

St Michael's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305327
Inspection date	27 March 2007
Inspector	Ron Goldsmith
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Registered person	St Michael's P.C.C
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 Michael's Pre-School operates from a church hall in Newton, Chester. The playgroup has been registered since 1975 and is managed by a committee of church members. Children have use of a large hall, quiet room, toilet facilities and a large enclosed garden.

Most children attending live locally. The setting is registered to provide sessional day care for 26 children aged from two to under five years at any one time. The provision is open four morning sessions per week, from 09.30 to 12.00 and two afternoon sessions, from 13.15 to 15.45 during term time only.

There are currently 39 children from two years to under four years on roll. Of these, 21 are receiving funding for early education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. There are 8 staff employed, 6 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Routines adequately support children's physical and emotional well-being. Children follow a programme of activities to promote their physical development. They have regular access to the outdoor play area to get fresh air and exercise. They learn to negotiate steps safely and move about restricted spaces with control. Planned activities include use of both small and large equipment to develop strength and coordination. Children move about independently and are closely supervised by staff. Children use a range of equipment for developing hand to eye control and manipulative skills.

Children learn a little about healthy choices through topics about food and they are aware that they need to wash their hands to prevent germs. Arrangements with parents over giving medication and dealing with accidents in an emergency are satisfactory.

Children eat food which is nutritious and suitably prepared. Children eat fruit often and they enjoy raisins and breadsticks. Children do not have access to drinks of water throughout the day but they are given a choice of water or milk at snack time. Some children are learning to pour their own drinks and select a snack for themselves. Children enjoy their snack time and they sit together chatting and being sociable.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are suitably maintained and secure to keep children safe. Children and parents enter a welcoming environment suitably laid out to make the best use of space. Children use a suitable range of equipment for their needs and capabilities. They learn to avoid tripping hazards outdoors and staff are vigilant about the children's safety. Staff check the safety of the rooms and the outdoor facilities using an appropriate risk assessment before children arrive. Any safety concerns are reported to the manager and acted on. Written risk assessments and records of accidents are reviewed to eliminate hazards. Staff supervise children closely.

Staff have sufficient knowledge of the signs and symptoms of abuse and the reporting procedures to keep children safeguarded, should they have a concern about a child. There are clear procedures relating to the protection of children from abuse. These support staff's sound understanding of child protection and how to follow the procedures if necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young children are encouraged to explore their environment with good resources and activities, such as items from play boxes, a range of materials with different textures, and singing songs and nursery rhymes together. A key worker system ensures they enjoy consistent interaction with people familiar to them. Staff listen and respond to children and support them effectively. Children have great fun outdoors as they play together on push and pedal toys. Planning for young children is based on an understanding of their developmental stage and themes are introduced each week to interest and stimulate them. They have sufficient opportunities to play creatively with a range of good resources and different materials, and begin to take an interest in stories and books.

Staff establish good relationships with children, which helps them to develop confidence and self-esteem. Their enthusiasm and friendliness encourages children to join in and participate. Children are able to make some choices and the layout of equipment and resources encourages some independence. Children sustain their play in activities well and there is a happy and busy atmosphere.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make steady progress towards early learning goals. Staff have sufficient knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance and use this to plan and provide a satisfactory range of activities and experiences under each of the six areas of learning. Staff who work with funded children have enough knowledge of what they can do from working with them previously, which helps them to plan activities at the appropriate level. However, staff do not take a systematic approach to making assessments, monitoring progress and planning the next steps for individual children. Planned activities are not fully evaluated in order to assess the learning outcomes and for staff to use to inform future plans.

Staff have an adequate understanding of some children's interests and approaches to learning.

Positive relationships have been established which foster children's self-esteem. This is reflected in the confidence with which children communicate with others and the pride they take in showing off their work. Children are developing some personal independence. Some are able to dress themselves for outside play. At snack times children are given roles of responsibility, for example, they help to pour their own drinks. When asked, they willingly help to put away chairs. Children confidently initiate interaction with adults. They competently speak in group situations, discussing events in their life at circle time.

Staff are aware of the needs of children with learning difficulties who may not yet register on the stepping stones towards early learning goals. They assess and plan well for these children due in part to their sound understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the support of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. Areas where these children make progress are within personal and social development and early language skills.

Children listen and respond well during circle time and make up stories during role play. They eagerly select their favourite book for reading and can name key characters. Children count during every day activities and use a range of equipment for making number patterns. They use mathematical language, such as 'this one is bigger', as they use building blocks to make towers or patterns.

