



St Pauls Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY311559
Inspection date	06 October 2006
Inspector	Susan Marriott
Setting Address	c/o St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Infant School, Rotheram Avenue, Luton, Beds, LU1 5PP
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Registered person	Claire Terrena Byrne
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Paul's Pre-School opened in 1986 and relocated in 2005. The group operate from a purpose built portacabin in the grounds of St. Margaret's School in Luton, Bedfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday morning from 09.15 to 11.45 and Monday to Friday afternoons from 12.45 to 15.15. The pre-school also offer wrap around care with a breakfast club each weekday from 08.30 to 09.15 and a lunch club from 11.45 to 12.45. The children have access to one room and an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 46 children aged from two years to under five years on roll, and of these 32 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and also makes provision for children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven staff who work with the children and a dedicated administrative assistant. Six of the staff, including the leader hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school has input from a qualified teacher and a mentor from the Early Years Child Care Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray to prevent cross contamination. Children receive appropriate treatment in a medical emergency because all staff hold suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible. The contents are checked regularly and dressings remain sterile. Staff record accidents and include the relevant details. Children wash their hands before snack and staff always remind children to wash their hands after visiting the toilet. Children can access tissues easily and a bin for disposing of the soiled article is provided nearby. Children therefore learn about germs through the daily routines because staff remember to promote discussion about the reasons for hand washing and keeping noses clean.

Children benefit from a healthy diet where all snacks are nutritious and prepared on site. Snack time is being used to good effect as a learning time for children. For example, children spontaneously remember their manners and say please and thank you. However, the staff are aware that further improvements are possible, particularly with regard to promoting children's independence at this time. Snacks include a healthy range of fruits and breadsticks and children have the choice of milk or water. However, children do not yet fetch their own cartons of milk or pour drinks themselves. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they can ask for a drink at any time although the jug of water and cups is not easily visible or accessible.

All the children enjoy daily indoor and outdoor activities, which enables them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. Children can take their learning outdoors because they have free access to the outdoor area whenever the weather permits. For example, a giant chalk board enables children to practise their large arm movements and the children love to dig in the digging patch. Physical activities are planned and included each session, contingency plans make appropriate arrangements in case the weather turns inclement. For example, the children develop their cooperation skills and practise their hand-eye co-ordination as they play games with the parachute, when rain prevents outside play. Children have access to wheeled toys and large climbing equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff give high priority to the security of the premises and the supervision of the children. Clear fire evacuation procedures are displayed but staff do not yet carry out drills with suitable

frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting and the record of visitors provides space for recording the actual purpose of the visit to the premises. Diligent and relevant risk assessments are completed to minimise hazards for staff and children. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting because staff give good explanations as to why, for example, the children should walk to the carpet and sit down carefully.

Children are warmly welcomed and well-cared for in a pleasant, suitably safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. Storage space is restricted and this means that the room can sometimes appear rather cluttered. However, the staff make every effort to overcome the difficulties this presents and set the room out thoughtfully to facilitate children's choice and developing independence. Children can see the resources and may ask for any item they would like. The playroom is creatively divided into areas for activities relating to the six areas of learning.

Equipment and resources are safely stored and clearly labelled so that children and staff can access them easily. The staff put up posters and pictures to make the room attractive for children and set out the equipment enticingly before the children arrive. Bright displays of children's work enhance the environment and reinforce and consolidate topical learning.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because they are protected by informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. All staff have received suitable training in this field.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are making good progress in learning, leisure and personal development because staff are confident, enthusiastic and highly skilled in their childcare practice. Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. They become confident learners as they freely access the pre-selected resources set out for them. Staff provide extremely positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Staff encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition as they support play. Staff skilfully adapt their level of language and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. This helps them to meet the needs of all children. Self-evaluation documentation refers to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and shows how the setting takes general heed of the framework when introducing children to pre-school before the age of three years.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a varied programme of play-based activities which provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. Planning is complex and yet manageable for the setting because the staff have ownership of their systems. It is highly effective, because it builds on the Foundation Stage guidance. Plans show a balance of child-initiated and adult-led

activities across the six areas of learning. Clear intentions for learning are cross referenced to the curriculum guidance and provide a clear focus for securing and progressing children's learning. Conscientiously kept assessment folders are based upon dated observations, recorded on post-it notes, arranged under the six areas of learning. Parents and carers are able to make their own contributions if they wish. The system enables children's progress to be tracked against the stepping stones and is fully effective in securing children's progression in learning and informing the next steps in the learning programme.

Children are happy and settle quickly in the gentle and nurturing environment. They generally display high levels of involvement and gain a sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem through self-chosen activities. Older and more able children maintain their interest in the activities due to the skilful intervention of staff who redirect their learning appropriately. Staff work together as a very effective and committed team deploying themselves to support children's learning with sensitivity and respect. Staff set challenges to the children at keyworker time. For example, staff give the children a piece of play dough and ask them to make an insect. With encouragement and support, a child makes a fly and another makes a bee. All contributions are placed upon a central board and shared with rest of group at the end of the session. The staff ask lots of open questions to stimulate further discussion. For example, they ask, 'What else do you know that is round? Which one is the daddy snake?'

