



St John's Playtime Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251650
Inspection date	29 September 2006
Inspector	Gill Thornton
Setting Address	St. Johns United Reform Church, Cowper Street, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 5JD
Telephone number	01473 724 961
E-mail	
Registered person	St John's Playtime Pre-School
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 good. 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. John's Playtime Pre-School is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the pre-school. It has been running for over 25 years and registered in its present form in 1992. The pre-school operates from two rooms in the United Reform Church in Ipswich. A maximum of 16 children may attend at any one time. The group is open each weekday during school term time from 09:15 to 11:45.

There are currently 27 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from the local area. The group currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a small number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The group employs five members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The group receives support from the Local Authority and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to learn the importance of good health and hygiene practices through the regular routines of the session. For example, staff ensure children wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before snack time and older children refer to the need to 'wash away the germs'. Children's health is promoted because staff have attended food hygiene training and sound procedures are in place regarding food preparation to prevent the spread of infection.

Children receive appropriate care if they are ill or have an accident. Staff are well informed about children's individual health care matters and all the required documentation and consents are in place to support this. All staff have attended first aid training and are aware of the correct procedures for giving medication and recording accidents and a well stocked first aid kit is readily available. This enables staff to respond appropriately in the event of a medical emergency.

Children's dietary needs are met through the provision of a mid-morning snack that takes account of their individual dietary requirements and preferences. Staff encourage children to try different fruits such as pear, banana or grapes. However, they all then routinely have a biscuit, with no clear discussion about healthy foods, which gives them rather mixed messages about healthy eating. Children are able to freely access drinking water throughout the session to ensure they are not thirsty.

Children have good opportunities to take part in daily physical play activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. The group have no outdoor area, but successfully use the church hall for a range of planned activities to promote children's large and small physical skills. For example, a well organised 'gym trail' during which children take part in various tasks including doing 'bunny hops', crawling through a tunnel, throwing bean bags or building a tower of bricks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure indoor environment. The church entrance lobby is manned during pre-school sessions to prevent unauthorised access to the building and staff closely monitor children's arrival and departure to promote their safety. Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised because staff take steps to reduce risks. For example, carrying out daily visual safety checks and ensuring the main playroom is well laid out so that children can move freely and safely between activities. Staff follow sound routines when escorting children to the toilets and well implemented policies support children's safety and welfare.

Staff prepare the room before the children arrive to provide them with a suitable range of toys and equipment which meet safety standards. The playroom is bright and welcoming with posters and displays featuring current themes such as the farm and harvest. Children learn about keeping safe through planned activities and visits in to the group, for example, from the 'lollipop lady'. Sound procedures are followed on outings, including having high adult to child ratios and ensuring children understand the group's safety rules. For example, holding onto the 'safety rope' when walking to a nearby garden for an Easter Egg hunt.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted because all staff have attended safeguarding children training and are aware of the correct procedures to follow if they have a concern. Children are cared for by adults who are vetted and have the relevant experience, knowledge and skills to ensure children's safety is promoted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settle well. They spend their time playing purposefully with the balanced range of toys and equipment set out around the room. After participating in a brief registration session the children are eager to take part in activities that interest and stimulate them, such as the ever popular playdough or the selection of resources on the graphics table. Children are familiar with the clear routines and timing of sessions which helps them develop their confidence and self-esteem. For example, at snack time they all confidently collect their own cup and plate before sitting down.

Children make positive relationships with staff who are supportive and caring and take time to listen to them, this helps children develop their sense of self worth as they know staff value their contributions. Most children are confident to join in with circle time activities, such as when contributing to the weather chart.

Staff have attended 'Birth to three training' to help them support the small number of children on roll that are aged under three. They have started to reflect the framework in their planning and in younger children's records of progress. Staff are sensitive to the needs of younger children and comfort them sensitively to help them settle, for example, ensuring a child had their 'cuddly'.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Staff use their understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn to provide a suitable range of activities balanced across the six areas of learning. Planning identifies appropriate learning intentions based on appropriate stepping stones. However, adult focused activities are not always clearly adapted to take account of children's individual stage of development and evaluations do not inform future planning. Staff use a good variety of teaching methods to help children make progress and adapt their questioning skills to take account of individual children's level of understanding and interest. Children respond well to staff's use of props, such as a Peter Rabbit puppet to keep their attention during story time or ribbons to use as 'worms' while singing 'Wiggly Woo'.

Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Staff give children clear explanations of what is planned each day and follow routines which the children are familiar with to encourage their participation, for example, when clapping out the 'number of the week'. Children's progress through the stepping stones is monitored in their 'Step by Step' records of progress and staff are instigating a system of making brief observations to add more meaning to these. Staff provide children with a welcoming environment which reflects most children's backgrounds and sections of the wider community.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school and have a positive attitude to learning. They are sufficiently confident and self assured to work and play independently or in small groups. Children understand the rules of the group, for example, they remind each other that 'we share at playgroup'. Staff encourage them to develop self-care skills when putting on their shoes and coats at home time.

Children are becoming confident communicators and are generally eager to join in with circle time activities such as the 'letter of the week', with more able children confidently identifying words starting with that letter, although staff do not routinely emphasise initial letter sounds. Children have opportunities to recognise their own names and enjoy using mark making resources at the graphics table and in the role play area to encourage their understanding of writing for a purpose. Children listen and respond to stories at circle time and borrow a book to share at home to promote their enjoyment in an increasing range of books.

