



## **St Benedicts Playgroup**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	220174
<b>Inspection date</b>	05 July 2005
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Hunn
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Benedicts Mount, West Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 9XN
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<b>Registered person</b>	St Benedict's Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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. Benedicts Playgroup is managed by a committee. It opened in 1986 and operates from St Benedicts Church Rooms in West Hunsbury on the outskirts of Northampton. A maximum of 17 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each week day during school term times from 9:00 to 11:30 and from 12:15 to 14:45. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and are taken for walks in the local area and trips to the park.

There are currently 46 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 13 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from West Hunsbury and surrounding areas. The setting supports children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six staff. Five of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two members of staff are currently working towards a qualification.

The setting receives support from the Northamptonshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children begin to understand the benefits of a healthy diet in promoting their good health and growth as they enjoy a range of nutritious snacks that include fresh fruit or vegetables at each session and regular drinks. For example, cheese with lettuce and tomato slices, selection of sliced fruit with cheese and biscuits, cereals and pasta. The snacks appeal to the children because they are presented attractively and meet their individual dietary needs as agreed with their parents.

Children have fun as they take part in a range of activities which help them develop their physical skills, such as climbing the steps and sliding down the slide, crawling through the tunnel and taking part in PE sessions during indoor activities. They have regular opportunities to obtain fresh air to support their development as they play in the outdoor area, visit the local library or walk to the park.

Children learn the importance of hygiene in contributing to their good health through daily routines where practices are monitored by staff to ensure the premises and equipment are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness. Children use and dispose of tissues appropriately, wash their hands before eating and after going to the toilet and can explain that they do so 'to get rid of germs which may make you poorly'. However, facilities and procedures for washing and drying children's hands before snack time do not always help prevent the spread of infection. Children's well-being is safeguarded because staff have up-to-date first aid knowledge and are pro-active in applying appropriate procedures concerning any infectious illnesses within the group.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where risks of accidental injury both inside the premises and during outdoor activities are minimised because staff are vigilant and use thorough risk assessment to reduce potential hazards.

Children learn the importance of safety as they respond to the clear guidelines set by the staff, for example by waiting for the person in front to finish before getting on the slide and how to march around the room safely when playing instruments during music sessions. Children begin to take responsibility for themselves as they become aware of how to cross the road safely during outings and why they must not run off or talk to strangers during trips to the park.

Children are able to use a variety of good quality toys and play materials because they are monitored by staff to ensure they are safe and suitable for children's individual needs and stages of development. Children are well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of local child protection procedures and regularly update their knowledge by attending appropriate training.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive at the playgroup happy and eager to participate because they are warmly welcomed by the caring staff into an attractive and inviting environment. Children's confidence and self-esteem increase through clear daily routines and sensitive and appropriate interactions with the staff who know them well. Children aged 2 particularly benefit from consistent support and encouragement to help them feel secure. Children progress because staff plan a stimulating range of activities which cover all areas of their development based on the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Children's interests are captured by the imaginative range of toys and play materials that are set out although children are not able to readily access other resources so that they can freely explore and develop their ideas during their play.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are confident, interested and keen to learn. They persevere and concentrate well during activities. Children form strong relationships with each other and the staff, take turns and begin to share, for example when waiting for their turn on the slide and when playing matching games as part of a small group. Children are successfully developing their personal independence as they become proficient in changing their shoes and clearing away their used plates and cups after snack time. However, they do not sufficiently select and use resources for themselves to initiate their own learning.

Children speak confidently to each other and to adults. They successfully develop their early reading skills as they recognise their names from cards, share books and regularly link sounds to letters during activities. Children attempt writing for different purposes, for example when naming their work and during role-play activities. Younger children make marks with older children writing recognisable letters of their name. Children are developing a strong interest in number as they spontaneously count and recognise numbers to ten, and some beyond. Older children are able to consolidate their mathematical skills as they are encouraged to estimate, compare numbers and solve simple number problems during activities and sing number songs. Children investigate capacity as they play with sand and water and competently use

language to describe size, shape and position.

Children learn more about the world they live in as they investigate a variety of interesting objects and living things. They observe changes in materials as they mix paints to make lighter and darker colours and take part in cooking activities. They develop an awareness of how things work as they move objects around in the canal system during water play using pumps and wheels, operate cameras and competently use computer programmes to support their learning. Children use a variety of large and small equipment confidently and with increasing control and are challenged to learn new skills as they toss pancakes, balance on stilts and throw balls through basket-ball nets.