Snack time is a social time for children, although some opportunities to develop children's independence and learning are missed. The children find their name card to identify their own place at the snack table and the staff talk animatedly to the children in their keyworker groups. Staff use clear and highly skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through play.

Excellent priority is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Children share books with staff in the book area and concentrate well at story time. Staff ask them to remember the order in which Spike visited the animals in his quest for 'the best nest'. Their efforts and contributions are valued and rewarded with lots of praise and encouragement. The children become very excited when their familiar friend 'Archie the dog' pays a visit to pre-school. Archie is a toy dog who lives in a special box. Staff use Archie to teach across the six areas of learning. For example, Archie's best friend 'Flea' comes out of the box first because Archie is frightened by the squeals of delight from the children. Archie tells the children that he went digging at the weekend and found a potato, just like the potatoes which the children dug up in the digging tray this morning. He also went to London and took some photographs. The children identify a red phone box and a picture of the queen and the discussion continues about the children's experiences. Children learn about letters and words in the environment because staff make excellent use of labelling. For example, the multi-cultural café sign lists foods such as naan bread, spaghetti, samosa, curry and rice, spring rolls and fish and chips. Children learn to write for a purpose, using notepads to take orders in the café and fetching their name cards before sitting at the craft table, so that they can name their own work. Plans show that children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems. For example, numbered ping pong balls float in the water tray and children

identify the numerals and perform simple calculation as they fish the balls out of the water with a net and add two and three.

Children explore and investigate through planned activities and staff adapt these appropriately. For example, the recent wet weather renders the garden digging patch rather too muddy. So the digging activity is moved to the sandpit which is filled with compost, worms and buried vegetables. Children use programs on the computer to support their learning about numbers and letters and use technological toys, such as tills and telephones, within role play. The shop becomes a shoe shop, a food shop and a music shop during one week, ensuring that children experience a wide range of everyday scenarios. Well-planned art and craft activities mean that children explore a wide range of media and learn to make their own decisions. They choose their own paper from a choice of colours and shapes and staff encourage children to express their own ideas. For example, the provision of a huge range of natural resources includes a swede, a coconut, autumn leaves, collage materials, paint and glue. A child chooses to cover the swede with yellow paint and rolls it around the paper, exploring the patterns left behind. Two children decide to make a picture between them and their final collage wins the 'Picture of the Day' award because the children 'shared the resources' so well. Children enjoy a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities to promote physical development. Excellent team work and staff organisation means that when outdoor play is prevented by heavy rain, half the children use the parachute and half form an orchestra to provide the musical accompaniment to the activity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from the local community are warmly welcomed and included in all activities. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. The pre-school is building positive links with the Catholic school whose site it shares and yet is linked to a local Church of England parish. The local vicar visits regularly and photographs record the recent Harvest Festival held at the pre-school. Plans for activities connected with various festivals and celebrations across a broad spectrum of cultures enable the children to develop a positive attitude to others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have varying needs receive excellent support. For example, a child learns about positional vocabulary as the manager instigates a game in the multicultural kitchen role play area. She is clearly delighted when the child announces that the vegetable is 'in the pan'. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision. Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Children glow with real pride when they receive stickers and rewards for helping to tidy the playroom or 'sharing the glue'. Children are well-behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring staff and this positively contributes to the harmonious atmosphere.

Staff develop a very positive partnership with parents to support children's progress in learning. There is a wealth of information to include general care and educational literature, although

this is not always easy to access because it is not displayed in a defined place. The complaints procedure does not reflect recent changes in legislation. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well-supported by staff during the settling-in process. Staff and parents share important information about the children who receive nursery education. Parents are able to see their child's records and regularly contribute to them. This two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the pre-school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The leader works full-time alongside her staff team and therefore has a 'hands on approach' to every aspect of the pre-school operation. A dedicated administrative assistant is employed to deal with the secretarial duties and this releases the staff to devote their time and attention to the children. The mature and stable staff team are extremely well-qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning content from play-based activities. This promotes highly positive outcomes for children. The staff group welcome, include and actively involve students in their daily routine, valuing the helpful contribution which they are able to make to children's learning. The committed and dedicated staff team ensure that children benefit and enjoy their time at this welcoming pre-school. Staff clearly demonstrate a genuine affinity with children; they evidently respect children's feelings, value their comments and thoroughly enjoy their company. Documentation is clear and generally accessible, although the present system for ensuring that all staff are suitable to work with children is insufficiently robust. Planning and assessment systems continue to evolve, and increasingly secure and progress children's learning. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that require the provider 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 frequency of fire drill practices to ensure the safety of children and staff
- review and update the complaints procedure in line with new guidance issued October 2005 and ensure that a complaints log is in place
- review and update the existing system to ensure that staff caring for children are suitable to do so

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 further the delightful range of activities which promote children's learning.

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