Most children can count confidently to ten with staff support and they take part in many planned and spontaneous activities to develop these skills. They enjoy joining in with number rhymes such as 'Ten Fat Sausages' and staff encourage them to work out 'how many are left' which more able children do very confidently. However, there are missed opportunities for estimating and combining groups of objects during daily routines and activities. Children have some opportunities to use and recognise numerals but this does not regularly feature in their plans.

Children enjoy operating a good range of resources in the home corner to stimulate their interest in everyday technology such as a microwave, vacuum cleaner and electronic till. The group have recently purchased a computer and are excitedly awaiting delivery of a child sized storage unit so the children will be able to use it on a daily basis. Children have opportunities to explore and investigate different materials such as shaving foam and jelly and enjoy cooking activities such as making buns or cheese scones. They enjoy using construction sets and equipment such as scissors and playdough tools to develop their hand to eye coordination.

Children engage in imaginative role play activities based on their own first hand experiences in the well resourced role play area. Staff plan a range of role play situations such as a post office or doctor's surgery to extend their ideas. Children join in enthusiastically with their favourite songs and action rhymes, particularly 'sleeping bunnies'. Children explore colour at the painting easels and take part in planned, mostly adult-led craft activities, which give children limited free access to a range of media and resources of their own choosing to allow them to experiment and explore their own ideas and creativity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the group and valued by staff who respect their individuality, which helps them develop a sense of belonging. All children have equal access to toys and equipment which meet their individual needs, so they can become confident and independent. The group have appropriate procedures in place to support children with English as an additional language and work closely with parents to help their children settle and understand the routines of the pre-school.

Children learn about their local community during occasional outings, or through discussing what they have seen on the way to pre-school and becoming involved in celebrations within the church such as the Harvest festival. Children become aware of the wider society through access to resources such as puzzles and books reflecting a positive view of diversity. They learn about festivals such as Christmas, Ramadan and Chinese New Year, when they enjoyed trying to eat noodles with chopsticks. The setting has effective arrangements in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and works closely with parents and other professionals to ensure children's specific needs are met.

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

Children benefit from the positive relationships staff develop with their parents who are very complimentary about the group, they praise the sensitive and committed staff and the progress made by their children. Parents find staff approachable and available to share information verbally on a daily basis to ensure children's changing needs are met. Parents are very involved in the group, they regularly help on the parent rota and form an active committee. All the required documentation and consents are in place to ensure children are cared for according to their parents' wishes.

Partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is satisfactory.

Parents value the annual parent consultations where they discuss children's progress and their written reports with their keyworker. Parents are aware that they can ask to see their children's records of progress at any time, but there are no formal opportunities for them to contribute to these or share information on their children's starting points. Parents receive good information about the provision, including the Foundation Stage, via a welcome booklet and regular informative newsletters keeping them up to date on the running of the group. In addition, the pre-school notice board contains meaningful information for parents, including a folder containing all the groups policies and procedures and a notice encouraging them to borrow the Foundation Stage video.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The good organisation of time, space and resources combined with good adult to child ratios and effective staff deployment positively supports children's care, learning and play. Staff work well together as a successful team, they know each others roles and responsibilities and follow

clear routines to which the children respond well. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for by qualified staff with a sound knowledge and understanding of child development.

Well-organised operational policies and procedures are in place and work in practice to promote children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and their ability to make a positive contribution. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery provision is good.

The strong leadership and management together with the dedication of staff and committee has enabled the group to make substantial improvements to the provision. Staff have successfully acted upon advice received from their Early Education Support Teacher, with the full backing of the committee to monitor and evaluate the provision for nursery education. A clear system of staff appraisals is in place to identify areas for professional development and further areas for improvement. Staff have attended a wide variety of Foundation Stage workshops and they are using the knowledge gained from this training to update and enhance the provision of nursery education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection the group agreed to improve documentation to meet the regulations in the National Standards. All policies and procedures have been updated effectively to support and enhance children's welfare.

The group had significant weakness at their last nursery education inspection with three substantial key issues to address. They were asked to improve the planning and organisation of resources to provide a broad based Foundation Stage curriculum to enable children to experience challenge and progress in their overall learning. Staff have been working closely with their Early Education Support Teacher to reorganise the learning environment supported by appropriate resources and they have attended numerous workshops to improve their practice and therefore the overall curriculum to enhance the provision of Nursery Education.

They were also asked to develop short term planning to include adequate learning intentions, including the grouping of children, the adaptation of activities and opportunities for evaluation. Weekly short term plans now identify learning intentions based upon appropriate stepping stones balanced across the six areas of learning, showing group sizes and some adaptation. Adult focused activities include some differentiation but are not clearly adapted to take account children's individual stages of development and evaluation is somewhat inconsistent, this continues to be an area for improvement.

They also agreed to review assessment records and encourage parents to contribute to them. Step by Step records of progress are now completed by children's key workers to monitor their progress through the stepping stones, these are shared with parents during consultation

evenings. However, a system of encouraging parents to contribute to these records has not been formally established.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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 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):

- provide children with further opportunities to develop their understanding of a healthy diet.

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 the overall curriculum in particular with regard to providing opportunities for simple problem solving during everyday routines, such as snack time and to give children further opportunities to take the lead in creative activities and select resources to explore own ideas and creativity
- improve planning to extend the use of adult focused activities showing adaptation and grouping of children to take account of their stages of development with clear evaluations used to inform planning
- encourage parents to contribute to children's records of progress and provide information on their children's starting point.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk