

St Philip & St James Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101518
Inspection date	25 April 2007
Inspector	Jennifer Read
Setting Address	60 Painswick Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 2ER
Telephone number	01242 250212
E-mail	
Registered person	St Philip & St James Playgroup
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 Philip & St James playgroup is situated in the Leckhampton area of Cheltenham close to Cheltenham College, and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents. The playgroup operates from the church rooms attached to the church of St Philip and St James. It is registered to care for 24 children aged from two to five years and accepts those from two years nine months. There are currently 40 children on roll, of these, 29 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup is open Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 12.00 during school term times only.

The playgroup employs six members of staff. Two staff members, including the play leader, hold the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification. Two staff members are working towards the National Vocational Qualification in Childcare and Education at Level 2 and 3. All staff have first aid and child protection training. Parents help in the playgroup on a rota system and a French and music teacher visits the group once a week. The playgroup receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good health and hygiene practices and develop independence in their personal care well. They know to wash and dry their hands before snack, cooking activities and after using the toilet. Children stay healthy and are well protected from infection. Staff clean and prepare the tables before children sit down to eat their snack and implement effective cleaning and food preparation routines.

The children's health is well protected within an environment where the staff has a sound understanding about treatment for minor injuries, specific allergies and the administration of medication. All records are signed by parents and most entries contain the date and time of the accident. All staff are qualified in first aid and trained in the administration of an EpiPen. They record and display comprehensive information about children's specific dietary requirements and liaise very closely with parents. All staff are very vigilant about the different foods and ingredients purchased and of containers and household recyclable materials that are brought into the setting. This ensures children remain healthy.

Children learn to appreciate healthy foods and choices through provision of a varied, balanced diet. Children devour the jelly and bananas and readily ask for second helpings. They enjoy preparing their own sandwiches, using cutters to make shapes in the bread and readily choose their fillings. This adds to children's independence and enjoyment of food. Snack time is a social occasion where staff encourage conversation with each other and talk about how eating healthy foods helps them grow and be strong. Children are kept well hydrated. They have easy access to milk, water or juice at snack time and help themselves to their individual drink containers to keep refreshed.

Children benefit from daily fresh air and effective challenges to build on their co-ordination and physical development. Daily access to robust play in the outdoor area or playrooms enables children to practise and develop new skills, which contributes to a healthy lifestyle. For example, children develop their large muscles by running around the grass area, kicking, throwing and catching footballs and joining in mini assault courses. They gain control of their body as they climb, crawl and slide on the climbing apparatus and use a range of tools competently. Children relish participating in toddler aerobics and exercising to music accompanied by a visiting music teacher each week. During this time, children are introduced to rhythms, sounds and dance which increases their co-ordination in a fun way. Children are encouraged to be aware of what is happening to their bodies as they exercise and learn how to keep themselves healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a secure environment where their safety and security is given suitable priority. Although there is no written risk assessment in place, daily visual safety checks of play areas indoors and out helps ensure staff identify and minimise the main risks. For example, installation of portable safety fencing in the garden, displaying notices on the main door and ensuring it is kept locked at all times, ensures children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. However, infrequent discussion or practise of the escape plan means many new children have no awareness of appropriate action to take to keep themselves safe in an emergency.

Staff promote children's safety through well-implemented procedures for their safe arrival and collection. Children recognise boundaries established for safe play, for instance, placing chairs under the table when they leave the table at snack time and picking up their small mats after circle time to prevent someone from tripping.

The spacious play areas are organised and presented invitingly to promote children's interests and encourage learning. Colourful, bright and vibrant displays, photographs of the children and numerous posters, aid children's enjoyment. The rooms are divided to provide different learning and play experiences, such as, imaginative role-play area, graphics, creative activities, mathematics and book corner.

Children are confident and self-assured and move to activities of their choice indoors and outdoors. They select toys and play items for themselves from clearly labelled, low-level storage units. Necessary items like paper towels, coats pegs and drink bottles are displayed at child-height to encourage easy access. They have a personal draw in which to keep their belongings and place their own work. This significantly encourages children's independence.

The high number of staff and parent helpers present each session ensures children are well supervised during play. Staff safeguard children's welfare through generally good knowledge of child protection procedures. However, the child protection policy is incomplete, the attendance register is not accurate and rigorous systems for the vetting and induction of new staff are not formalised and well known to securely monitor adults caring for the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settle well because staff greet them warmly on arrival. They take part in a broad range of activities during the session to support and encourage their interests and experiences. Children gain confidence and self-esteem because they know staff listen to them. Staff integrate all children very well and encourage all children to contribute to the planning of activities. For example, a child asks for the cars and another asks to have a turn on the computer. Training on the Birth to three matters framework is being sought to compliment the already effective planning.

Children are developing an understanding of being part of a bigger social group. They readily participate in large and small group activities, such as, registration time, daily show and tell sessions and take it in turns to count the number of adults and children present each day. They develop confidence as they talk about their holidays, share photographs and discuss as a group how they travelled, making models to represent their mode of transport.

The freedom of daily choice allows children to instigate their own play and extend it further. For example, children go shopping in the home corner for their 'party picnic' food and ask staff for 'pennies' for the till to support and extend their play. As a result, children spend their time purposefully and are progressing well. Children enjoy role-play, sand, dough and magnetic letters. These help develop children's hand and eye co-ordination and small muscle control. All children watch the process of change as they help to plant and care for seeds and bulbs, and excitedly explore different pulses, rice and pasta to make musical instruments. Children make positive relationships with each other and staff, initiating conversations during play and supporting each other during daily routines.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making sound progress because staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and demonstrate good understanding of how children learn. Children are becoming autonomous in their play and learning because staff are effective facilitators and support them well. The planning cycle is guided successfully by what staff have observed about the children and by the children's needs and interests. Children readily contribute ideas to the medium term plans, deciding what they would like to learn from each topic. For example, 'I would like to learn about the beach', 'I would like to make a travel agents', 'I would like to pretend to go on holiday'. Planning clearly indicates intended learning and meets the individual needs of the children.