Children enjoy singing favourite rhymes and actions songs with confidence. They experiment with different ways of using paint and collage. They explore colour as they apply paint with sponges or colour in drawings with crayons and pencils. They make Easter cards by gluing and sticking different shapes. They manipulate different textures and shapes as they cut, roll and manipulate play dough. They play imaginatively in the home corner, making telephone calls or playing with dolls and wheeling pushchairs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally well settled in the nursery because staff are sensitive to their needs and there is some continuity in each room through the key worker system. Children are given

sufficient choices to help them learn to make decisions. They gradually gain increased independence in their personal care, such as hanging up their own coats and pouring their own drinks.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. They learn how to be kind and caring through the example set by the staff, who act as good role models. Children help with putting equipment away to make a contribution to the cleanliness and safety of their environment. Staff give effective support to help children learn social skills and to behave well through positive methods, such as praise for good behaviour and setting clear boundaries.

Children's individual care needs are met effectively and if children are upset they are given hugs and reassurance. Staff work well with parents and other agencies to meet the needs of children with disabilities or who have English as a second language. Children take part in some activities to help them understand and appreciate diversity, such as Chinese New Year. There are some toys, books and resources to reflect diversity.

Children benefit from the close relationship staff have with parents. Parents speak highly of the provision and of their satisfaction with the care provided and their child's level of attainment. Parents are welcomed into the playgroup at any time and information is shared through informal daily discussion and written newsletters. Parents initially receive an information pack with copies of the provision's policies and procedures. Parents complete initial profiles on their children to help staff become familiar with their individual needs. Record keeping is satisfactory but there is no system in place yet for recording a suitable complaints summary for sharing with parents.

The partnership with parents of educationally funded children is satisfactory. At initial meetings with parents staff discuss the Foundation Stage and explain about the Nursery Education Grant system. However, parents receive very little written information about the learning programme or the early learning goals. There is no displayed information about the Foundation Stage and the programme of activities is not always made freely available. Parents may have access to their children's progress reports and formal meetings with key workers are organised each year.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff are well qualified and experienced in childcare, which is reflected in the good outcome for children's enjoyment and achievement. Their knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum is sound but staff do not always refer closely enough to the guidance documents to help them identify learning objectives in their planning and to review teaching methods for children.

The staff work well together as a team and the delegation of roles and responsibilities is effective. Development plans support staff in achieving qualifications. Key workers provide continuity and familiarity for children. Staff induction, policies and procedures are comprehensive and generally used well for children's safety. However, the setting has failed to ensure completion of appropriate vetting procedures for staff and therefore the suitability of all staff has not been verified. The setting has also not informed Ofsted of the appointment of new staff. This is a breach of regulations.

Leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. Staff generally use space and resources well to support teaching and learning. Children benefit from good staff ratios, giving

them plenty of individual attention. However, the provision have not established clear procedures to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, and to assess the impact on young children. This is because aims are often not specific enough or targeted in relation to individual children to gauge what learning has taken place.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations for improving childcare arising from the last combined inspection and three recommendations for improving nursery education.

The recommendations for childcare related to staff appraisals, the policy for uncollected children and the frequency of planned fire drills. The provider has made good improvements for children's safety and welfare. Fire drills are carried out frequently and the provider has introduced a policy to identify the procedure should a parent fail to collect a child. A staff appraisal system has been introduced to encourage staff and management to look at performance issues but this is not sufficiently detailed or frequent enough yet to influence practice.

Recommendations for nursery education were to offer children more experiences of pre-number activities to develop children's mathematical skills, increase opportunities for children to mark make in the role play area and to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

These recommendations have been partly addressed to improve some aspects of children's learning. Children have more opportunities to develop skills which precede writing numbers, such as sorting, matching and comparing through routines and practical activities. Children are given opportunities to mark make in the role play area and thus experience attempting to write for different purposes. Weekly plans identify activities for staff to do, but learning objectives are not stated clearly enough to be properly evaluated. When learning is not well evaluated it is difficult to plan what children should learn next, which has an impact on their potential to make progress. This is, therefore, a continuing area for improvement.

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 complaint 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):

- provide fresh drinking water for children at all times
- devise a complaints log which will enable parents to see a record of any complaints made about the provision
- ensure that systems for notifying Ofsted of changes to staff members are amended so that they contain details which enable the suitability of staff to be verified.

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 planning and assessment systems so that staff work to more clearly stated learning objectives for individuals and groups, and so that the quality of teaching can be evaluated more effectively
- provide written information for parents on the Foundation Stage so that they are informed about the learning programme and ensure they are given opportunities to be more involved in children's learning
- improve leadership and management by developing the monitoring systems for the effectiveness of the organisation and the quality of the educational programme (also applies to the provision of 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