

St Michael's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220282
Inspection date	07 February 2007
Inspector	Carol Mansell
Setting Address	St Johns Ambulance Rooms, Milner Road, Finedon, Northamptonshire, NN9 5LW
Telephone number	MOB 0786 7742606
E-mail	
Registered person	St Michael's Playgroup
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Michael's Playgroup opened in 1984 and operates from one room in the St. John Ambulance Hall in Finedon, Northamptonshire. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The setting is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 09.15 to 15.00, and Tuesday and Thursday from 09.15 to 13.00 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The setting has a rabbit and some giant African land snails.

There are currently 26 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 16 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local catchment area. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

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

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children understand simple good health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands after using the toilet, after feeding the rabbit and before snack time. Staff provide 'wet wipes' for the children to use after snack time. This helps children to stay healthy. Staff are good role models for the children. They wash their hands regularly and explain to children why they need to tie their hair back before helping to give out the toast. This helps children to gain a greater understanding of hygiene procedures which helps to keep them healthy. Children's health is generally safeguarded as staff ensure parents are aware of the exclusion times for early childhood illnesses, such as measles, mumps and chicken pox. They ensure parents adhere to the procedures and notify them straight away if children become unwell whilst in the setting. This protects children from infection. Children are taken care of if they have an accident in the setting. Staff provide cuddles and cold compresses. However, staff do not always ensure the records of accidents are maintained appropriately. Some accident records do not have a time recorded on them and some records are not signed by parents. This may compromise children's welfare.

Children have their dietary needs met as staff have an appropriate system in place to ensure all staff have access to a list of special dietary needs. They obtain relevant information from parents and work in line with parent's wishes. Children are beginning to understand the importance of eating healthily as staff talk to them at an appropriate level. Staff provide the children with a wide range of snacks, such as warm soup, toast with marmite or cheese spread and beans or cheese on toast. Children have a good selection of fresh fruit offered daily which helps to ensure that children are well-nourished. Children have opportunities to drink throughout the session. They are encouraged to make independent choices at snack time, choosing between milk and squash. On cold days staff also offer hot chocolate which helps children to stay healthy.

Children participate in a range of physical activities both indoors and outside. They enjoy using the outdoor area and exploring the wheeled toys which helps to enhance their physical skills. Children confidently ride around the outside area and climb on the climbing frame. They enjoy playing with hoops and are learning to control them as they roll the hoops across the ground. Children also enjoy jumping around a circle of hoops. They use stilts and seek support from staff or other children when needed. Children enthusiastically participate in a variety of physical tasks during Sports Day and confidently join in with 'The postman game'. Staff offer lots of praise and encouragement which helps to build children's self-esteem and confidence. Children enjoy using a variety of different resources indoors. They manipulate playdough, pulling and stretching it to see how far it will stretch. They enjoy using the construction toys and are beginning to learn to work together. Children relish opportunities to tear paper up for collage pictures. They also enjoy drawing and colouring which helps to increase their fine physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a secure environment. They benefit, as staff arrive early and turn on the halogen heaters to ensure the room is maintained at an adequate temperature. Staff ensure that children are protected as they have installed fire guards to make the heaters inaccessible to the children. This helps to keep the children safe. Children have access to a large outdoor areas. They know where the resources are stored and ask staff to bring additional resources out of the storage sheds when required. This ensures that children have opportunities to self

choose and encourages their independence skills. Children are generally safeguarded as staff check the resources regularly. Children inform staff if they find any damaged resources and understand that this helps them to avoid accidental injuries. However, the risk assessments are not effective as there are a large number of accidents in the setting and staff are not deployed effectively around the setting to safeguard children's well-being. Also the fire log book is not available for inspection. This may compromise children's well-being.

Children are protected as staff ensure there is an effective system for managing access to the premises and they keep a record of any visitors. Children are safeguarded at the end of the sessions as staff ensure they are collected by a known parents or carer. Staff receive information from parents notifying them of any changes to the usual collection procedures. This ensures children are collected by an appropriate adult which helps them to feel safe and secure.

