



St. Martins Pre-School Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	310284
Inspection date	29 September 2006
Inspector	Lisa Patterson
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Registered person	Smart Start Catterall Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Martin's Preschool Centre is run by a private organisation. It has been registered since 1990 and is situated in the grounds of St Martin's College, Lancaster campus. Children have access to a self contained baby unit made up of one large room with adjoining sleep and sensory rooms. Toddlers and preschool children are cared for in a further two rooms and there is a dedicated role play room. There is a fully enclosed outdoor area to the rear of the building and an enclosed adventure play area just outside the nursery grounds.

The centre is open for 48 weeks of the year, from Monday to Friday and from 08.30 till 17.30. It is available for children of students attending the college and those in the wider community. There are currently 83 children on roll, of whom 34 are in receipt of government funding. The centre supports children for whom English is an additional language and children with special educational needs.

There is a fully qualified staff team of 14 members, which is lead by a qualified and experienced manager. There is a qualified nursery teacher within the team. The centre received the Investors In People award in 2003 and is working towards the National Day Nurseries Association 'Quality Counts' assurance system.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection because staff implement hygiene procedures at all times. Children are reminded to cover their mouths when coughing and wash their hands prior to handling food and after using the bathrooms. Hygiene procedures in the baby room are well implemented, for example, using separate sheets for babies and individual towels for babies to rest their heads on when lying down playing with toys. Children are well taken care of if they become ill or have an accident because staff are all trained in first aid, parents are kept fully informed through clear recording systems. The accident record forms the basis of risk assessments. Children and babies rest and sleep according to their needs, in full consultation with parents wishes. Staff apply training in the safe positioning of babies which maintains their safety.

All children in the nursery benefit from regular fresh air and exercise with daily visits to the adventure play area and the enclosed outdoor area in which they use sit and rides and play circle games. This builds muscle strength and develops coordination. Children also take regular walks to Williamson park and to the fish pond on the college site.

Children enjoy a balanced and nutritious variety of meals provided by the college catering department. Many children bring packed lunches and parents are provided with a comprehensive list of healthy and appropriate contents. Children benefit from healthy snacks, including toast, fruit and vegetables with a choice of milk or water. Water is available at all times. This ensures children receive a balanced diet and children suffering from allergies and food intolerances are not put at risk.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. Examples of children's achievements are displayed on the walls and ceilings of all of the rooms. Resources are displayed at an easily accessible level in the main, for example, the choice wall in the two to three year old room. This promotes the children's independence. Equipment is well maintained and, particularly in the baby room, there is a rigorous procedure for cleaning toys. This minimises infection and ensures toys remain safe.

Children play in fully risk assessed areas, both inside and out. Appropriate ratios are employed when out and about. This ensures they receive appropriate levels of supervision. Children learn about safety through staff reminding them of the importance of picking up toys and giving

explanations about why particular activities may not be appropriate, for example, running about inside or crashing the baby walkers against each other.

Children are safeguarded because all staff regularly update their training to ensure information is up to date. They know the procedure to follow and the written policy has been updated in line with current regulations.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are settled and happy in the nursery. They are offered a flexible induction into the setting during which they meet their key worker and acclimatise to their base room. Good use is made of the Birth to three and Foundation Stage guidance documents in planning a broad range of theme related planned and spontaneous activities. Children enjoy walks outside to collect leaves and identify signs of Autumn and the babies thoroughly enjoy listening to the different sounds in the treasure basket. Children benefit from staff who facilitate their learning through offering a choice of play experiences.

Children enjoy a calm and caring atmosphere through which the staff question and challenge the children's understanding. Staff in the baby unit listen to and mimic the sounds of the babies which promotes language development. Individual needs are met through consultation with parents, though they are not sufficiently aware of the assessment procedures in place for the children.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage guidance and how children learn. Planning confirms there is a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences on offer and good use is made of every day activities for developing skills, for example, counting cups during snack times. Staff have fun with the children, pretending to not be able to count during carpet activities. Children are interested in the activities on offer, however, working as a whole group sometimes decreases their abilities to remain on task and increases behavioural difficulties. An example of this include when working on the interactive white board. Children with special needs are cared for appropriately because staff work closely with parents and other agencies in ensuring the child's needs are met. The use of space does not always promote learning in all areas and the base room appears cramped.

