



St James Rd Church Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130642
Inspection date	02 February 2007
Inspector	Maura Pigram
Setting Address	St James Road, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 0DZ
Telephone number	01923 251825
E-mail	
Registered person	St James Road Church Pre Sch Management Committee
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St James Road Church Pre-School opened in 1992 and operates from St James Road Church Hall in Watford. It has the use of the hall, low-level toilets, an enclosed outdoor area and two further rooms. It also has use of a kitchen and an office area. It serves the local community. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The nursery is open term time only. It is open from 09:30 until 12:00 and 12:30 until 15:00 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Children attend for a variety of sessions. All children share access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 41 children aged from two years to under four years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for early education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the Pre-school Learning Alliance. The leader of the pre-school is a qualified teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and generally well-maintained environment. Staff generally follow suitable hygiene procedures to prevent the spread of infection. Children are able to independently use the toilets and help themselves to tissues to blow their noses. Consequently, they develop some good hygiene habits for later life. However, soap is not readily available for them and the routine of sharing a bowl of water for hand washing prior to snack time is a potential risk of cross-infection.

Procedures are in place to help staff act in the children's best interests, should they require medical attention. All necessary documentation, including written parental consents and contact details, are in place to permit staff to act quickly if children become ill or if there is a medical emergency. Most staff have completed appropriate first aid training. This means that children's health, if they have an accident, is protected.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks which are freshly prepared each day. Drinks include water or milk; older children are encouraged to pour their own drinks. Children eat their snack together in small groups. The staff also sit with the children providing positive interaction. However, the individual needs of younger children are occasionally overlooked. Snacks include a wide variety of fruit and occasional biscuits. Children are beginning to learn about the benefits of healthy foods through the interesting snack time discussions.

Children's physical skills are well supported. They become confident at using utensils and tools as staff plan useful activities. Children competently use various cutters and scissors at the play dough table eagerly cutting sausages or making models from the dough. Children enjoy using large outside equipment, such as trikes, cars and climbing frames, which encourages balance and co-ordination. Children respond excitably to the music and movement sessions. Most children sing and dance with gusto, any children reluctant to participate are effectively supported by staff. The daily routine and organisation of the room offers space and appropriate space for quiet play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where they are kept safe. Most of the policies and procedures are used effectively to support children's safety and welfare. Children move around freely to play and are able to access resources safely. Children use a varied range of good quality, developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. These are cleaned and checked frequently to make sure they are safe for children to use. Risk assessments are carried out regularly to ensure children can play safely. An emergency evacuation procedure is in place

which is practised with the children. Busy periods such as collection time is managed safely and consistently. This ensures that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and there is no authorised access to children.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe by the clear explanations, boundaries and the close supervision of the staff. Children are occasionally taken out on outings to places such as the local shops. During this time they learn about crossing the road safely. They have regular visitors such as fire officers and the 'lollipop man'. As a result, children learn how to keep themselves safe through fun activities. Children are encouraged to tidy away toys during the specified 'tidy-up-time' and are rewarded with positive praise.

Children's welfare is promoted by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection issues. Relevant training is completed and there is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection. There is a detailed policy in place which has been updated recently to incorporate the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This ensures that any concerns are dealt with promptly, appropriately and sensitively.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children become settled and happy because the staff are supportive and caring. Consequently, they confidently access the easily available resources. During free play sessions the children are extremely busy and engrossed in their play. Language skills with all age groups is particularly well supported. Consequently, children develop their self-esteem. The children take part in a wide range of stimulating and interesting activities such as art and craft activities. They also enjoy exploring with various materials such as pasta, wool and cornflour. This means that children are involved in a broad range of planned and spontaneous activities, which support their development and learning. The staff have started to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework in all planning. However, this is not always implemented to ensure the routine of the day is beneficial to the needs of the younger children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The children are progressing well, supported by staff who have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children of this age group develop. This enables them to plan a wide range of practical activities that relate to the children's interests. Staff know the children very well and valuable systems are in place to ensure that children's starting points are known. This means that children effectively progress along the stepping stones. Plans show the learning intentions for children across the six areas of learning. Staff use assessments to evaluate children's progress and use this to plan future activities. However, staff do not always build on what older or more able children can do, limiting the children's progress in some areas of learning. Staff use an effective range of teaching methods to meet children's needs and help them progress. All of their time is spent with the children so that their play is effectively supported. They manage children's behaviour skilfully, helping them to share and to take turns. This enables the children to learn how to play together harmoniously. Children with special educational needs including those who speak English as an additional language are very well supported so that they can be fully involved in the activities.

