



St Bernards Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305316
Inspection date	23 February 2007
Inspector	Gillian Sutherland
Setting Address	St. Bernards RC School, Sherbourne Road, Ellesmere Port, Merseyside, CH65 5EW
Telephone number	0151 355 2222
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Registered person	Karen Prout and Catherine Doherty
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Bernard's Pre-School Group was registered in 1997. The pre-school has the use of the church hall, and adjoining side room, in St Bernard's Church in Ellesmere Port. The group has access to the kitchen and toilets in the church and also a secure outdoor play area. Designated areas inside and outside the adjoining St Bernard's school may also be used by the children. The group serves families in the local community.

The pre-school is registered to provide 24 places for children aged between two years six months and five years. There are currently 32 children on roll; this includes 23 funded children who are all aged either three or four years. Children attend a variety of sessions each week.

The playgroup operates during school term times only. They have morning sessions each weekday from 10.00 to 12.30. They may also operate afternoon sessions when needed on weekdays from 12.45 to 15.15.

Five members of staff work with the children. Four members of the staff team have Early Years qualifications and one is currently attending further training. The setting receives support from an Early Years teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment, where they participate in a varied range of activities which promote their physical skills and development. Each day children access physical play activities, using indoor play space or, weather permitting, the outdoor play space. They also enjoy going to the adjoining infant school where they access their outdoor play space and climbing equipment. Occasionally, if their own play space within the church is being used for a church function, the children then access the infant school hall for their play session. They use the school playing fields where they can freely access the wider open play spaces for outdoor play and games. During their creative activities children's fine motor skills are being developed as they confidently use scissors, small shape cutters, glue spreaders and a varied range of pencils and brushes.

Children play in a very clean environment, where they develop a good understanding of personal hygiene as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the session. They understand through pictures in the toilet area that they should wash their hands before going back into the play room. The older children can go to the toilet unaccompanied but the younger children are always escorted to and from the toilet by a member of staff. Step stools are provided thus enabling children to reach the sinks, and paper towels are used to dry their hands.

To ensure children are protected and well cared for, at least one staff member holding a current first aid certificate is on duty at all times, and accurate accident and medication records are maintained.

The pre-school promotes healthy eating. Children's individual dietary requirements are met by the pre-school staff. At snack time the helper of the day serves the snack to the children present. The snacks are varied and include fresh fruit and vegetables. Children are given milk or water to drink at snack time, however, they cannot freely access drinking water during the session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are relaxed and happy as they enter the pre-school. They are greeted warmly by the staff and quickly settle into the pre-school's activity programme. All areas accessed by children

are decorated with their art work and a range of different posters and pictures. The available play space within the building is designed in such a way that children can move round freely and self-select the toys and resources they want to play with and the activities they want to participate in.

Children's safety is well promoted through daily risk assessments, where staff check all areas and record their findings on a record chart. Effective fire safety procedures are in place and staff ensure that all children learn how to evacuate the building quickly and safely. Fire drill practises take place at regular intervals and a record is maintained of when these are carried out.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are able to recognise signs of abuse and know which agencies to contact should they have any concerns about a child in their care. The pre-school's child protection policy does not currently include the telephone numbers of the social services department or the police.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time in pre-school and are confident and engaged in purposeful play. They participate in free and structured play sessions and they establish good relationships with the staff and each other. Children enjoy and eagerly participate in registration time as they sit in a circle with the pre-school staff, say a short prayer and hello to everyone and then all have a chance to arrange the daily calendar and the felt weather hanging.

Children actively make choices as to what activities they want to participate in and the resources they want to play with. They can freely access a book of their choice, all of which are stored in an easy to reach book storage system.

Children enjoy close contact with familiar adults and a key worker system is securely in place. This results in the children being happy and secure in their relationships with staff.

The pre-school staff have some understanding of the Foundation Stage and curriculum guidance and have included information about this in their prospectus. They have limited knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and have not yet made parents aware of this framework either in their pictorial evidence or their prospectus.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals, due to the staff having an awareness of the six areas of learning. Staff responsible for the educational programme do have some knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use this during their planning to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are covered. Children then participate in a range of purposeful and age appropriate activities.

Children enjoy using role play equipment. In the home corner they played very happily as they dressed up and prepared meals using the play foods. Their language skills were well promoted

as a member of staff participated in this activity and chatted to the children as they played. Children were in the process of celebrating Chinese New Year and their home corner was decorated with lanterns they had made. This celebration was further promoted in their snack time as they enjoyed eating, or attempting to eat, noodles with chopsticks and had vegetables and a dip. Each child was also given a 'fortune cookie' to take home with them.

