise storage of children's individual scrapbooks to allow them access to these to encourage their interest and support their development and learning.

The committee should ensure that the manager of the service is included in the appraisal system.

The review of current policies is still ongoing.

Recommendations for improvement

The management committee, manager and staff should ensure that the quality of children's learning experiences are improved by:

- developing procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the playgroup;
- further developing planning to incorporate clear learning outcomes; and
- continuing to improve programmes in all aspects of children's learning and development, particularly in communication and language and expressive and aesthetic development.

Requirements

- Communal hand washing should cease immediately and clearer infection control records should be kept. This is to comply with Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation (4)(1)(d).

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.

Val Walker
Care Commission

Alan Urquhart
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