

St Anne's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	311890
Inspection date	19 April 2007
Inspector	Kathleen Snowdon
Setting Address	Pickering Green, Harlow Green, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE9 7HX
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Registered person	Committee of St Annes 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 satisfactory. 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 Anne's Pre-School playgroup opened in April 1992. It operates from a demountable classroom on the site of St Anne's RC Primary School, which is situated in Low Fell, Gateshead. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and from 12.45 to 15.15 in term time only. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 42 children aged from three years on roll, 41 of whom are funded. The children come from the local and surrounding communities. Four staff work directly with the children, all of whom hold appropriate qualifications. The playgroup receives support from local authority early years advisors.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Satisfactory arrangements keep the children refreshed and comfortable during the time that they spend at the playgroup. They eat fruit and vegetables, such as apples, tomatoes, carrots and bananas, and they enjoy drinks of milk or water. Nutritious snacks like these encourage the development of healthy tastes and preferences. The children sit together to eat. As they do so, they talk to their peers and to adults, which promotes their social and communication skills and helps them to appreciate the experience of eating with friends.

Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene when they wash their hands before eating and after using the bathroom. This, as well as the sensible policy that deals with sick children, restricts the spread of common illnesses and infections. Written parental permission to allow staff to seek emergency medical advice or treatment is not in place.

Good opportunities keep the children fit and encourage them to be active. They benefit from fresh air when they run around freely during outdoor play sessions, and they use a range of actions, such as stretching, bending and swaying as they respond to lively compact discs, such as 'Sticky Kids'. The children sometimes use equipment like bikes, carts and tunnels. These items help the children to control and direct their movements. After physical exercise the children talk about how they feel, which raises their awareness of their physical reactions. Many of the children confidently tackle challenging jigsaws. These promote hand-eye coordination and dexterity and encourage the children to persevere, concentrate and focus.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's safety is preserved by the secure external doors, which prevent unauthorised access to and exit from the group. This, as well as staff's knowledge of child protection issues, protects children from dangerous people and situations. The playgroup room is well maintained, well lit and organised in a way which allows children to move easily from one area to another without the need for adult accompaniment. The children are encouraged to tidy up items that they have dropped on the floor, which teaches them simple ways in which to minimise the risk of accidents.

There is a wide range of developmentally appropriate toys and resources. These are stored on low-level shelving to allow the children easy access. This encourages the children to make choices and allows them to initiate self-chosen activities. The children get involved in cleaning and checking toys. For example, they wash dolls, building blocks and small world items during water play and look for breakages. In the process, they learn about the importance of handling things that are safe and hygienic.

Staff carry out risk assessments before the children arrive to ensure that the environment is hazard free. Assessments are not sufficiently rigorous. They fail to ensure that essential information is in place, such as a written statement about what happens in the event of a fire. However, fire drills are practised regularly and staff ensure that all children take part. This equips the children with the knowledge that they need to stay safe in emergencies.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are good opportunities for children to have fun and enjoy themselves. After arriving at the playgroup, all the children leave their parent or carer happily and become immersed very quickly in a range of activities, which keep them engaged and interested. They play with a variety of toys that help them to make progress in all areas of their development and they learn important inter-personal skills as they play with and alongside other children.

Very good relationships exist between the children and the staff. The children receive staff's full attention, which helps them to feel secure and well supported. The children are highly motivated and enthusiastic. They are keen to talk to their peers and to staff about things that interest them, for example when they discuss favourite programmes like 'Pippin' and 'Power Rangers'. This encourages the children to express their thoughts and opinions in front of others.

Nursery Education.

The children listen intently to interesting stories and look through good quality books and magazines. This helps them to understand that text and illustrations carry meaning. The children have very good opportunities to practise writing. They use pens and pencils throughout their time in the playgroup to write lists or letters and they like to use stencils and letter shapes. These activities develop the children's overall dexterity and promote language and literacy skills.

Very good opportunities are in place to increase the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, they grow tomatoes, spring onions and flowers and so observe first-hand the cycle of growth. They go with staff on purposeful outings, for example, to post letters at the post office, and learn about the community in which they live. Lovely books, like 'Edward Goes Exploring', prompt lively discussions about different countries, which helps to raise children's awareness of the wider world. The children also celebrate a range of festivals, such as Easter, Divali and Chinese New Year, which promotes positive views of culture and ethnicity.

