Integrated Inspection by the
Care Commission and
HM Inspectorate of Education of
Tweedbank Playgroup
Tweedbank

24 January 2007
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Care Standard</th>
<th>Child at the Centre Quality Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2 – A Safe Environment</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4 – Engaging with Children</td>
<td>Development and learning through play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5 – Quality of Experience</td>
<td>Curriculum, Children’s development and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6 – Support and Development</td>
<td>Support for children and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 14 – Well-managed Service</td>
<td>Management, Leadership and Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
Headquarters
Care Commission
Compass House
Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

Hazel Dewart
HM Inspectorate of Education
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston
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@spso.org.uk.

More information about the Ombudsman’s office can be obtained from the website: www.spso.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
HM Inspectorate of Education

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Introduction

Tweedbank Playgroup was inspected in October 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 years six months to five years. It was registered for 20 children attending at any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 20.

The environment

Standard 2

The playgroup was located within the local community centre. Accommodation consisted of a large cloakroom area, playroom and toilets. The children’s toilets had just been refurbished prior to the inspection and were bright and attractive. Staff and children also made good use of an additional two rooms within the centre, a small quiet room for storytelling and a larger room for physical play. Staff had created a bright, attractive and pleasant learning environment. They made good use of attractive displays to celebrate children’s achievements. Children had access to a good range of resources to support their learning and development. Play equipment was in good condition and well maintained. An enclosed and well-maintained, outdoor grassed area was situated just outside the main playroom and was used to promote physical activity. Staff and children followed appropriate hygiene procedures to control the spread of infection. Documentation relating to health and safety matters, for example the fire register and accident/incident logs, were in place and kept up-to-date.

Quality of children’s experience

Standard 4 & 5

Staff were very warm and caring. They had developed very good relationships with children and knew them well as individuals. They engaged effectively with children during play and supported them well in their learning. Praise and encouragement was used very appropriately to recognise achievement and help create a positive learning environment. Children were highly motivated and enthusiastically took part in a wide range of appropriate learning experiences. Staff ensured the daily programme was very flexible and took account of children’s needs. For example, a rolling snack programme encouraged children to choose when to access snack and this did not disrupt play.

Procedures for assessment were good overall. Children had access to their individual records of achievements which included
useful examples of their own work. Staff gathered some assessment information but did not yet use this information to identify next steps in learning. Staff met weekly to discuss children’s interests and plan appropriate learning experiences. However, what children were expected to learn was not clearly stated.

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

• The programme for emotional, social and personal development was very good. Children were happy, settled and secure. They greeted each other upon arrival and were developing friendships. They were very familiar with established rules and routines and these were reinforced effectively by staff. They were developing good practice in personal hygiene when washing their hands regularly. Staff encouraged children to develop self-help skills at snack and when putting on outdoor clothes. Children demonstrated perseverance when faced with tasks which at first presented some difficulty.

• The programme for communication and language was very good. Children accessed the cosy book corner independently and were learning about the language and layout of books. Staff provided many good opportunities for children to develop skills in listening and talking. They listened carefully to children and encouraged them to contribute to group discussions. Children used a good range of writing resources at the writing table to develop early writing skills. They used pencils and pads in the ‘hairdresser’s’ imaginative play area to develop early writing skills. Staff encouraged children to develop an understanding of their initial letter sound in their name.

• The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was very good. Children used a good range of electronic toys such as vacuum cleaners and toasters to learn about technology. They explored the properties of water wheels and were learning about simple measure in the water tray. Staff encouraged children to explore and investigate their attractive outdoor environment. They were learning about autumn and the process of change and had fun collecting leaves and chestnuts. Staff promoted an understanding of simple shape and number through play. They had learned about people who help us through visits from the police and fire services.

• The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was very good. Children enthusiastically took on adult roles in the well-resourced ‘hairdresser’s studio’. They enjoyed dressing up and taking on adult roles in the home corner. Children had good opportunities to take part in small world imaginative play and used a toy town play set to create scenarios. They independently used painting rollers to explore colour and texture. They used a wide range of collage and junk materials to produce individual and creative pieces of work which were celebrated. A good range of quality musical instruments was freely available, and children had fun exploring sound and rhythm.
The programme for physical development and movement was very good. Children were developing good hand control when using scissors, writing tools and play dough. They enjoyed running around and taking part in an energetic exercise programme in the outdoor play area. They used a selection of balls and hoops to develop coordination skills. They used a series of small obstacles to develop balancing skills with increasing confidence.

Support for children and families
Standard 6

Staff had developed very good relationships with parents and carers. Parents were kept well informed about the work of the playgroup through a series of very useful notice boards, regular newsletters and daily informal contact. A very informative parents’ handbook was in place which provided a very good overview of the work of the playgroup. Parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very satisfied with the work of the playgroup. Effective procedures were in place to support children starting playgroup. Good links had been established with the mothers and toddlers group which was also located in the same building. Staff had also developed good links with local schools to support children as they moved on to primary school.

Staff had established very good links with a range of outside agencies to support children requiring additional help with their learning. They enjoyed regular visits from specialists to support them in their work with children. They worked closely with parents to ensure children’s learning needs were being met. Effective individualised educational programmes and care plans were in place and children’s progress was closely monitored.

Management
Standard 14

The playleader coordinator and the management committee worked closely together to provide very good leadership. The playleader coordinator was highly committed and had developed very good relationships with parents, children and staff. She demonstrated a sound understanding of early years practice. The management committee were very supportive of the work of the playgroup. The staff team worked very effectively together to ensure high-quality service provision.

A range of policies and procedures was in place to guide the work of staff. Staff were familiar with the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice and of the implications for future training for their practice. Formal opportunities were in place to allow staff to review their work through an annual review process, and training needs were identified. Staff were committed to ongoing professional development. Staff were very aware of their role in child protection.

Staff were involved in evaluating the work of the playgroup and in identifying areas for development. An effective improvement plan was in place and staff were working well towards meeting key targets, such as the purchasing of specialist resources. Formal procedures to monitor the quality of the provision, and in particular playroom practice, were not yet in place.
Key strengths

- Warm, caring staff who had created a very positive learning environment and supported children's learning very effectively.
- Very good programmes in all key aspects.
- Very good support for children and families provided by staff who were very aware of children's individual needs.
- The very good leadership qualities demonstrated by the playleader coordinator who was very well supported by the effective management committee.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

At the last Care Commission singleton inspection there were no recommendations and no requirements.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should improve procedures for assessment and planning to ensure what children are expected to learn is clearly stated and assessment information is used to inform the planning process.
- Formal procedures to monitor the work of the playgroup should be developed to ensure the high level of provision is maintained.

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.

Donald Currie
HM Inspectorate of Education