



St Gregory's Child Care Trust

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY267801
Inspection date	16 January 2007
Inspector	Angela Cole
Setting Address	St Gregory's School, Knapp Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 3QH
Telephone number	01242 515387
E-mail	
Registered person	St Gregory's Child Care Trust
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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. Gregory's Child Care Trust opened in 2004 and is a registered charity managed by a board of trustees. It operates from purpose-built premises attached to St. Gregory's Primary School in the centre of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The setting offers before and after-school care, holiday care and pre-school care and education. Care is offered from 08.00 until 18.00 from Monday to Friday and a maximum of 120 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school and nursery children have access to two large playrooms and a circular, story room during school hours. The school age children have the use of the small school hall and all rooms in St. Monica's wing. The outdoor areas used by the school-age children include a secure all-weather pitch and a playground. The younger children have an enclosed, purpose-designed play area.

There are currently 156 children aged from two years to under eight years on roll. Of these, 67 children receive funding for early education. Children come from within the school catchment areas. The setting mainly caters for Catholic families and is also open to children from other faiths. The pre-school and nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a significant number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 16 members of staff. Of these, one has teaching status, 13 hold appropriate early years or playwork qualifications and two are working towards a qualification. The staff are supported by parents who wish to come on rota. The setting has close links with the school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have excellent opportunities to benefit from fresh air and exercise. They choose to go outside onto the well-equipped, adjacent areas all year round and have the use of two halls for physical activities. Children in the out-of-school club enjoy a wide range of planned energetic play and staff skilfully support their activities, including dancing and ball games on the all-weather pitch. Younger children gain excellent co-ordination as they check their personal space, warm-up and move spontaneously and imaginatively to music and ring games. They freely move as they expertly control wheeled toys, clamber around a 'pirate's ship' and climb the hill to the gazebo.

The children benefit from the excellent hygiene of the premises. They gain a wide-ranging sense of personal hygiene as they become fully independent in toileting and hand washing. Children hygienically dispose of waste materials and the younger children learn how to brush their teeth after lunch. There is excellent continuity with parents regarding children's health care and clear records are kept of accidents and medication.

The children learn about the importance of a good diet to keep themselves fit and healthy. The breakfast club offers a wide choice of sugar-free cereals while nursery and pre-school children enjoy a variety of nutritious snacks that include breads, salad and fruit. Children benefit from the excellent consistency with home care regarding their dietary needs. Parents respond to the wealth of information given about healthy eating and provide nutritious, packed meals or children choose to eat the healthy lunch that is cooked on the school premises. Children gain an excellent understanding of the importance of regular drinks and they access water whenever they wish. They are free to pour their own healthy milk or water at snack times and older children enjoy high-fruit drinks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in light, purpose-built premises that are safe and suitable. The environment is well-maintained and staff are aware of the need to address vibration from the water pipes. The building is spacious with many different areas so the needs of a wide age-range of children are

successfully met before and after school, during pre-school sessions and for holiday care. The indoor spaces are well partitioned into learning and play areas so that all children have safe and easy access to a broad range of activities. The children move freely onto the adjacent outdoor spaces so they choose their own play and learning environment.

Children of all ages have excellent, safe access to clearly-labelled storage at their level. The high-quality resources include some made by staff to be relevant to these children and their development. For example, a book of photographs records frosty weather and activity cards illustrate the 'Three bears' story. Equipment is appropriate to the age and stage of the children as, for example, drawing pins are not accessible to two-year-olds. Children use a wide range of safe, recycled materials for dens and modelling; staff supervise children closely as they use potentially dangerous resources such as polystyrene packing materials and sharp needles.

Staff are well aware of the need for risk assessment to reduce hazards for children, and thorough, twice daily checks are recorded. Detailed risk assessment for the premises, specified activities and outings effectively supports children's safety. During sessions, children arrive and depart safely because of the individual handing over between parents and staff and the excellent security of the premises.

Children, overall, gain a good sense of how to keep themselves safe. They hear explanations offered by staff, for example, about the need to remove their shoes and socks for a movement session. They will soon be able to experience a more challenging outdoor environment as access to a wilder part of the garden is opened up. Children are involved in termly fire practices held by the school, and staff who are not present discuss the procedures regularly in meetings.

Children receive excellent support regarding child protection. The staff safeguard and promote children's welfare and have all the required procedures and documents in place. For example, they all hold current first aid and child protection certificates. They have a comprehensive understanding of all child protection issues and procedures to confidently and effectively handle concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children enjoy their play in each of the different groups of the provision. The routines are highly varied to effectively support each child at different times of the day. Children appreciate the very good facilities for outdoor play and opportunities for quieter, as well as active, times.

Children from two years upwards eagerly look forward to their time at the excellent out-of-school club. They choose to participate in a very wide range of planned activities organised into different age-groups so they feel relaxed and fully involved. They are happy to be with adults who respond to activities that they are interested in and are ready to support their ideas. Children's spontaneous play is well encouraged as they freely access the full range of resources available, including appropriate books, role play, small-world and construction toys. They highly enjoy creating dens, learning new crafts such as sewing, making music with microphones and playing vigorous games with hoppers and footballs alongside the staff.

Young children settle well into the daycare as they benefit from very small group and individual care. Staff have a deep understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and its relationship to the Foundation Stage. This means that the youngest children are fully supported and challenged to make good progress in all areas of their development. They are effectively involved in a broad range of appropriately planned activities to foster their emerging language and mathematical thinking. Staff talk with them continually, tell enthralling stories using puppets, describe their play and use this to foster their use of new words from books and early counting skills. Young children highly benefit from the unhurried and calm atmosphere in which they explore creative and imaginative materials. For example, children choose to investigate the texture of paint with their hands and enjoy mixing the playdough ingredients. They begin to make good sense of the world in play with small toys that represent animals and farms.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make very good progress towards the early learning goals in aspects of each of the six areas of learning. For example, in communication, language and literacy, children confidently use their growing vocabulary to share their thoughts about happenings that are important to them. They tell brief stories about what they are doing and ask questions. Children enjoy being read to individually or in small groups. They eagerly match letters and often use emerging writing to name their work. Children make good progress in relation to their starting points in mathematical development. They use number language in their play and gain sound understanding of figures through counting and comparing in routines and songs. They focus on shape, space and measure, for example, through number stories.

There is no difference in learning between different groups of children such as girls and boys. For example, their creativity is valued as they freely draw, paint and stick. Children enjoy experimenting with instruments in their own time and show great enthusiasm in their singing and moving to music. Children gain effective ideas and skills as they develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They eagerly notice changes of cooking ingredients, such as those for porridge, and as they grow and eat vegetables, herbs and fruits. Children gain a good sense of place and time as they set up and talk about their own small-world scenes and recall their activities of the sessions. They effectively use technology to support their learning and make their own complex designs with bricks and construction pieces.

Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and of how children learn. They use a variety of methods to assess the children and plan using notes on the children's needs and interests. The inclusion of all children is actively planned and monitored so that children learning English as an additional language and those with additional needs are well supported to progress in their learning. Overall, the learning environment and activities are effectively planned to be suited to needs of the children. Good use is made of small groups for keyworker teaching and for some of the older children's story times. Staff working with three-year-olds make particularly good use of 'props' to fully engage these children in tales such as 'Little red hen'. Children concentrate well on their chosen activities in attractive learning spaces and the adults effectively support them according to their individual learning needs. The teaching during free play truly interests children, helping them to become focused, able to resist distractions and persist for some time. However, frequent transitions between timetabled activities do not support older

children to maximise their independent learning. Overall, teaching methods are good with focus on play and first-hand experiences. Staff are perceptive to children's interests and question them successfully to extend their thinking.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are well known to the staff and receive good individual support. They settle into the groups quickly as staff take time to meet them and their parents on pre-visits. This means that new children access resources that interest them, such as computer programmes with pictures. Each session, they are individually greeted by staff who give them appropriate attention, such as cuddles for the young ones. Pre-school children are effectively supported to move onto school through joint visits and a buddy system that is supported by the exchange of photographs.

