



St Joseph's Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	400441
Inspection date	16 January 2007
Inspector	Elizabeth Patricia Edmond
Setting Address	Station Road, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire, LS24 9JG
Telephone number	01937 832344
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Registered person	St Joseph's Pre-School
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 Joseph's Pre-school has been registered since 1992. It operates in the Parish Rooms in St Joseph's School in Tadcaster. Although the group works closely with the adjacent school, they are managed by a separate voluntary committee of parents and community members.

The pre-school has sole use of the two large rooms and occasionally the school hall. Toilets are shared with the school and children are escorted, when using them. There is access to a rear playground and front play area, both of which provide suitable outdoor play space. Current opening hours are Monday to Friday, term time only, from 08.50 to 11.30. Additionally, children may attend the lunch club until 12.30, when they are asked to bring a packed lunch.

The group are registered with the local education authority to provide funded nursery education to those children of eligible age and receive support from them in this respect. Of the 22 children

currently on roll, six children have a funded place. Three full time staff members are in attendance. The staff have suitable qualifications and experience. The group welcomes parents' involvement in all aspects of the provision.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a warm clean environment where clear health and hygiene matters are managed well by staff, although, aspects of the building make it difficult for children to develop their independence fully in this. However, they are encouraged to wipe their own noses and independently wipe their hands before snack time or lunch.

The children are encouraged to enjoy being active in the outdoors; although they are not currently using the garden freely, the staff take the children out every day to access the various activities. The young children develop their physical skills as they climb the steps up the small slide, they develop good balancing skills and they learn to use the wheeled toys with increasing strength and accuracy. The children learn about their bodies and how they change after they have been active, because the adults help them to feel their heart beat. They have great fun with the parachute and enjoy the feeling of the wind as they run underneath. Opportunities for older or more able children to practise their physical skills on a daily basis are a little limited, although links with the school for planned use of their equipment promotes this satisfactorily.

The staff help the young children to pour their own milk and cut up the fruit they have chosen at the self service café area. Consequently, the children develop their independence and learn to make healthy choices in their diet. The clear information for parents about providing healthy lunches means that the children are well nourished and content.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children are able to play freely because the staff have a sensible approach to managing risk. They are vigilant when supervising the children, for example, when they need to leave the room to use the school toilets or as they cut up their fruit at snack time. Similarly, the staff are very careful when the door is open as parents arrive to collect their children.

Additionally, the staff are skilled in explaining to the children how to keep themselves safe, for example, by encouraging them to think about why they should not touch the play dough as it comes out of the microwave. The range of equipment is in good safe condition and stored on low-level furniture. This means that the children can access this freely and safely.

All necessary documentation is in place to promote the children's safety and safeguard their well-being. For example, the child protection policy is clear and comprehensive in relation to both the staff's and the committee's responsibility in ensuring the children's safety. Induction and appraisal systems further strengthen this aspect of the children's care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children arrive happily at the pre-school and they enjoy their time there greatly. They soon settle at a favourite activity and they form strong friendships with their peers. The staff have created a stimulating environment for the children and they are confident and motivated to access most of the opportunities.

There is a very good range of activities which encourage the children to develop their natural curiosity as learners. They investigate how the play dough has changed after it has been in the microwave and are fascinated by the magnets in the sand. The young children are astounded when some will stick together and others behave in a peculiar way. Some children are particularly inventive in the shapes that they make with magnets and they experiment by putting different amounts of sand between the magnets.

The younger children enjoy the simple role play or small world resources and the staff are skilled in extending this play so that the children's learning is promoted in other areas as they play. For example, the children are drawn to the interesting display of books about construction vehicles as they play with the train set and they quite naturally talk about shape, number and sequence as they play in the Three Little Pigs' houses.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The pre-school manager is very focused on the needs of the children and she leads a flexible team of staff and occasional parent helpers. The additional helpers are directed effectively which means they too are successful in supporting the children's care and learning. Key-working systems are developing well as staff change and they develop their confidence in specific areas. The children's profiles contain very clear observations of children's development in note and photographic form; key staff are beginning to use these observations confidently to inform individual play and learning plans. Plans to further develop planning and assessment systems are clearly outlined in the group's action plan as to how this will enhance the children's individual learning needs. Although the premises present organisational challenges for the staff, they use them particularly well and continue to consider ways to improve this.

Key staff consistently demonstrate a skilful approach in their use of informal questioning techniques to stretch the children and develop their understanding. For example, they casually draw the children's attention towards the properties of the various magnets and offer them the vocabulary to explain what is happening. Similarly, they purposefully interest the children in the changing consistency of the play dough as it cooks and use impromptu situations effectively to teach the children about how their heart rate increases when they have been active. Consequently, the children engage fully with the broad range of resources and activities and they make good progress in all areas of learning.

The children are confident, motivated learners. They eagerly take part in all of the activities throughout the morning. They are confident in the regular routines, for example, they are

happy to tidy up ready for story or outdoor play. They learn to share and take turns; the more able children do this easily with the minimum of adult support.

There is a good amount of number in the environment in various contexts and the children recognise and name familiar numerals. The more able children easily recognise numbers one to six as they play their dice game and they choose the appropriate amount of items to fill their dish. There is equipment to help children solve simple problems and the children concentrate for some time as they attempt to make the scales balance. This is helped further by staff who are skilled in encouraging children to think about one more or one less as they play.