Craft activities, such as painting and model making, allow the children to express their creativity and experiment with design. As well as this they manipulate play dough and clay, which enables them to sculpt and shape. The children appreciate music and really enjoy singing. Number songs like 'One, two, three, four, five' are particular favourites and teach the children about numerical sequence. The children use scales and jugs during planned activities, such as baking, but there are too few opportunities for the children to weigh and measure spontaneously.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage is good. It enables them to teach the content of all the areas of learning to help children to make progress towards the early learning goals. A key worker system ensures that staff know individual children well. This helps them to establish then build on what the children already know and to use teaching methods that they know suit individual children best.

Daily observations are made which help staff to plan effectively. Plans include learning intentions and show details of how staff are deployed and the resources needed. Plans are used in a pragmatic and highly appropriate way. Staff use them not only to ensure that children are benefiting from play that is emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually challenging, but also to reflect on their own practice and consider why some activities work better than others.

As well as this, staff exploit spontaneous events, such as a sudden downpour of rain, to enliven the playgroup session and to stimulate children's interest in the world around them.

Defined play areas contain a wide range of resources, which the children reach easily. This encourages children to use their initiative and pursue their particular interest. The well balanced daily routine includes a mix of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. This ensures that the children receive support and guidance to help them move on to the next stage of learning and also gives them sufficient opportunity to find out about things in their own way and at their own pace.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are treated with equal concern. They are included in all activities and have access to the full range of equipment available. This includes items like jigsaws, small world characters and books, many of which depict images of people with disabilities and people carrying out roles that are usually associated with the opposite sex. On outings in the local community, the children see and want to know more about people with specific needs, such as guide dog users. These influences raise children's awareness of important issues, such as gender and disability, and help the children to understand and respect difference.

Good guidance from staff and sensible rules teach the children about boundaries and help them to behave acceptably. Children are encouraged to think about what they have done, which encourages them to reflect on their actions and teaches them right from wrong. Staff acknowledge positive personal qualities, such as helpfulness and kindness, which reinforces the children's good behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Before children begin attending the group, parents receive good quality written information about opening times and about policies and procedures. Once the children start, regular newsletters, a dedicated noticeboard and daily discussions with staff keep parents fully informed about important information in general and about the children's progress. Parents and staff work together to compile photo diaries, showing photographs of the children engaged in a range of activities both at home and in the group. Parents are given these as keepsakes when the children leave. Parents have highly positive views of the staff and the service that they provide. They particularly value the curriculum and how much their children benefit from attending. Parents describe staff as 'friendly and approachable' and say that they have recommended the group to their friends.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Insufficient attention is paid to documentation in general. Consequently, some written policies, such as the child protection policy and the lost and uncollected children policy, contain out of date information and lack essential detail. Records of the children's details are readily available and most, although not all, written parental consents are in place. Although staff demonstrate good knowledge of emergency evacuation procedures, there is no written statement of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire. This is a breach of regulations.

All staff hold appropriate qualifications and some are working towards further qualifications. They take part in relevant training to increase their knowledge and improve their practice. Planned courses include child protection and first aid.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff work well together as a team and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This allows the group to operate smoothly on a day to day basis. Regular staff meetings enable staff to discuss issues that are relevant to their work and that relate to the children that they care for and teach. Staff work directly with the children throughout the day and so know them very well.

Staff monitor their nursery education provision through the use of questionnaires to parents and through consultation with other professionals, such as early education advisors from the local authority. They work hard and are aware of the improvements that they need to make.

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 playgroup was asked to make improvements that related to documentation, resources and health and safety matters. Reasonable improvement has been made since then. There is now a written complaints policy in place, as well as several items that reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity and disability.

Secure external doors prevent unauthorised access to the playgroup room and perimeter railings are well maintained. Children reach the toilets and the outdoor play area easily and do not need staff to escort them. Only low risk food is provided at snack time and staff carry out a brief risk assessment before the children arrive. These steps help to ensure that the children spend their time in a pleasant and secure environment.

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.

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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):

- obtain written parental permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment for children
- update written policies, the child protection policy and the lost and uncollected children policy, for example, to ensure that they contain essential detail
- ensure that there is a statement of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

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):

- increase opportunities for children to weigh and measure in spontaneous activities, such as role play.

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