



St Paul's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY279102
Inspection date	13 September 2006
Inspector	Linda Janet Witts
Setting Address	New Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 5BD
Telephone number	01452 507505
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Registered person	St Pauls Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Paul's Playgroup first opened in 1987 and moved to the present premises in 2004. It operates from a playroom at St Paul's Primary School in the inner city area of Gloucester. The playgroup has access to the school hall, infant toilet facilities, playground and gardens. Most of the children come from the local area with a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds.

There are currently 17 children from two years to under five years on roll. This includes 14 funded children. Children attend for a variety of sessions according to requirements. The playgroup welcomes children who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup opens during school term times for five sessions a week. These take place from 09.00 until 12.00.

St Paul's Playgroup is managed by a committee of parents, carers, volunteers and a school governor. Three staff work with the children. Two are currently studying for level three qualifications relevant to their roles. Parents of the children who attend also help out at the group.

The setting receives teacher support from the Early Years Childcare Services Foundation Stage Consultants. It is a member of the local Playgroup and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is promoted by staff who take positive steps to keep the premises clean. They ensure safe handling of food and help children to understand that washing their hands after using the toilet, creative and outside play, and before eating, helps to keep them healthy. There are occasions, such as prior to children eating breakfast, when the hand washing routine is inconsistent. Children who become unwell or injure themselves are cared for sensitively. Staff are trained in administering first aid and records of accidents are appropriately maintained. Parents receive written information about the group's sickness policy and about infectious illnesses; appropriate permissions and records are in place regarding the administration of medication to children. Children tend not to require a sleep whilst attending the playgroup, but there is a cosy book area where they can relax, if they wish.

Children are provided with nutritious, balanced meals and snacks. They are offered breakfast of a choice of cereals and toast, the topping of which children enthusiastically spread on themselves. They also have fruit as a snack later in the session. When parents provide lunch boxes, as children prepare to transfer into school, newsletters detailing information on healthy lunches are distributed. Mealtimes are relaxed, social occasions when children and adults sit together to enjoy their food and each other's company.

Children get plenty of physical exercise. They use the outdoor facilities to practise running and use a variety of equipment. They gain awareness of space as they manoeuvre around the playground and pathways leading to a wooden play train structure. They pedal tricycles, bikes with stabilisers and propel scooters, at speed. Many link up with others as they engage in physical activity. For example, two three-year-olds take turns to transport one another on a chariot-style vehicle. They remind one another to hold on tight when travelling on the back, to keep themselves safe. They set off at speed, meandering between the other playground users stopping only to greet children 'travelling' on the play train. Children also enjoy physical play within the school hall. They negotiate assault courses and can use school climbing apparatus, that offers challenge to more able children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are secure and well supervised in a clean and well-maintained environment. They receive care from staff who are safety aware and help them to learn to keep themselves safe.

For example, a child swings between a table and chair and stretches to place his feet on the seat. He is reminded that he may slip and tumble, resulting in injury. Children know not to enter the storage shed outside and follow instructions such as walking in single file as they move between areas of the school. Regular fire drills help to familiarise children with emergency evacuation procedures. Visits from police, ambulance and road safety officers reinforce how children can keep safe. The group's documented risk assessment does not show considerations made relating to areas of the school used and outdoor play areas.

Children use safe and suitable toys and equipment that stimulate and challenge them. Resources are of good quality and stored in low storage units to enable children to be involved in the selection of activities. Equipment is regularly checked to ensure it is a good state of repair.

A high percentage of staff are trained in child protection, to ensure that they are aware of possible signs of abuse or neglect and appropriate action to take if they have concerns about a child's welfare. The group has a suitable strategy to deal with any allegations against a member of staff or volunteer but this is not detailed in the group's child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children of all ages enjoy their time at playgroup. They all, including those who are very new to the group, arrive with enthusiasm, detaching from their carer with confidence. They are relaxed in the company of the staff and adult helpers. Children are familiar with the playgroup routine and happily join in group activities such as circle-time, snack-time and story-time. Children are able to choose a variety of resources, initiating their own choice of activity, and also engage in adult-led activities. Activities are adapted for younger children to ensure their participation and enjoyment.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children benefit from the staff team's childcare experience and sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage of learning. Children are making satisfactory progress across all six areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The learning environment is attractive. Children can see print used for a variety of purposes, posters of interest and photographs of themselves at play. The visual displays do not include writing in the children's home languages as well as English. An enjoyable range of worthwhile activities is offered at each session and children are able to enjoy regular outdoor play opportunities. Visitors are invited into the group and trips to places of interest undertaken, to enhance children's learning experiences. Staff make regular observations of children and are beginning to share information and utilise it to inform future planning. Plans do not clearly show learning intentions or differentiation for individual children. Staff now meet weekly to plan together but have not developed an effective system to evaluate activities that are planned, initiated by children, or those that occur spontaneously. The group has an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator who works successfully with children's parents and outside professionals to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Support for children with English as an additional language is limited. They are warmly welcomed and encouraged to be involved with the group, as are their parents. Communication is initiated through gesture, facial expression

and using pictures, as bilingual support is not available. This restricts staff ability to involve these children's parents in their learning. Children's assessment records are developing. They identify where children are in their learning and include some evidence of learning in descriptive observations, photographs of children undertaking activities and samples of their work. The records do not clearly show links between the observations made or other evidence and children's developmental stepping stones; for example, there are few evaluative comments to help parents understand children's progress.