Children are protected because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice. Children benefit, as staff have attended relevant training recently and are aware of the changes to the local procedures. This helps to protect children from abuse or neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle well into the provision. They know the routine and sit ready for registration where they confidently answer to their names. Children move freely around the setting choosing from the different resources that have been made available by the staff. They know where the resources are stored and ask staff if they can change some of these to enable them to access favourite items. Children work well together with the magnetic maze pieces. They negotiate where each pieces needs to go on the board and then slide the balls in through the slots to see if it works. Children are able to problem solve, moving the pieces around the board and then trying the balls again. They demonstrate a real sense of achievement when the ball runs between a number of pieces before falling out. This helps to develop children's confidence and enables them to use their initiative. Children sit quietly as they listen to stories read by the staff. They join in with 'Going on a bear hunt' following the staff member's lead with the actions. Children benefit, as staff ask open-ended questions which provides them with opportunities to show their understanding of familiar stories. This helps to build their self-esteem.

Children are generally busy around the setting. Children who have recently started in the provision seek support from the staff. They are fascinated by the rabbit and spend a lot of time watching the child chosen as a helper feeding the rabbit and changing its water. Older children help the new ones to understand that they must not pull on the cage or the rabbit could get scared. Children are able to show their knowledge and understand responsible behaviours safeguarding the rabbit's well-being. Children enjoy playing in the medical centre. They take on different roles such as, being the patient lying down with another child examining him as the doctor. Staff change the purpose of the role play area regularly which helps the children to enhance their imaginative skills.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a general knowledge of the Foundation Stage, a reasonable range of teaching methods and an adequate understanding of how young children learn and progress. The level of challenge is sufficient to interest some children in the activities and enable them to make satisfactory progress whilst others become

easily distracted. Assessments and the use of information gained from it are satisfactory, but sometimes inconsistent. Staff generally make satisfactory use of their time and resources to support children's learning. Monitoring procedures are adequate but are not always used to identify ways to improve teaching. This potentially hampers children's ability to make progress in their learning.

Children chatter happily in their play. They socialise as they move around the setting and confidently talk to the staff as they participate in planned activities. Children enjoy drawing and colouring and some are beginning to form their letters. They receive praise and encouragement from the staff which helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. Children enjoy looking at books independently as well as joining in with stories read by the staff. Children turn the pages carefully and follow the print along the page. Children are beginning to recognise their names as staff use name cards at registration time and large named placemats at snack time. This helps children to understand that print has meaning. Children like to explore different mathematical equipment. They relish having individual attention from staff when working with sequence cards, building the blocks up to look the same as the ones on the cards. Children talk with staff and seek assistance when required. Children confidently use the names of shapes correctly. Whilst using the outdoor area children chooses to draw around themselves stating 'I've done a circle'. Children spontaneously count during the session. They are beginning to recognise number signs. Children count using the till, they count the animals as they go into the ark also staff help children to count from one to ten at registration time. Staff introduce basic mathematical concepts and children are beginning to demonstrate an understanding of 'more than' and 'less than'. This helps children to increase their mathematical skills.

Children enjoy playing in the imaginative area which has been set out as a medical centre. They imitate adults as they answer the telephone, taking notes as well as feeding the dolls and taking them for a walk. Children explore and experiment with playdough. They see how far they can stretch it and discover what tracks are left in the dough when they introduce cars into their play. Children are able to make decisions and use their initiative which enhances their creative play. Children play together on the carpet area with the large construction toys. They mainly work well together, but some behaviour issues do arise. Children relish being chosen as the helper of the day. They respond well to the extra responsibilities such as, feeding the rabbit and Giant African Land Snails, as well as helping staff to organise the table ready for snack time. This helps to build children's confidence and self-esteem. Some children seek out friends to play with. They enjoy taking their babies on an outing and they happily chatter as they move around the setting. Children generally work together to tidy the toys and resources away. They are beginning to form positive relationships. Children enjoy going on outings and meeting people who visit the setting. For example, they interact with the policeman, nurse and the carpenter who arrives to mend the fencing. Children are able to demonstrate their curiosity by asking the visitors questions about their work. This helps to build children's confidence.

