



St. Philip Howard Pre School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	148149
Inspection date	23 November 2006
Inspector	Gail Groves
Setting Address	St. Philip Howard School, Woods Avenue, HATFIELD, Hertfordshire, AL10 8NN
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Registered person	St Philip Howard Pre School Playgroup
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 Philip Howard Pre-school opened in 1990 and operates from a classroom in St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School which is situated in Hatfield, Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the group at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday during school term times only. Sessions are from 9.00 to 11.30 with a lunch club from 11.30 to 13.00. On Monday Wednesday and Friday there is also an afternoon session from 13.00 to 15.15. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children from two to three years on roll. Of these 19 children receive funding for nursery education. Most children come from the local area. The group currently supports a very small number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and also supports a very small number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. Four of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a qualified teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, appropriate nappy changing procedures and good hygiene routines at snack and lunch times prevent the spread of infection and there is always at least one member of staff present who holds a current first aid certificate. Children are excluded for appropriate periods of time if they have an infectious illness and all parents are informed of the presence of any such cases. This means that they can monitor their children's health and limit the possible spread of the illness. Children learn to understand simple, good health and hygiene practices so that they are developing good hygiene routines for later life. They wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet and learn to wipe their noses on a tissue which they then dispose of carefully in the bin.

Children are encouraged to widen their tastes by eating different kinds of fruit, such as melon, blueberries and tomatoes, alongside their biscuit at snack time. They have access to water at all times, which they can help themselves to independently from a jug at a low table and choose between water or two different flavours of squash to drink with their snack. Children attending the lunch club bring a packed lunch and staff eat their own sandwiches alongside them to encourage and monitor their food intake. Details regarding children's health and dietary needs are sought before children start to attend and staff work closely with parents to ensure that these are met. However, there are limited opportunities for children to learn about healthy eating and healthy living and therefore they are not fully developing an understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors and are therefore developing good motor skills and coordination. The stimulating and exciting outside play area offers children chances to pedal, balance, climb, throw, catch, kick, crawl, run and jump as they use a wide range of wheeled toys, balancing equipment, hoops, bats and balls. Inside they enjoy music and movement sessions and join in with action rhymes and ring games. A good balance between active, energetic play and opportunities for quieter play, such as looking at books, drawing or playing imaginative games in the play house, allows children to rest according to their needs so that they do not become overtired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment where the risks to their safety have been assessed and minimised. For example, children's arrival and departure is well controlled to ensure that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised, regular risk assessments and daily checks ensure that the resources and environment are

appropriate and safe for children and the bike riding area outside is carefully segregated from other play areas to prevent accidents. Children use good quality, suitable and safe equipment which is well maintained and meets their differing needs. All resources are stored at low level so that children can access them safely and independently.

Children learn to keep themselves safe both through planned topic work as well as through discussions with staff about practical experiences within their everyday routines. For example, staff remind children to sit down when they use the slide in case they fall and talk about the need for them to be careful when using scissors and knives as they snip cards to make collages or spread butter on bread to make sandwiches. Planned topic work, such as learning about road and firework safety as well as practising the emergency evacuation drill each term reinforces children's understanding of safety issues.

Children are safeguarded because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. They have all attended child protection training and there are procedures in place to ensure that children do not leave the premises with anyone who has not been authorised to collect them. There is an appropriate child protection policy in place which is shared with parents. However, it does not include the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer. Parents are therefore not aware of how children's welfare would be fully protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle and are happy in the setting. They are well supported by sensitive staff who treat them with affection and respect them as individuals. As a result, children are becoming confident to make decisions, explore and investigate and are able to extend their learning. For example, they explore the sand and dough and find out what it will do as they mould and shape it and experiment with rolling cars down a pipe to see how far they will travel.