Children are able to recognise letters and their names, and some children have begun to write their own names. As the children arrive at pre-school they look for their own name card on the table and then put it into the basket. For the younger children their card also has a picture on it. They also recognise letters as they complete the daily weather chart and calendar, this is done as a group activity at registration time. Children have opportunities for mark making and writing during free play and again through pre-planned activities.

Some of the older children are developing friendships with their peers. Children are keen to save seats next to them for their friends at registration or story time. They approach visitors confidently, showing their ability to initiate relationships and communicate with adults. This was observed as a group of children were keen to show me a board with pictures of small animals on it that had been brought into the pre-school. Children described how it felt when they touched some of the animals, for example, some talked about the small furry animals, including hamsters, whilst others went on to explain how they had touched the snake who was very smooth. They confidently told me that they did not like the spider.

All children are provided with many opportunities to develop their creativity and their personal self-esteem is raised as they proudly display and talk about their art and craft work. During the inspection one activity involved the drawing of a crème egg which was placed in an egg cup in the middle of the table.

Children's listening skills are developed as each day a key worker takes her group of children into the quiet area, and here they participate in a specialised activity where the children 'Listen with Lola'. Lola, a cuddly leopard toy, is brought out and communicates with the children and the member of staff. Children participated well in this activity as they used the story of 'The three little pigs'. Questions asked by the member of staff required children to listen, think and do simple calculations during this story time session.

The planning of the activity programme is undertaken by the managers and staff and activities are planned on a long and short term basis. Staff observe children at play and use post-it notes to record children's achievements reached during their play. Staff record children's progress and link this information to the stepping stones. However, this information is not currently used effectively to identify the next steps in children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children access the range of resources and equipment, providing they are appropriate for their age and ability. Staff are knowledgeable about children's individual needs. These are well met in practice by familiar, consistent and caring staff.

The children are developing a good understanding of their local community and the wider world through planned activities. They celebrate different festivals, such as Chinese New Year and the Indian festival Diwali. They have also had discussions about people with disabilities. The pre-school has some resources which help to promote an awareness of our diverse society.

Children's behaviour is generally good. They understand the need for safe boundaries and have an understanding of basic rules. This is supported by the behaviour management policy and the systems implemented by the staff. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff for their efforts and achievements. They are polite, share the resources and take turns easily, showing consideration for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive information on their child and the setting, which includes daily verbal handovers on children's interests and achievements. Parents are given detailed written information about the Foundation Stage curriculum in their prospectus. Clear communication is established from the outset with parents. In addition, parents receive regular newsletters, attend parents meetings, and the informative notice board keeps them well informed of any developments. Children's development and progress is observed, monitored and recorded, and parents are fully aware they have access to these records at any time.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Detailed policies and procedures are in place and these are available to parents at any time. All the legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is satisfactorily in place, including accident, medication and incident records. However, the daily registration record does not include times of arrival and departure for the children present and some of the pre-schools policies need reviewing and revising to ensure they comply with current requirements and legislation. The policies that need reviewing are the complaints procedure and the local safeguarding children policy, which does not currently indicate the contact details of the police or social services department.

The good staff to child ratios improve the quality of care for all the children. Staff work with the children consistently on a daily basis, ensuring they are fully supported with their learning and development needs.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. The managers and staff ensure that parents are informed of the activities on offer and this includes details of the current theme, to which the daily activities for children in the different age groups are linked. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection when two recommendations were raised, the providers now have included in their policies: a sickness and exclusion policy; plus the procedures that would be

followed should an allegation of abuse be made against a member of staff. All parents are given a copy of all the pre-school's policies and procedures as children register.

In the last inspection the providers were asked to improve their planning, clearly identify learning outcomes, provide more chances for children to solve mathematical problems and use technology to support their learning. This has been partially met as children now have chances to solve some simple mathematical problems during their story time and also in their singing sessions. The providers have also introduced some technology by having a camera that one child takes home for an accompanied weekend with 'Chloe' the pre-school doll. They have also obtained a lap top which is being made ready for the children to access and use. Regarding the planning, this too has been partially met as they have tried to improve their planning skills, but are still waiting for additional advice and support from a specialised teacher.

Staff have also continued to implement the observation and assessment of children's learning to ensure that children's progress is effectively assessed in the six areas of learning, and to ensure that this information is used to inform future planning. During this inspection, it was noted that a balanced range of activities were provided on a daily basis, all of which cover the six areas of learning. Children's participation and progress in these activities is assessed by the staff and in particular the child's key worker and the information is then used when planning further activities.

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 that parents are made aware of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and any photographic evidence used is dated

- consider how drinks can be made freely accessible to children
- review and revise current policies and practices to ensure they comply with current requirements and legislation, and where required, contain contact details of relevant agencies.

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 develop planning and assessments to ensure they identify the next steps in children's learning and that children are able to reach their full potential across all the stepping stones.

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