This means that they can be effectively engaged and benefit from the experiences offered. The environment is generally well organised and purposeful use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas.

On arrival children, quickly settle and engage in activities. They are interested and well motivated to learn. Children's independence is effectively fostered. Children, for example, are encouraged to choose toys to play with, use their initiative, judgement and make their own discoveries. They are developing positive relationships with other children, and adults, enabling them to be part of the setting and develop their self-esteem. In particular they love exploring the home area which is regularly changed to enhance the children's learning and to maintain their interest. Groups of children delight in playing in the 'hospital'. Their language and understanding is enhanced because the staff skilfully interact with them during their play. Much laughter is generated through the role play as the children listen to their patients hearts and give medicine to help make them better.

Children enjoy choosing books from the well resourced library area which includes dual language books. They share books and use these confidently. The children take pleasure from spontaneous stories and enjoy using models to recreate favourite stories such as 'The Three Little Pigs'. They respond with excitement when listening to stories, songs and rhymes. They are able to concentrate well during the whole group 'circle' times as the experienced staff make these sessions fun and enjoyable. Effective use of props such as large picture cards are used to enliven these sessions and effectively promote children's understanding. They are learning to recognise letters, sounds and words through the interactive whole group time and the well planned activities such as making fruit salad. During the large group time, the children delight in joining in with rhyming songs and rhymes. They use name cards throughout the day to help them recognise their own name and that print carries meaning. Children are given some opportunities to develop early writing skills. They eagerly use resources such as paint easels and sand trays for mark making. However, there are no resources in areas such as the 'hospital' for children to practise their developing writing skills. Children are confident in using programmes on the computer and control the mouse with ease. They have access to interactive toys such a toaster. Positive interaction during this play provides children with further opportunities to develop their language and understanding.

Children confidently use numbers during their play and routines. They understand some comparative language related to size, such as bigger or smaller. Songs and rhymes are effectively used to promote children's good understanding of numbers. Some children readily count to ten and beyond. However, older or more able children are not always supported to compare or combine numbers within their play or routines. Children take part in a variety of festivals and enjoy having visitors to the nursery such as fire and police officers. Parents are also invited in to share their job roles and experiences with the children. As a result of this, they develop a curiosity about the world around them.

Children enjoy practising physical skills; everyday they confidently use resources such as trikes, cars and climbing frames. They join in dancing and movement sessions with gusto and eagerly copy the actions of the songs. Children's imagination is very well fostered through the use of the stimulating home area. This is regularly changed and consistently supported by enthusiastic staff. They recently enjoyed buying and growing plants from the garden centre, they also

bought shoes from the well resourced shoe shop and measured their feet during this time. Consequently, children are learning in an enjoyable and meaningful way.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and are treated with respect by the staff. They receive a warm welcome by key-workers and are helped to feel part of the pre-school community. There is a flexible settling-in policy which means that staff can have the opportunity to get to know the children and their parents. Consequently, individual needs can be met. Parents and carers are asked to complete a detailed registration form providing valuable information about their child. This is effectively used to discover children's likes, dislikes, what they can do and any support they may need.