The many opportunities provided within their daily routine for children to learn independence, such as pouring their own drinks at snack time, putting on their own aprons or coats when painting or going out to play and washing and drying their own hands after using the toilet, enable them to gain confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, they are eager to join in with new experiences and readily become involved in the broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which the pre-school provides to support their development and learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children play well together and are developing good relationships with each other as well as with the staff. They are supported by staff to share and take turns and are helped to understand how to deal with their emotions when they become angry or upset. Children's communication skills are well developed and they use language in a variety of ways, such as to ask questions, to seek help and to share information. Staff also encourage children to use language for thinking by helping them to make connections in their learning. For example, by remembering what they saw yesterday and relating it to what they are doing today or by predicting what will happen on the next page of a story. There are

numerous opportunities for children to become aware of letters and written words within their environment as they find their own name card to put on the display board when they arrive, hang up their coats on their named coat peg and use notebooks and pencils for mark making as part of their imaginative play.

Children's awareness of numbers and number sequencing is good and they are beginning to be able to calculate. They count readily and spontaneously, sometimes using their fingers to support their thinking. Staff build chances for children to calculate and problem solve into their play by singing number rhymes and planning activities which enable children to sort and classify objects, such as plastic dogs, into groups by size or colour which they then count and add together. Opportunities to use mathematical language arise as children build tall towers of bricks and look to see if the tower is taller or shorter than they are.

Children explore and investigate their environment as they grow bulbs, look at the weather and the changing seasons and examine natural items such as the cones, shells and leaves on the nature table. They learn to build, balance and connect construction pieces together as they use a range of large scale building materials in the outside play area or the smaller Duplo and wooden bricks inside. Their awareness and interest in information and communication technology is fully supported as they use age-appropriate programmes on the pre-school computer. A wide range of creative activities are provided and children paint, sing songs and play musical instruments with evident enjoyment and gusto. Their imaginations are extended as they develop role play scenarios with the doctor's kit and dressing up clothes or use the two outside play houses that are sometimes set up to represent other places, such as the Post Office or Library. Their physical development is well supported through the wide variety of play experiences available outside as well as through the carefully planned activities, such as threading, using pencils, glue sticks and scissors, that are available inside.

Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use methods of teaching that help all children learn effectively by taking account of their age, capability and individual needs. For example, they ensure that they gain children's full attention before giving them important information or asking them questions and use play and practical experiences to enhance and develop children's understanding. They manage children well, have high expectations for their behaviour and ensure that they use their time effectively by always being available to join in with and extend children's play. The group's curriculum themes are planned in conjunction with the school nursery so that the topics covered by both settings link appropriately. However, whilst the written plans show the areas of learning to be covered during some activities, they do not link them to the early learning goals or stepping stones of the Foundation Stage. As a result, the learning intentions are unclear and teaching is potentially unfocused. Also, although staff make regular assessments of children's progress, it is not clear how these are used to guide their planning and teaching as the short term plans do not show how activities are to be adapted in order for children with differing levels of abilities to achieve the appropriate learning outcome.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included and feel a strong sense of belonging. A flexible settling in procedure enables both children and their parents to feel confident and happy and helps them both to develop good relationships with the staff. Close links between the pre-school and the school nursery allow children's transition into the nursery to be fully supported and fosters a feeling of security. Children are able to make choices and to take decisions throughout their daily routine and are therefore developing confidence and self-esteem. For example, they decide which activities they wish to play with, choose whether to use white or brown bread when they make a sandwich and decide if they would like to play inside or outside. Good support is offered to children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Close liaison by the staff with parents and other professionals enables them to provide the appropriate care and teaching which will meet children's particular needs.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are learning to be aware of their own needs and to respect the needs of others as with adult support they learn to share and take turns. They work harmoniously together as they help to tidy up, ride together on a bike and trailer or push each other around in cars in the outside play area. As a result, they are developing good social skills and are able to play happily and purposefully together both in pairs or small groups. Staff value politeness and encourage children to develop caring attitudes to others. Positive behaviour is always praised and reward stickers are used to good effect. Consequently, children are learning to behave well. Children also benefit from some activities and resources which help them value diversity. Because they are a Roman Catholic setting, the pre-school's main focus is on Christianity but children also learn about religious festivals, such as Divali, which are celebrated by the children attending the group who are not Christians. Access to resources such as books, puzzles and dolls which also reflect cultural and racial differences, helps to extend children's understanding further.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with very good quality information about the setting and its provision, including a copy of the latest Ofsted report as well as copies of all of the group's policies and procedures. They are also given information about the Foundation Stage which explains how the activities provided by the pre-school enable their children to develop and progress within the six areas of learning. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their children's learning. They borrow books which they share and read with their children at home and exchange these every day. Newsletters and posters keep them informed of the topics and themes which will be covered each term and provide them with ideas and ways that they continue the play and learning experiences at home. Parents are well informed about their children's achievements and progress through regular parent consultations as well as informal discussions with staff at the beginning and end of the sessions. This positive partnership benefits children in all areas of their development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff have a high regard for the well-being of all children, a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. They attend training courses to update and enhance

