

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

21 June 2006

**Aberdour Playgroup
The Institute
Shore Road
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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

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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
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Riverside Drive	Almondvale Way
Dundee	Livingston
DD1 4NY	EH54 6GA

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Introduction

Aberdour Playgroup was inspected in March 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 three to five years. It was registered for 24 children attending at any one session. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 26.

The environment Standard 2

The playgroup used a hall adjoining the public library. Premises were shared with other voluntary groups. Staff worked hard to provide an attractive playroom. All resources were stored in outside containers. With the help of parents, they set up and cleared away equipment every day. Staff organised space well so that children could play independently or in groups. They provided good opportunities for indoor energetic play. There was no garden or suitable outdoor play area but staff ensured that children went on monthly visits to places of interest, such as the park, beach or shops. They created low level displays which children could explore and investigate.

Quality of children's experience Standard 4 & 5

Staff knew children very well and were responsive to their needs. Overall, they interacted positively with children and praised their efforts, developing their confidence and self esteem. Children were motivated and concentrated well on their chosen tasks. Staff allowed children time and space to engage in activities. However, they did not always make effective use of questioning or dialogue to develop children's ideas and extend their learning. Able children were not sufficiently challenged in their thinking and play.

Staff had begun to make observations of the children at play but these were infrequent and were not linked to planning. Plans did not yet reflect key aspects of the curriculum or indicate what children were expected to learn next. However, the local authority was supporting staff to improve procedures. Staff kept assessment records, using local authority documentation and photographic evidence of each child which they shared regularly with parents. They provided parents with a written transition report before their child moved on to the nursery class or primary school.

Features of the programmes for children included the following.

- The programme for emotional, personal and social development was good. Children were happy, relaxed and familiar with daily routines. They cheerfully chose activities by themselves and concentrated well. Staff encouraged children's independence through activities such as snack preparation and dressing themselves. Children did not have sufficient opportunities to take responsibilities in the playgroup. They were developing friendships and cooperating with one another during their play. Staff provided appropriate opportunities for children to develop understanding of the importance of celebrating religious and cultural festivals, such as the Chinese New Year.
- The programme for communication and language was good. Staff provided a range of opportunities for children to develop skills in listening, talking and early reading and writing. Children spoke confidently with each other and during role-playing. They listened well at the story-telling session and at group time. Staff had displayed a wide variety of fiction and reference books in the attractive story corner and at other play areas. However, these were not used sufficiently well by either staff or children. Staff provided good opportunities for children to recognise their name in various situations such as snack registration and in labelling art work. Staff had provided a writing table but it was not well enough resourced and, as a result, children did not use it. However, a few children made good use of the telephone note pads in the home corner to scribble and make marks.
- The programme for knowledge and understanding of the world was fair. Staff made good use of outings and visitors to help children find out about their local community. The police, florist and 'Granny Hall' had visited the group this session. Staff provided good opportunities for children to understand simple mathematical processes such as counting, sorting, matching and measuring. Children were developing their powers of observation using their senses at the sand and dough areas. However, there was limited staff intervention to encourage children's skills in early science. Children had limited opportunities to observe nature or to bake. A laptop computer had been donated by parents. However, some programs were inappropriate and did not meet the needs of children. Children had little or no experience of using other technology.
- The programme for expressive and aesthetic development was very good. Staff had provided a wide range of materials for children to express themselves imaginatively and creatively. Children had very good opportunities to make models, to print, to paint and use dough. They expressed themselves freely as they worked. Some played imaginatively at the blocks, making ramps for fast cars and 'baddies'. Others enjoyed very imaginative role-play in the house corner. They travelled, with cases, to Euro Disney. They danced on the playgroup stage in 'Paris'. They used instruments freely and danced to Tchaikovsky, for an extended period of time. Movements were graceful and expressive.

- The programme for physical development and movement was good. Children enjoyed imaginative energetic activity at the high climbing frame. They explored different ways of moving their bodies as they climbed and balanced and slid down the chute. They enjoyed dancing with tap shoes, ballet shoes and bare feet. However, there were insufficient opportunities for outdoor play. Children did not run, jump, throw and catch or use large toys to ride and push and pull. Staff provided very good opportunities to develop children's control of their hands and fingers through the use of scissors, spatulas, knives, puzzles and fastenings.

Support for children and families

Standard 6

Staff knew children very well and responded positively to individual family circumstances. They provided a flexible extended day, two days each week, to meet the needs of children and their parents. The playgroup was very much part of the local community and visitors were warmly welcomed and encouraged.

Parents took part in rota duties and shared their skills with children. For example, a guitarist, balloon modeller and engineer had already supported the playgroup this session. A retired teacher visited regularly. Local shopkeepers shared their expertise. Staff kept parents informed of events through a daily diary, a notice board, occasional newsletters and informal chats. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with the service provided. A few parents wanted more regular information about their children's development and progress.

The links with the receiving primary school were not always effective. Although staff completed a transition record for children moving on to nursery class or P1, there was no information sharing for those children who attended both playgroup and the nursery class. Staff had already identified this as a priority for improvement.

Staff liaised effectively with a number of agencies to support children with identified needs. For example, the speech therapist had worked alongside staff in the playroom. Together with parents, they had drawn up and implemented appropriate programmes. They met regularly to plan, review and share good practice.

Management

Standard 14

Overall, the playgroup was managed effectively by a committee of parents whose children attended the centre. They had delegated the day-to-day running of the group to the two playleaders. Both leaders were open, approachable, and enjoyed good relationships with staff, parents and children. They liaised well with the chairperson and committee members who had responsibility for recruiting staff, organising reviews and dealing with finances. Their individual roles had not yet been clearly defined or communicated to parents.

Staff had access to a variety of relevant training courses to help them improve children's learning experiences. All staff spoke positively about the local authority's training programme and felt

very well supported by advisory staff from Fife Council. They had a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the protection of children. They were familiar with the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice and their implications.

An annual audit of all aspects of the provision, carried out by the local authority and staff had identified priorities for improvement which were successfully being taken forward. Parental questionnaires also informed the agenda for improvement. There were no systems in place yet for regular monitoring and evaluating the quality of children's experiences and practice within the playroom.

Key strengths

- Warm, welcoming playgroup.
- The very good programme for expressive and aesthetic development.
- The playgroup as an integral part of the Aberdour community and staff commitment to involving parents and the wider community in children's learning.
- The partnership between the playleaders and the local authority to continue to improve learning experiences for children.

Other Issues

Response to recommendations or to requirements made at previous inspection

Three recommendations and one requirement had been made at the previous Care Commission singleton inspection. Satisfactory progress had been made with them all.

Recommendations for improvement

- Staff should improve the quality of their questioning to challenge and extend the thinking of more able children.
- Staff should make better use of observations and assessment information to plan more effectively for next steps in children's learning.
- Staff should improve the programme for knowledge and understanding of the world.
- The playleaders and management committee should continue to develop and improve liaison with the local primary school.
- The management committee, in consultation with staff, should clearly define the roles and responsibilities for the playleaders and committee members and also develop more regular procedures for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the playgroup's work.

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.

Pat Appleby
HM Inspectorate of Education