Assessments are made on entry to the preschool in consultation with parents, which links to planning. Parents are not encouraged to become involved in the formal ongoing assessments though are given a daily record of their child's day. While informal differentiation is in place, planning does not confirm how assessment is used to provide activities which are appropriate to individual children.

Children progress well in relation to their starting points. They are able to take turns, to listen to their peers and adults and are able to pour their own drinks. They have the confidence to

speak in a group and are developing an understanding of language in its verbal and written forms. Children are learning about shapes and are able to count confidently to 10, and some beyond. Children take part in the beginnings of addition and subtraction, for example, if there are 20 people and one more enters the room, how many will there be? The children are learning to speak Spanish with a qualified Spanish teacher and learn about diversity through topics about different countries and cultures. Children are extremely proficient in the use of the interactive white board and are able to navigate through the activities on offer and rectify any mistakes. They develop their fine and gross motor skills and are confident in the use of scissors, paint brushes and pedal cycles. Children participate in a range of creative activities including music, painting and three dimensional model making, for example, circle songs and rhymes, and model making with disused packaging.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered

Children are all valued and included because the nursery ensures background information provided by parents is used to provide appropriate care. They have a sense of belonging because the nursery values their individuality through providing welcome displays in different languages. Children learn to value diversity through a good selection of resources and activities. They also participate in activities and topics about different countries and cultures, for example, Africa through which they learn about the animals and cultures. Children with special educational needs are catered for because all staff have attended training and the special needs coordinator has a clear understanding of her role.

Children learn to work harmoniously with their peers and adults. There are clear boundaries in place which are consistently applied by staff. Children are able to make choices about what they play with and snacks. This gives them responsibility and control. Staff offer regular praise and encouragement and share children's achievements with children and staff, for example, a significant achievement made by a baby was shared verbally with staff, and the child was praised very excitedly. This promotes their self-esteem.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good.

Children have their needs met because the nursery works closely with parents. They receive a wealth of information about the setting at the start of their child's placement and ongoing written information, for example, newsletters and daily record sheets keep them up to date. They support the nursery through fund raising events and parents get-togethers, for example, Avon and Ti Chi evenings. Parents do not receive sufficient information about the curriculum and assessments throughout the nursery and information gained is not sufficiently used to inform future planning. They are invited to attend a parents evening just before their child leaves to go to school. Parents find staff approachable and the parents survey gives them a chance to offer their opinions more formally. There is a complaints record and written complaints policy though this has not been updated in line with current regulations.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is good.

Children are protected because there is a robust recruitment and vetting procedure and staff hold relevant qualifications. Staff have a commitment to continual professional development and regularly attend training, both in house and from external agencies. The manager keeps up to date with changes and facilitates training and team building opportunities to ensure their knowledge and understanding is current. The staff team is given opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of the nursery, for example, their uniform. This gives them a sense of ownership and motivation. Time and space management in preschool occasionally prevents children from accessing resources and activities to their full potential.

There is a comprehensive policy document covering all aspects of the nursery care, which is well understood and implemented by the staff team. It is regularly reviewed by both management and the staff team. Record keeping systems are in place and completed appropriately to meet the needs of the children.

Overall, evidence suggests that the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

As a result of the last inspection it was recommended that the nursery provides written and accessible information regarding the dietary needs of the children and to update the Child Protection statement. Details of dietary requirements are recorded and displayed in food preparation areas which ensures their needs are met. The Child Protection statement has been updated in the light of previous and more recent changes to policy which ensures procedures are correct and children are safeguarded.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- make improvements as indicated in the nursery education section below
- update the complaints procedure in line with current regulations.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure differentiation is clear in planning to allow all children to work at their own pace
- provide more information about the curriculum on offer and make more use of information gained from parents to inform planning and assessment (also applies to child care)
- manage time and resources appropriately to meet the needs of all children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk