

St Michaels Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109883
Inspection date	28 June 2007
Inspector	Coral Hales
Setting Address	Church Hall, Colebrook Way, Weyhill Road, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 3BB
Telephone number	07940 569651
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Registered person	St Michaels Pre - School
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 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 Michael's Preschool opened in 1975. It is a community group and operates from a playroom attached to the church hall in Andover. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open from 09:00 to 11:45 and 12:15 to 15:00 five days a week during term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 67 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 56 children receive funding for early education. The preschool supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The preschool employs seven members of staff. All have early years qualifications and three continue to train towards further qualifications. The setting receives support and guidance from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and from an advisory teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and child-friendly setting. They learn about the importance of good personal hygiene and visit the toilet and wash their hands as part of the daily routine and become independent in their personal care. Children are protected from illness and infection because appropriate health and hygiene procedures are in place. Accidents are dealt with efficiently and information is shared with parents. All staff hold first aid certificates and first aid boxes are in place. This ensures children receive appropriate treatment and in case of emergency consents for medical advice/treatment are maintained.

Children's healthy growth and development is promoted by staff who are aware of individual dietary requirements. Water is available and children can help themselves at any time. They begin to understand the principles of a healthy diet through planned activities. For example, they visit the local supermarket to look at all the different fruits from around the world that are available to buy. Children sit together as a group for snack, they enjoy the contact with each other and the staff. They are given time to taste, enjoy and finish their food in a relaxed and calm environment. During the inspection they chose from a selection of fruit and vegetables and cheese and crackers.

Children experience regular opportunities to play outside to experience physical activity and develop their skills. They use a good variety of outdoor equipment that enables them to climb and balance and improve their ball skills. Children develop an awareness of space and others around them as they for example, act out 'going on a lion hunt in the garden'. All have a positive attitude to exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in premises that are safe, secure and suitable. They are kept safe as good systems are in place which effectively maintain their safety and welfare. All areas are checked to ensure they are suitable for them to use and clear risk assessment documentation is maintained. Staff have a good understanding of health and safety issues and have a dedicated member of staff who keeps them up to date with new guidance. Child/staff ratios are well maintained which allows for individual support when necessary and children are well supervised.

Children use resources and take part in activities that are well suited to their age and ability. Equipment is well-maintained and suitably stored to allow children free access to allow them to develop their own play ideas.

Children are well protected from harm because staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection. They have been on basic and advanced training and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice. The setting has comprehensive policies and procedures in place and these include all current guidance and staff are aware. These are shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are confident, relaxed and settled in the pre-school. They are motivated and interested in the broad range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities which promotes their learning. Children make good progress because the staff know them well and close and caring relationships are evident. Staff foster children's curiosity well and provide activities with sufficient challenge to move learning forward. Children achieve well as staff have a good understanding of early years guidance, such as Birth to three matters and Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. They plan varied and appealing activities, which engage children's interests well, for example, the lion hunt effectively excites them and they are eager to take part. Children develop their independence as they play and are able to access resources for themselves and initiate their own ideas.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the stepping stones. They use this knowledge well to encourage children's interest and help them to learn and make progress. Staff plan with the curriculum with activities linked to themes and learning intentions are clearly identified and activities are then evaluated. Staff appropriately structure the session into free play sessions where children choose from a range of activities. They can work individually or undertake adult directed ones, for example, making the binoculars to use later on the 'lion hunt'. Staff are skilled at maintaining a good commentary about what is happening and this develops children's interest in learning. For example, the role-play area set up as a vets in the Safari Park provides many opportunities for children to acquire lots of new vocabulary and phrases. Staff keep comprehensive and informative assessment records for all children and these are shared with parents to show how progress is being made and noted. These are then used to plan for each child's future learning.

Children's personal independence is developing well and this is effectively promoted by staff. For example, different children are chosen daily to be 'helpers' and stickers are given out to those who have been kind or helpful. This ensures that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Children are aware of the guidelines and the expectations such as tidying toys and resources away. They develop a good awareness of their own needs and a respect for the needs of others. They are patient and kind with new children and readily share toys and offer them support as they settle in.

Children are clear and fluent speakers and use their developing vocabulary well to express themselves. They understand when it is their turn to talk and when to listen as they sit together at circle time. They begin to recognise their names and letter sounds, however few opportunities are available for children's learning to be extended. They develop their early writing skills and use marks to represent their ideas, for example as they make lists, attempt to write their name and as they take messages in the 'Vets'. Children love stories and listen intently to them and can recount favourites such as the 'Lion hunt' and very effective interaction by staff brings the story to life. Good use of symbols and pictures and home words helps those learning English as an additional language to fully participate in all activities. Children begin to develop their number skills and have opportunities to practise counting, for example, at circle time. However, this is not helping them to relate numbers to items and routine activities are not always used effectively to allow children to develop an understanding of practical mathematics. During a group discussion the children tell staff what number is on the door at home. Whilst making

models the children sort bricks and they predict what they will need to finish it. They enjoy stories and counting songs and join in well.