Children draw on their experiences and imaginations as they play alongside each other and the staff in sustained role-play, for example they help the 'poorly animals' get better in the vets and take orders using phones and key-boards in 'the office'. Children sing songs and action rhymes and use musical instruments to investigate sound patterns. They use a range of interesting media to explore colour, shape and texture although children do not always have sufficient opportunities to choose resources for themselves and express their own ideas and feelings during art and craft activities.

Children make progress towards the early learning goals because most staff have a strong understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how young children learn. Staff explain things clearly and make very good use of questioning to challenge children's thinking and help them move on in their learning although some activities, such as craft activities, are occasionally over adult-led. Staff make regular observations of children's abilities against the stepping stones but do not always use this information to assess children's progress towards the early learning goals or to plan the next stage in learning for all children.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are warmly welcomed and are helped to play a part in the playgroup because staff value and respect their individuality. Children learn to respect themselves and other people as they use a range of resources reflecting positive images of diversity and take part in craft activities and puppet shows, for example, about Christmas, Diwali and Remembrance Day. They develop an awareness of their local community and the wider world through planned activities, visitors to the playgroup and outings, such as visits from the fire brigade and bus trips to the local library.

Children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language integrate within the group because satisfactory systems are in place to promote their welfare and development and help them participate in activities. Children are well behaved and polite. They learn what is expected of them as they respond to the clear guidelines and regular praise from staff who manage their behaviour positively and consistently. This fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children's care and well-being are promoted because staff have developed positive working relationships with parents. Information about the children's care and development is shared informally and a range of good quality written information, for example regular newsletters, notices and displays on the notice board is available to advise parents about the playgroup.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents' views about their child's needs and interests are established through the completion of the 'About Me' booklet when children join the playgroup and this enables staff to build on what children already know. Parents speak very positively about the setting and their children's learning and achievements. However, whilst parents are able to speak to staff and view their child's profiles at any time, there is no clear system to inform all parents about their child's progress towards the early learning goals and seek their views. This means that parents may not always have up-to-date information about their children's progress and their comments may not be used to plan the next stage in learning for all children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care and learning are promoted by the systems in place for the organisation of the playgroup and the satisfactory leadership and management of the nursery education. The staff and committee support each other well and have a clear vision to provide a safe and stimulating environment involving parents, where children can learn through play. Suitable systems are in place for recruitment, induction and staff appraisal which ensure that staff are clear about their roles and that policies and procedures are appropriately applied.

Children's care and welfare are safeguarded by well-maintained documentation although the registration system does not include departure times for children and staff. Children benefit from the effective organisation of space and deployment of staff so that they are well supported during their play and learning. The staff work well together as a strong team to ensure the sessions run smoothly. They are very committed to ongoing training to further develop their knowledge and skills and strive to continue to improve the quality of care and education for the children. Staff regularly discuss their practice and generally evaluate the provision of nursery education by informal means. The provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection it was recommended that documentation be developed to further promote children's safety, care and welfare. The written statement on special needs has been updated so that it is now in line with current legislation and guidance and ensures that staff and parents are fully informed about the action to be taken when caring for children with special needs. Comprehensive operational procedures have been put in place for the conduct of any outings and thorough risk assessments are now completed to identify any potential hazards to help keep children safe. The

registration system has been developed to include arrival times of children and staff but times of departure are not included and has been taken forward from this inspection.

The last nursery education inspection recommended that the playgroup develop opportunities for children to make choices and extend their own role-play, increase children's understanding of the effect of exercise on their bodies, and use the information gained from observations and assessments of children's progress to plan the next stage in learning for less and more able children. Further resources and activities have been introduced that increase opportunities for children to use their imaginations during role-play activities and children learn about the effect of exercise on their bodies, for example as they feel their hearts beating faster after physical activities. However, the system for linking information gained from observation and assessment of children's progress towards the early learning goals has not been used to plan the next stage in learning for all children and this has also been raised at this inspection.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There are no complaints to report.

## **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):

- make sure that the facilities and procedures for children to wash and dry their hands always help prevent the spread of infection
- make sure the registration system includes departure times for children and staff
- make sure further resources and play opportunities are provided that are freely accessible to children so that they can make choices and build on their natural curiosity as learners

#### **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):

- provide further opportunities for children to select and use activities and resources independently to initiate their own learning and to express their own ideas and feelings during art and craft activities
- develop the system for observation and assessment by making regular and informative assessments of children's progress towards the early learning goals. Make sure this information is used to plan the next stage in learning for all children
- make sure that all parents are given up-to-date information about children's progress towards the early learning goals and their comments and observations are sought and used to plan the next stage in learning for all children

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