The staff are committed to providing an inclusive practice. Any children with special educational needs are very well supported. The pre-school has established links with outside agencies to ensure children with specific difficulties can be included. As a result of this all children are able to fully participate and develop a sense of self worth. Staff provide good role models for the children by being calm and polite. Praise is given freely to the children, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand that they have done well. The children are helped to understand the need to share. As a result, children learn how to play together harmoniously. Simple explanations and reminding them not to run in the hall as they might hurt themselves helps them understand appropriate behaviour.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are helped to gain an understanding of the wider community. They are able to see various languages displayed alongside their notice boards. The pre-school has an appropriate range of toys, posters and books showing positive images of diversity. Festivals are celebrated throughout the year. Parents and carers are invited into the pre-school to share their personal experiences or festivals celebrated within their own family. Children's birthdays are celebrated, the children delight in blowing out candles. They receive a special pencil to mark the occasion. As a result, children develop a strong sense of belonging and their self-esteem is effectively fostered.

Children benefit from the close partnership with parents and carers that the pre-school has formed. Parents receive a detailed welcome brochure informing them about the services it has to offer. It includes valuable information on settling children into the pre-school and on the borrowing books system. They also receive newsletters and a parent-rota system is in place. There is a procedure in place to record any complaints which complies with the requirements of the National Standards. This means that parents are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns regarding the welfare of their children.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. The nursery provides a welcome pack giving details on its education provision. It also contains a summary of some of the policies and procedures which are available to view. Children's progress is well monitored. Parents have an opportunity to exchange information about their children on a daily basis. In addition, they are invited for informal meetings to discuss their child's progress so that parents are fully informed about their child's achievements. Children regularly take home their individual

pieces of work with staff providing any explanations about the children's art work. Consequently, there is a positive partnership between the children's home and the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the setting ensures that children enjoy a balance of large and small group time. Children benefit from the long term committed staff who have a clear sense of purpose. They are committed to continual improvement and are in the process of developing the outdoor area. The children mainly benefit from the wide range of planned activities and their time for free choice play which successfully promotes their learning.

Most policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Recruitment and vetting procedures contribute to children being protected and cared for safely. However, the registration system does not always accurately reflect the children's or staff's arrival and departure times. Consequently, in the event of an emergency there is not a clear record of children or adults present. This potentially hinders the children's welfare.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Children make good progress through the Foundation Stage as the staff work together to plan stimulating activities and play for them. The leader is a qualified teacher and is a good role model. She is proactive and committed to providing a high standard of nursery education for all children. She continually monitors and evaluates the curriculum to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Recently links have been established with the local nursery school so that they can develop a close working partnership to benefit the children's progress. Plans and assessment methods are regularly monitored to ensure they work well in practice. New assessment methods have been recently introduced allowing for children's progression and strengths to be successfully monitored. As a result, children's individual assessments are effectively identified and records are relevant. This means that they can be used by staff to plan the next steps of children's learning. Staff development is highly valued and they are encouraged to attend relevant training. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the provider was asked to; develop staff's awareness and understanding of opportunities for learning and play that meet children's individual needs and promote their overall development. Some staff have attended relevant training to promote their understanding of children's play. Regular staff meetings also take place so that good practice can be shared. This issue is also raised at this inspection to ensure needs of the children under three years are promoted.

The provider was also asked to update some of their policies and procedures. These related to informing the regulator of any significant incidents or child protection issues, the complaints procedure and the recording of any visitors to the pre-school. They also agreed to ensure the glass windows in the shed were made safe. All of these issues have been addressed satisfactorily to ensure the children's welfare and safety are met.

There were no key issues raised at the previous education inspection.

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):

- ensure all staff are informed and aware of the importance of good hygiene practice in order to prevent the spread of infection
- improve the outcomes for children from birth to three by using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- ensure a system is in place for registering children and staff attendance on a daily basis, showing hours of attendance.

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):

- improve further challenges for older or more able children in everyday routine activities with particular reference to problem solving and mark making.

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