Most children are developing confident communication skills. Many are happy to talk in large and small groups, to both familiar and unfamiliar adults. At circle-time children are encouraged to share their news and many are keen to talk about their families and experiences. Children have few opportunities to recognise and show respect for each child's home language. They do not see or hear their home language as well as English. The three year olds join in and show their enjoyment of rhyming stories and rhythmic activities. They enjoy listening to stories; they listen attentively and show interest in the illustrations. The cosy book corner is accessible throughout each session so that children can look at books as individuals or with their friends. Children are able to draw and paint, gaining control when using writing implements. Many can hold a pencil correctly and make marks such as lines and circles and give meaning to the marks made.

The young children are encouraged to show interest in counting. They enjoy number rhymes counting up and back. They talk about numbers such as how many children are present and enthusiastically join in counting. There are few numerals for children to explore and handle. Numbers are not often used as labels in their environment. Children are introduced to simple shapes and some can name them. Staff introduce children to mathematical language, such as 'big', 'small' and positional language. Children create patterns with pegs and when painting. They select objects by shape, such as jigsaw pieces and construction resources.

Children are keen to use the playgroup computer. Some are able to manipulate the computer mouse and try to complete simple computer programmes unaided. Children have opportunities to take photographs using a digital camera. After instruction, they operate the simple equipment confidently and are fascinated to see the process that results in computer generated photographs of what they have captured. Children investigate sand, filling and emptying utensils. They also explore the outside play space and are taken into the local community, where they can visit the local park, city farm or other places of interest. Within the playgroup room there is no interest table or collection of objects for children to explore and investigate as they wish. The children have plenty of construction resources that they join together, building for their own purpose. Children are introduced to different cultures through planned activities, for example, festival celebrations.

Children safely use a range of tools and equipment; for example, using a paint brush with control, pencils, and knives, as they spread toppings on their toast. They manipulate resources of different size and shape skilfully as they go about their play. They transfer resources between different areas of the playgroup room with care.

Children use their imagination within their play. They express themselves and explore media as they paint freely at an easel and extend pre-planned adult-led creative activities using their

own ideas. For example, a child produces a set of hand prints for a wall display. The three year old at the activity requests another sheet of paper. She smears her hands across the paper then dips her hands cautiously into trays of two different colours and applies them to her art work. She fans her fingers and watches as the paint oozes between her fingers, smiling with satisfaction. She rubs her hands together and announces 'I've made brown', then repeats the process. Creative materials other than those available for planned activities are stored at low level but not all children are aware that they can access them to create as they wish. Children pop in and out of the home corner and engage in role-play based on their own first hand experiences. The young children are keen to involve adults in their imaginative play. For example, one young three year old serves cups of 'tea' and 'pizza slices' to staff and playgroup visitors. Others play happily alongside one another, engaging in the same theme. They carry out domestic chores in the home corner, make cakes at the sand tray and take journeys on the play train outside. Children also enjoy musical activities. They join in familiar playgroup songs sung routinely during the session. They sing nursery rhymes and songs, such as 'five currant buns' using props that initiate their involvement. They have opportunities to use musical instruments and listen to the different sounds created. They can also explore the sensory cupboard containing objects to explore with their senses.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are warmly welcomed into the group and have developed good relationships with the staff. They are relaxed in the company of staff and their peers. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are encouraged to be independent in their personal care and activity choices and many persevere at activities for extended periods of time. Children learn good manners and are becoming familiar with the behavioural expectations within the playgroup. They are well behaved, follow instruction well and are encouraged to share and take turns. They know that there are times when they are expected to be quieter, such as when walking through the school. Children can choose to relax as they wish and children can find peace away from activity in the book corner, play house or sheltered areas of the playground and garden. Children see positive images of ethnicity, gender and disability in jigsaws and books. However, the environment does not reflect the home life of all children attending, for example, there are no links to their home language or familiar objects to aid children's feeling of security and to show that their ethnicity is valued.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents receive written information about the provision and regular newsletters to keep them up to date with playgroup news. Full details of playgroup policies are readily available for parents to examine. The group's complaints procedure does not clearly detail how complaints will be dealt with. Each member of staff is committed in their role as key carers to individual children. They have established good relationships with the children and their parents and promote two-way communication, even when communication is difficult and both parties resort to signing and gestures. Positive steps are being taken to encourage parents to take an interest in their children's learning. They are encouraged to do playgroup duty when they can see their children at play and see how the curriculum is implemented. Now staff are taking the opportunity to go through children's progress records

with parents on a one to one basis, to aid their understanding and this is appreciated by parents. Those parents who do not do a duty miss out on this opportunity.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children play happily within the well-organised play space. They can select activities from a suitable range of pre-planned and freely chosen activities. They have regular opportunities to play outside. Ratios of adults to children are good and help to ensure that children are appropriately supervised and contributes to the smooth running of each session. The playgroup room is attractive and the resources available are of good quality. Healthy eating is promoted and children learn personal hygiene although occasionally procedures to minimise cross-infection are not implemented.