The children get a great deal of pleasure from books and stories. The interesting displays of books around the room mean that all children access these in a way that they enjoy. For example, some children are drawn to the non-fiction books and ask what the text says about the construction vehicles; others prefer to snuggle up with a friend or an adult for a story. There are opportunities for children to practise their pre-writing skills as they play, however, some are a little less confident in this and sometimes insist that an adult labels their work. They enjoy drawing and painting and more able children use chalk to label the shapes outdoors.

The topics and equipment which address the children's knowledge and understanding of the world is a strength at the setting. The children are interested and staff are vigilant in encouraging children to ask questions about how things work or what will happen. They are interested in the shooting horse chestnuts and acorns that they have dug up in the garden and the adult explains what will happen if it is put back into the earth. The children are confident in the uses of everyday technology and they use the computer with increasing skill and knowledge to support their learning in other areas. For example, they know how to operate the microwave and they confidently negotiate through the options on the computer program until they have found their favourite game. They also begin to recognise the written prompts and click on 'Yes' when they want to play again. Similarly, they recognise the numerals and count out the correct amount of ducklings to match the number on the mother duck. The children use tools increasingly well. Even the youngest children manage the scissors, tape dispenser and hole-punch well for their threading pictures. The adults help the children to use a knife to cut their fruit and they all experiment freely with the play dough tools to make shapes and patterns. This also promotes the children's fine motor skills.

The children enjoy their developing creativity; some children are very confident in their free painting and drawing. There is a good range of craft materials which, in theory, the children can access freely. However, in practice, the children are often reticent if an adult is not there to give direction. Therefore, whilst they learn the necessary skills to produce work in two and three dimensions, their creativity is a little inhibited. The children enjoy the range of musical instruments and often hum or sing well known songs as they play. Role play is a favourite activity and the children confidently express themselves in this way. They enjoy dressing up and stay in role for some time, for example, by keeping the space boots on to play in the garden.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The staff are getting to know the children very well through detailed liaison with parents and ongoing observations of the children. This way the staff know about the children's care and learning needs and address them very well; the children therefore feel secure and valued as individuals. There is a good range of resources and activities which promote equal opportunities. Consequently, the children learn to accept and enjoy the diversity in our culture.

The children are relaxed, confident and behave very well. This is due to the staff's consistent support and clear explanations to the younger children. Consequently, the older and more able children confidently share and take turns with very little adult support. They capably play turn taking games and willingly help each other with their boots and shoes. The children say 'please' and 'thank you' and are reminded by staff if they forget. This adds further to the very pleasant environment. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good and relationships are positive. They receive clear information about all aspects of the group. Noticeboards, newsletters and discussions are informative, relevant and easily accessible. Information about the play based curriculum is similarly effectively communicated. For example, information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage is included in parents' packs and all curriculum plans are displayed for parents. Information about the children's progress is available in the children's profile folders and more formalised parents' evenings are beginning also to be effective.

Parents are invited to be involved with their children's care and learning in various ways. Some take on key roles at committee level and others help at the play sessions on a voluntary basis. They all use the setting's 'I am Special' leaflet to share information about their child's preference and abilities as they start pre-school. Parents are questioned at regular intervals about how they feel the group is performing and those who take part in the inspection process are very pleased with the standards of care and education provided. The young children develop very positive three-way relationships with their parents and the staff; they are very relaxed and settled as they see their familiar adults discuss business arrangements and their care needs. This is because of the very effective settling in process and the pleasant relationships this creates.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are confident in the well-organised nursery environment and the purposeful routines. The children have a very good amount of space, although the building presents some challenges to the staff and the children. For example, although the hall is large, the staff use the furniture, drapes and dividers to create cosy areas for the children. Similarly, whilst the toilets are not easily accessible to the children, they are always escorted and helped if necessary. Staff plan periods of outdoor play each day because the outdoor area is not freely accessible.

Leadership and management of the provision is good. Key management and staff have a shared focus on providing good quality care and nursery education. Systems for appointment, appraisal

and induction work very well in practice and deployment is discussed on a day to day basis. Therefore, although there have been changes at committee and staff level, all adults are aware of what is expected and they are beginning to work very well as a team to support the children's care and learning.

The staff have a very professional approach to evaluating and improving the care and education for the children. They have worked well with the local authority to develop a comprehensive action plan; similarly, suggestions made by parents are addressed wherever possible. The plan for staff training is clear and staff are supported by the committee when they are able to do so. Where there are gaps in training, for example, when first aid certificates have expired, training is quickly arranged and the group forges links with the on-site school staff for short term support in this. All aspects of documentation are well organised and professionally managed. The staff are vigilant in their record keeping duties and all information about the children is stored in a confidential manner. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to ensure that parents were aware of procedures for safety when leaving their children and that milk was stored at appropriate temperatures. A third recommendation was for the recording of staff's daily attendance. The group initiated an action plan which addressed all issues raised. This involved writing to parents, installing a fridge thermometer and reviewing procedures for recording attendance. This has had a positive impact on the children's health and safety.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection of the funded nursery education, the group were asked to improve the staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, including the stepping stones leading to the early learning goals. A training programme was implemented at the time which addressed this successfully. There have been recent changes to staff and the new leader has a clear understanding of all aspects of early years curriculum. A further key issue was the provision of self selection craft materials. Improvements have also been made in this area. There is now a good range of materials and tools, although some children lack a confidence in accessing them without adult direction.

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 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):

- continue to develop the use of the premises to include increased use of the outdoor area, to promote positive outcomes for children in all areas of their care and learning.

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):

- further encourage the children's confidence in using the craft area independently and creatively.

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