their skills and are working towards renewing their accreditation in the Herts Quality Standards quality assurance scheme. As a result, children's care and learning is supported by good practice. All of the necessary documentation for the efficient and safe management of the provision is in place and record keeping systems are used well to meet children's needs. The group's policies and procedures work well in practice to promote positive outcomes for children.

The effective use of time, space and staff deployment significantly contributes to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff work extremely well together and form a very effective team. Sessions run smoothly and are well organised because staff clearly understand their role, know what is required of them and are vigilant and observant at all times. As a result, they are able to react quickly to situations, such as a crying child or an argument over toys and are able to quickly provide appropriate support where and when it is needed. Activities are changed frequently and efficiently so that children do not become bored and staff ensure that the majority of their time is spent in interacting with the children rather than in completing mundane tasks such as clearing up. The pre-school room is organised to maximise the play opportunities for children, with clearly defined areas such as those for messy play, table top activities and floor play whilst resources and the toilets are easily accessible to enable independence. The outside play area provides an interesting and challenging environment with grassy and wooded areas in which to explore and dig as well as a hard surfaced area for bike play, ball games and a range of physical activities, such as obstacle courses.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. This contributes to children's progress towards the early learning goals. The manager motivates the staff and children by her enthusiasm and has built a committed team who have been working together for many years. A training log ensures that staff training is monitored and helps to identify any gaps in their knowledge. Discussions at the monthly staff meetings help the team to evaluate and identify the strengths and weaknesses in the pre-school's provision and they work together to implement change and improvement. All staff offer ideas for curriculum activities and these are then coordinated and recorded as formal plans by the manager.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the pre-school agreed to improve children's safety by conducting a risk assessment of the premises. They now complete an annual risk assessment and also carry out daily checks of the premises both inside and outside to ensure that all areas are safe. They also agreed to improve their systems for recording the presence of visitors and for recording children's hours of attendance. All visitors are required to sign in and out using the visitors book in the school office and are given a visitors badge so it is always clear who they are. In addition the pre-school records their names in their own daily register of attendance so that they also have a record of who was present at each session. The register of children's attendance has been re-designed so that staff can record the times of children's arrival or departure if these are different from the normal start or end time of the session. Consequently, if there is an emergency evacuation of the building, it is easy to check which adults and children are present. The pre-school was also asked to obtain written permission from parents to seek

emergency medical advice or treatment for their children should it be necessary. They now do so as part of their admission form and as a result, children's health is more fully protected.

At the previous education inspection the pre-school was asked to provide more opportunities during everyday routines for children to become more independent and to provide further opportunities for children to learn about calculating through active teaching and everyday practical activities. These issues have been addressed effectively through the careful planning and organisation of activities and through the staff's interactions with the children. This has contributed to an improvement in the educational programme.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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

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 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):

- increase the opportunities for children to learn about healthy eating and healthy living
- review the child protection policy and include the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer.

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 that the activity plans show the learning intentions of activities and how these link to the stepping stones or early learning goals of the Foundation Stage
- ensure that assessments of children's progress are used to guide future planning and teaching so that plans show differentiation within activities.

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