Children explore the local environment and begin to have an understanding of the local and wider community. They go out for walks and observe the changing seasons in the garden. Themes are used effectively to develop the children's knowledge of the wider world, for example, they learn about different countries and cultures as they discuss different animals from around the world. They show developing coordination and control as they successfully use simple working technology. Children show increasing skill when using the computer and discuss that the game will not work as it has 'frozen' and staff need to 'mend it'. Daily routines allow children to make sense of time for example, they discuss that 'snack is next, then we will go on the lion hunt'. They create models and displays to represent what they have talked about, for example, children help to make a large display of wild animals and then create 'binoculars' to use later. They enjoy painting their feet and then compare their prints with the animal prints to see how different they are. Children's imagination is well developed and they enjoy role-play in the well resourced area and laugh and giggle as they play. They enjoy singing both as a planned activity, for example, when the music lady comes in and spontaneously as they play and 'Twinkle Twinkle' was sung by two children as they sat in the 'Vets'.

Children are always keen to take part and enjoy using the garden on a regular basis. They develop new skills as they run, jump, climb and have lots of fun in the fresh air. Planned activities allow them to extend their learning in the outdoor area. They use a good range of construction building kits, malleable materials, small world toys and puzzles to develop and improve their fine motor skills. For example, they play in dry sand and fill and empty containers and cut up and mould with playdough and as a group complete a large floor puzzle.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop caring and cooperative relationships and begin to show respect for the needs of others and are encouraged to be helpful and kind to others. They have a positive attitude towards themselves and recognise the need to share and take turns when involving themselves in each others play. For example, before joining in with sand play they ask 'please can I play too'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children develop an understanding of diversity through a variety of multicultural resources and learn about different festivals, for example, Chinese New Year. Staff work closely with parents to support children with English as an additional language and these children quickly settle into the routine of the group. The Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) helps ensure children with learning disabilities are identified at an early stage. She works closely with the parents and other professionals to ensure all children make good progress. Appropriate paperwork is in place and this is used effectively as required.

All children behave well as they purposefully occupy themselves and receive good levels of support. They play well together and chat happily as they work alongside each other at the various activities. They respond well to staff who praise positive behaviour and stickers are awarded for a job well done.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are made aware of the policies and procedures and receive a brochure which includes all details about the pre-school. Clear information about the Birth to three framework for children under three years and about the

Foundation Stage and six areas of learning is included. Curriculum plans are displayed for the parents which allows them to become involved in their child's learning. Staff keep parents well informed about their child's progress through daily informal discussions and via the new formal meetings. Parents comment positively about the caring pre-school staff, the good organisation of the group and how the children love coming. All complaints are logged and procedures are carried out well and parents are aware of the system to follow if they have any concerns.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children thrive in a warm and welcoming environment and are happy and settled. Their care is enhanced by efficient and effective organisation. The space within the premises is well laid out to maximise play opportunities for the children. They are well supervised by the motivated and experienced staff who follow the policies and procedures to appropriately protect children and promote their well-being. Staff are effectively deployed to ensure that children receive a good level of care and attention. Children are given time and space to initiate their own learning and develop play ideas at their own individual learning pace. All records relating to children are kept secure to maintain confidentiality. All documentation is well-organised and updated regularly to allow staff to access information easily and all required documentation is available for inspection.

Leadership and Management is good.

Staff are qualified and experienced and have clear aims to improve and maintain the quality of education for the children in their care. They meet together as a team regularly to discuss practice, children's progress and planning. This enables them to provide a varied and interesting range of suitable activities to meet the children's needs. Staffs' ongoing suitability is monitored effectively and annual appraisals identify training needs and staff regularly attend courses and workshops to further develop their knowledge and skills. The senior staff and committee meet regularly and this enables them to identify and improve weaknesses. The very caring and knowledgeable staff work together well and clear channels of communication are in place with the managing committee. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the quality of the care was judged to be inadequate. The staff were required to improve their knowledge and understanding of regulations and to ensure Ofsted was notified of significant incidents. They were also required to review their child protection policies and procedures to ensure they complied with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff were to be aware of them and adhere to the guidance issued. It was further identified that children were not suitably protected as the heaters were not covered.

The staff and committee have worked well together to address these issues. Training has been attended, documentation has been updated and new procedures put into place to ensure that Ofsted is notified of significant incidents. The heaters were immediately covered until new fixed guards could be ordered and these are now in place. These measures have had a significant impact on the safety and well-being of the children.

The last education inspection identified that assessment systems required improving to ensure children's progress was clearly shown and that this information was used to improve the planning

to allow all children to reach their full potential. They were also asked to make parents aware of their child's progress. Staff have developed and improved their systems and these work very efficiently to inform planning to allow the children to make good progress. Children's progress is shared with parents during planned interviews booked with the child's key member of staff. These changes have had a positive impact on children's learning and ensure parents are kept well informed.

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 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):

- enable children to further develop their practical mathematical skills as they take part in daily routines

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 more opportunities for children to recognise their names and to have this learning extended and enable children to relate numbers to items to reinforce their knowledge and understanding

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