Children are fascinated as they explore ice which has formed in the outside play area. They hold pieces of ice and watch as water drips from their hands. This helps children to show an interest in why things happen. Although there are computers available in the setting, children lack opportunities to use the technology. Staff plan activities in line with familiar celebrations. However, children lack opportunities to explore and question issues of difference in gender, ethnicity, culture and disabilities. This hampers their understanding of difference and diversity and limits their knowledge and understanding of technology.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who are aware of their individual needs. They work with other professionals to ensure all children are included fully in the life of the setting. Staff have a clear awareness of children who need extra support at times. They encourage the children to be independent, helping them to put on their coats when going outside. Staff offer lots of praise and encouragement which helps to build children's self-esteem and confidence. Children have access to a few resources which provide positive images of different cultures. This limits children's understanding of difference and diversity and the wider society.

Children generally behave well. They are beginning to understand the behaviour expectations and actively participate in drawing up a list of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. Staff reinforce children's knowledge by providing gentle reminders and explanations at an appropriate level. This helps children to recognise responsible behaviours. Some children are easily distracted and demonstrate challenging behaviour. When staff are aware of this they maintain a positive and consistent approach. Children are becoming aware of their own needs and the needs of others. However, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not fostered.

Children benefit, as staff greet parents into the setting at the beginning and end of each session. They are building strong relationships and exchange information regularly. This ensures children's individual needs are met. Parents have access to the policies and procedures which have been recently updated in line with the National Standards. This helps parents to understand the expectations of the setting and ensures children receive continuity of care. Children are encouraged to tell their parents what they have been doing in the playgroup. This helps to build children's confidence and feel that they are valued.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit as staff ask parents for information regarding what their children like to do. Staff provide suggestions of activities that parents may like to do with their children to extend their learning at home. This helps parents to be involved in their children's learning in a meaningful way. Parents receive information from the setting regarding the Foundation Stage. Staff update the information with parents regularly and provide opportunities for parents to view their children's work and progress files. If parents are unable to attend the setting then staff make home visits to ensure that all parents can access the information. This builds a strong partnership with the parents which helps children to feel safe and secure.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who have completed appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures. This ensures children interact with suitable staff. The settings policies and procedures generally work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Children generally benefit, as there is a high ratio of staff to children in the setting. However, staff are not effectively deployed during the sessions which does not ensure children stay safe. Staff record children's presence during registration time. However, staff do not record the times that children and staff arrive and depart. This potentially compromises children's well-being.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. There have been a lot of changes in staffing over recent months. The manager has worked hard to develop a team of committed staff

members who work together to create a welcoming environment for the families. Staff are encouraged to access training and there is a clear focus on their development and achievements in order to enhance the setting for the children. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a level 2 qualification in childcare. Staff have completed appropriate training courses and systems are in place to ensure other staff are encouraged to attend various courses to enhance the provision for the children. The provider agreed to develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least one member of staff with a current first aid certificate will be on the premises or on outings at any one time. Staff have completed appropriate first aid training and the setting has an action plan in place to ensure this training is maintained. The provider also agreed to ensure registration arrangements show when visitors are present. Staff ask visitors to sign in the visitors book on arrival and then include them in the register. This ensures children are cared for in a safe and secure environment.

At the last inspection the provider agreed to provide opportunities for children to self select resources and materials during creative activities. Children select from the variety of resources made available by the staff. They have choosing days where children set the activities out. The children have opportunities to make independent choices as they know what is available and can ask for favourites. This helps to build their independence skills.

The provider agreed to continue to develop ways for parents to regularly share what they know about their child to inform the assessment process and provide opportunities for them to be involved in their child's learning and to ensure parents receive information about the activities children have enjoyed in the setting, sends home suggestions of things parents can do with their children to be involved in the learning in a meaningful way.

The provider also agreed to ensure those children who want to, have the opportunity to develop their writing skills and make sure that all labelling is in the correct upper and/or lower case lettering. Children are confident in using mark making equipment. Staff provide numerous opportunities for children to develop their writing skills and recognise that upper and lower case lettering can be used. This helps children to understand that print has meaning.

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

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 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):

- ensure records of accidents are maintained appropriately and signed by parents
- ensure risk assessments are valid and draw up an action plan to minimise identified risks and ensure staff deployment within the setting protects children from harm, and ensure the fire log book is available for inspection
- increase activities and resources to actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices
- ensure there is a system 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):

- ensure assessments are systematic, informative, objective and sufficiently linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals, and ensure that information gained from assessments is used to help children move to the next stage in their learning
- provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences across the six areas of learning; refers to knowledge and understanding of the world.

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