All children have good opportunities for making decisions and are supported by staff to think of others as they do so. For example, pre-schoolers respond to encouragement to choose younger children during a ring game and learn to relate well to each other. The staff in each area ensure that the resources and activities positively represent children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. Children become familiar with staff who speak a different language and adults with varying abilities. These experiences effectively help children to develop a positive attitude to others. Staff develop good relationships with the family members of children learning English as an additional language so the children are well supported. Children with additional needs make good progress as staff liaise closely with their parents and with outside agencies.

Children are, overall, well supported to behave by positive methods and emphatic praise for good behaviour. Staff discuss behaviour management with parents before the children start in the different groups. Adults have received specialist training and now work to agreed policies and procedures so the children are supported by consistent, appropriate strategies. For example, when staff use small groups in the pre-school room, children are calm and responsive. Young children hear staff assertively reminding them of expected behaviour while older children follow agreed rules and a charted block system which they feel is fair. Children respond to the positive ethos of the school environment in which politeness and consideration for others are underpinned by a prayerful attitude and good role-modelling of the adults. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Families gain confidence to come into the setting because of the welcoming staff and the bright environment. This includes many displays of children's work and detailed information about the groups, including the Foundation Stage curriculum. There are good opportunities for informal exchange of information that ensure children are cared for in accordance with their parents' wishes, for example, regarding collection. Parents are welcomed into the playrooms so they have daily conversation with staff about children's activities and development. Parents of children receiving full day care are invited to meetings with staff to share termly written information about their children's progress in the Foundation Stage. Nursery children benefit as their parents add comments on records to support the planning for their learning needs. Families have good opportunities for meaningful involvement

in children's learning. For example, they are encouraged to share their interests with the children during the sessions, and their responses to invitations to give day-to-day help are highly valued.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children receive good care and education as a result of conscientious and competent organisational skills. The systems to check the initial and continuing suitability of staff are robust. Staff receive a sound induction and children benefit from adult support and teaching that is enhanced by a continuous training programme. The under fives and out-of-school provisions operate efficiently with reference to detailed operational plans to foster the children's welfare. However, the size of the pre-school sometimes exceeds the legal number of 26 children in one group. The spacious premises are effectively organised so children have a variety of play spaces and ample, adult support in appropriate age groups. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Most documentation is maintained to a high standard and policies are updated to expand procedures originally taken from those followed by the school. The groups have set up a log to record any complaint and this is compliant with Ofsted's requirements. Registration systems are clear and show the hours of attendance of children, staff and visitors to support children's safety. Families receive a wealth of information about the provision, and children's development is regularly shared with parents. There is a good regard for confidentiality throughout the setting.

Leadership and management are good. The trustees provides good support for staff and sets clear direction that leads to continuous improvements in the organisation and outcomes for children. Staff teams work well and responsibilities are shared so children are motivated to progress in a happy and positive atmosphere. The educational provision is closely monitored and evaluated to identify strengths and areas to improve. The leaders are open to advice and are highly committed to promoting an inclusive environment in which every child matters.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the setting improved continuity of care regarding accidents and aspects of the operational plan in the areas of child protection, health and complaints by parents. All parents are now informed of accidents and they sign the records to ensure the continuity of children's care. The operational plan has been extended to include details of action to be taken in the event of allegation against staff, informing Ofsted of serious injuries and allowing parents the option of complaining to Ofsted. This has improved the organisation of the setting to foster the children's welfare.

The previous education inspection required the setting to improve children's creative development, children's contributions to group discussions and information for parents. Staff now provide a variety of accessible craft materials so children can explore shape, colour and texture in two and three dimensions and so develop their creativity. The setting has introduced group times when keyworkers listen to small groups of children so their individual views can be heard. This means their contributions are valued and their self-esteem is raised. Parents

now receive a variety of information about the Foundation Stage. This benefits the children as parents are enabled to be more involved in their children's education.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 1 2004, 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 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):

- ensure the size of a group never exceeds 26 children.

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):

- develop the use of time with particular reference to transitions and group times to maximise older children's independent learning. (also applies to care)

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