

**Poppies Pre-school Ltd
Laurencekirk
Aberdeenshire
30 March 2011**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects centres in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their centre provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with centre staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the head of centre and staff about the strengths of the centre, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into playrooms and join other activities which children are involved in. We also gather the views of parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the centre. We describe how well children are doing, how good the centre is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the centre. We also comment on how well the centre works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the centre is led and how all staff help the centre achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the centre, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers and carers who are relatives or friends

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1. The centre

Poppies Pre-school Ltd was inspected in February 2011 by HMIE on behalf of both HMIE and the Care Commission as part of the integrated inspection programme. The centre caters for pre school children aged four months to five years. It is registered for 31 children attending at any one session. The total roll was 37 at the time of the inspection.

2. Particular strengths of the centre

- Confident, motivated children who are actively engaged in their learning.
- The quality of children's learning experiences.
- Partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- The commitment of all staff to continuous improvement.
- Leadership of the nursery and the commitment to blend care and education effectively.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children under three are very content and relate very well to key staff. They are learning to play with each other and share toys. They confidently choose their own activities and focus very well while playing. Children listen very well to stories and join in enthusiastically to action rhymes. They enjoy playing outdoors, investigating water play and tackling obstacle courses. Children are developing their independence as they learn to look after themselves. Children aged three to five are motivated to learn and concentrate very well on their chosen activities. They set themselves challenging tasks while investigating indoors and outdoors and persevere very well to achieve success in their learning. Children plan their learning and explore their interests in depth. They talk about space and dinosaurs with a high level of understanding.

Across the nursery they compile effective rules for indoor and outdoor experiences and conduct appropriate risk assessments. Children have achieved a silver award from Eco-Schools Scotland. Children are learning to care for their environment and other living things, for example in keeping their own hens. They have a very good understanding of recycling and saving energy. Children confidently interviewed the project manager of the local wind farm to extend their knowledge of electricity.

Children are developing very good skills in literacy and numeracy through real-life contexts and play activities. They listen very well and show a love for books. Many children create their own books and enjoy telling their own stories. Almost all children are keen to write and interpret pictures well when using instruction booklets. Children use their counting skills and mathematical knowledge very well to solve problems. They conduct surveys and record the results such as birds in their gardens. Children use mathematical language well when making comparisons. They have an early understanding of money through regular shopping trips and by selling the eggs from their hens.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Staff ensure they provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children. Staff working with children under three help them to communicate, to use their senses and to develop their physical skills. Staff provide a wide range of natural materials which promote children's curiosity. Senior staff have researched a range of national and international philosophies to provide a rich child centred curriculum. They have now carefully integrated the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* into their practice. They work very effectively with children to create a stimulating and exciting learning environment. Children are fully involved in real-life activities such as shopping, baking bread, and caring for the hens. Staff listen carefully to children and support their interests through mind map planning, children's meetings and Eco committee discussions. Outdoor learning opportunities in the garden and regular woodland visits provide children with investigative, problem solving and physical challenges.

Opportunities for literacy, numeracy and creative work are fully embedded across all areas of learning. Transitions into the nursery are sensitive to the needs of individual children. Staff are keen to develop further links with local primary schools.

Across the nursery, children's emotional and learning needs are very well met. All staff are very committed to the child being at the centre of all their work. Staff ensure they provide a varied routine throughout the day ensuring appropriate rest times for all children. Staff skilfully support children's learning through effective well-timed questions. They listen carefully to children and respond to their individual interests. Staff are very aware of the developmental stages of individuals and groups and provide activities and resources which are flexible to meet their needs. Staff identify children who may need additional support and work very closely with other agencies to meet their learning needs effectively.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Parents report they are treated as partners in their children's learning. Staff share children's learning and achievements effectively with parents in a variety of ways. Staff compile detailed records of children's learning and achievements which parents also contribute to. Parents appreciate the 'ask me about' stickers which help them support children's learning further. Attractive displays of children's work show the progress in learning through special topics of interest. The involvement of community members and parents has a very positive impact on extending children's learning experiences in dance, music, yoga and science. Staff also work very closely with local health professionals to promote good practice in health and hygiene.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their centre community?

All staff are committed to self-evaluation and to monitoring the progress of the improvement priorities. Children, staff and parents regularly reflect on the learning opportunities and the wider work of the nursery. All have a strong voice within the Eco-Schools committee in planning future developments as they work towards a green flag status. All staff engage in weekly sessions of professional research reading and continue to develop their knowledge and skills through further training courses to upgrade their qualifications. They are very receptive to new ideas and are keen to share good practice.

6. Does the centre have high expectations of all children?

The nursery has very positive relationships between children, staff and parents. The ethos is clearly that of a rights respecting nursery for all. Children's behaviour is very good and staff support them in self-discipline at all times. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and learning and provide additional challenges in learning whenever necessary. They use praise and encouragement effectively to build confidence and celebrate success. Children are aware of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Cultural diversity is celebrated and staff actively encourage children to find out about other countries and cultures.

7. Does the centre have a clear sense of direction?

The nursery team have a common vision of continual development. The owner is an excellent role model for all her staff. She has a clear sense of direction based on continual research and development. She accesses further training courses through a number of universities and conducts her own personal research from around the world. She fully supports further professional development for all her staff. She encourages her staff to engage in distributed leadership and reflective

practices. Through this ethos of self-evaluation the nursery will continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

The inspection team was able to rely on the centre's robust self-evaluation. As a result, it was able to change its focus during the inspection to support further improvements within the centre.

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the centre, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The centre and education authority will inform parents about the centre's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education.

We have agreed the following area for improvement with the centre and education authority.

- Continue to engage children in assessing and developing their own learning.

Quality indicators help centres, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a centre. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each centre, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish centres are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Poppies Pre-school Ltd.

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	excellent
Meeting learning needs	excellent

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the centre.

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

Managing Inspector: June Drylie
30 March 2011

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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