Leadership and management of the playgroup are satisfactory.

Systems are in place to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and cleared for work with children. The playgroup leader and deputy are nearing completion of level three qualifications relevant to their role. New staff members are encouraged to undertake basic playgroup training, training in first aid and child protection to maintain a full complement of trained staff. Staff do not fully utilise local training workshops to support their delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They do appreciate feedback from the lead teacher assigned to their group and local support staff.

There are strong links between the playgroup and the school. They are valued as a part of the school and children are able to become familiar with the premises, teachers and behavioural expectations. Playgroup and reception children enjoy joint activities throughout the year. Children are familiar with their future teacher and staff share information with the teacher about each child; both aid children's smooth transition into school.

Regular meetings between staff and the committee contribute positively to the organisation of the group. Together they are committed to improvement. They acknowledge the need to work to evaluate their practice and to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their provision. They have not yet implemented an effective system to do this. They are fully aware of the challenges faced for those parents and children with English as additional language. They are committed in their search for ways to improve this aspect of their provision.

Policies and procedures are available and used to ensure the smooth and consistent operation of the group. These do not fully reflect new responsibilities with regards to local child protection procedures, handling of complaints and staff vetting. The documented risk assessment does not detail their findings in relation to all areas of the school premises used. All required records are maintained, stored and retained appropriately.

Improvements since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Several recommendations were made and an action raised, at the last inspection. The action was to develop a procedure to follow in the event of a child being lost or uncollected. Recommendations relating to care aspects of the provision were to:- 1. conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying actions to be taken to minimize identified risks, including trailing cables and staff deployment during outdoor play. 2. ensure the procedure for complaints includes details of the regulator. 3. ensure staff are aware of the need to inform Ofsted of any serious injuries or infectious notifiable diseases; ask for parental permission to seek emergency medical attention; and ask parents to sign all accident records. 4. ensure that the child protection procedure for the playgroup includes actions that would be taken if there were allegations against a staff member. Recommendations in relation to educational provision were:- 1. Develop a system for observation and assessment. 2. Extend planning to challenge individual children and ensure that activities have clear learning objectives and sufficient detail. 3. Implement a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate strengths and weaknesses. 4. Provide Foundation Stage information for parents including details of activities and children's progress.

The group has taken positive steps to address the action and most of the recommendations made. In the event of a child becoming lost or uncollected the group now has an appropriate procedure to follow. The group's documented risk assessment shows risks identified within the playgroup room but not other areas of the school used or outside areas. When children play outside staff supervise them well. Staff are aware of the need to inform the regulator about any serious injuries or notifiable infections should they occur. Parents have given written consents for staff to seek emergency medical treatment or advice for their children, as necessary, and they are routinely asked to sign entries in the accident record book. The group's child protection policy has not been extended to include action to be taken in the event of an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer. The complaints policy includes reference to the regulator but lacks clarity about procedures to be followed to investigate a complaint. A system for observation and assessment of children's progress has been initiated. Staff now make regular observations and are beginning to link those to the developmental stepping stones of the Foundation stage of learning. Planning methods are currently under development. Activity plans still lack information about learning objectives and how these might be achieved through planned activities. The group has a strategy to involve all staff in planning meetings, to ensure that they are clear about learning intentions and how activities can be adapted to support or challenge individual children. The group does not have a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage in their parent handbooks, distributed to them when their children start playgroup. Staff display photographs linked to areas of learning to aid parents understanding and also talk with individual parents about their child's progress when they help out at the group.

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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- extend the group's written risk assessment to include risks identified within all areas of the school used and outside play areas. Use the risk assessment as a working document in conjunction with accident records to monitor the effectiveness of action to minimise risks
- review group policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect group practice. Give particular regard to staff recruitment and vetting procedures, the group's complaints procedure and child protection policy

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):

- continue to develop assessment of children's progress and the means by which this is recorded and used. Ensure that information gathered is used effectively to inform future planning to help each child move onto the next stage in their development. Consider ways to clearly show parents the links between observations, collections of children work and photographs, and children's learning
- consider additional ways to support children and their parents who speak little, or no English. Help children to see that their home language and ethnicity are valued. (also applies to childcare).

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