Daily evaluations are used very well and inform planning effectively. Discussion about the activities and how they can be challenged or supported ensure children experience a stimulating environment across all six areas of learning. Consequently, staff know the children very well and differentiate instinctively for more or less able children. The staff intelligently use a range of teaching methods, practical activities and visual tools to support children's learning effectively. For instance, a French tutor and music and dance teacher visit weekly to extend children's learning and experiences.

Staff make occasional activity related observations and discuss these at the end of each session. These help inform children's individual assessments and future planning. However, there is no formalised system in place to show how and when achievements have been made and assessments are not consistently up-dated to give a clear indication of individual progress. Nonetheless, once a term, staff track individual children to complete learning stories and identify a next step.

Staff create an environment conducive to learning, organising the space and resources well to promote children's independence and decision-making skills. Children assist in tidying their play resources, helping themselves to drinks and selecting their own toys in the areas that are left free. Children respond well to balanced support and adult involvement in their play and are keen to include them. They display an increasing level of independence and confidence as they settle into the routines and manage their personal care.

Many children recognise their written names and refer to these when finding their draws to store completed work, hang up their coats or find their place setting at snack time. They have good opportunity to communicate and express themselves becoming familiar with letters and letter sounds as they excitedly play 'I spy', enjoy books and sharing news. This is assisted by daily 'show and tell' sessions and circle time discussions. Children are beginning to practise and develop their emergent writing both in adult-led and free-play activities. For example, children make marks to represent their names on their pictures and children that are more able confidently access the writing tools and materials to begin to write words and make cards for their parents.

Children use mathematical language spontaneously in their play and during planned activities. For example, drawing round their bodies and deciding who is the tallest, shortest, and predicting how many dinosaurs are left during the story. Effective questioning from staff and introducing rhyming words, such as, tree for number three, assists children in predicting what number comes next. Children have generally good opportunities to count and use numbers in daily routines, counting how many children and adults are present each day.

Children confidently use a range of everyday technology in their play, operating the mouse and completing simple programmes with growing skill. Children are starting to understand the

passing of time as they learn about life cycles and bring in photographs of themselves as babies and pictures of how they are now. However, identifying the day of the week, yesterday and tomorrow does not routinely take place. They eagerly explore and investigate the natural environment showing interest in living things as they observe a worm on the grass and using cameras to capture things of interest. For example, unusual mushrooms and different wildlife and plants when on nature walks. Well-planned activities and excellent resources and artefacts relating to a range of cultures and customs, such as Africa, enables children to gain a good awareness of the wider world.

Children enjoy a wide and varied range of creative activities that stimulate their interests and increase their awareness of texture and different resources. For example, they design and construct using magnetic blocks and recyclable materials making aeroplanes, trains and cars. They paint for a purpose and as a free play activity, discovering what happens when they mix different colours together on their hands or press shells and shapes into clay and play dough. Children enjoy regular music sessions and eagerly participate in familiar songs. They explore the different sounds of instruments, tapping out simple rhythms and respond with enthusiasm as they join in weekly music and movement sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a wide selection of well-planned activities and resources, which help them value diversity. They enjoy weekly French lessons from an outside tutor and engage in a broad range of topics and celebrations. For example, children show interest when learning about animals from Africa, practising simple songs and words in Zulu and exploring African artefacts, instruments and dressing up clothes to enrich their experiences.

Staff support individual children and those who speak English as a second language well. Introduction of language weeks relevant to the children attending the setting encourages a strong sense of belonging and broadens children's awareness of other cultures and languages from around the world. Although no children currently attend, staff work closely with other agencies and have forged links with Betteridge special needs school. Children readily participate in charity events joining in a 'bunny hop' and dressing-up in old school uniforms to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Children are learning responsible behaviour through the consistent, calm and positive approach of staff. They feel valued and a clear sense of identity because staff display their work, photographs and provide frequent praise and encouragement. As a result, children are well behaved, are beginning to show appreciation of each other's work and take turns co-operatively. Useful strategies, such as, the ten minute egg timer and number signs to indicate how many children are allowed at some activities, enables children to learn to manage their own behaviour. Children demonstrate sound awareness of the boundaries for expected behaviour eagerly helping to tidy away toys when hearing the music or alarm clock.

The partnership with parents of children receiving funding for nursery education is satisfactory. Parents value the homely environment, friendly staff and the support children receive to encourage their independence and free choice. Colourful wall displays, photographs throughout the rooms and displaying of children's individual learning stories, enables parents to support their child's learning at home and at the setting. However, parents receive little information about, the Foundation Stage, how their child moves through the stepping stones and their

on-going progress. Assessment records are available for parents to see when they wish, although these are not all up-to-date to enable parents to see an accurate record of attainment.

Parents take an active part in the life of the setting. They are usefully employed as parent helpers and contribute ideas to the planning of activities, resources and events through the parent questionnaires. Children benefit from the informal contact and close working partnership with their parents and staff. They receive informative termly newsletters, a useful notice board with articles about events within the community, policies and procedures and general information about daily activities and planning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. Children's learning is of a consistently good standard and they are making sound progress from their individual starting points. All six areas of learning are given equal emphasis and learning stories are used well to highlight areas for development. Although further monitoring is necessary to ensure observations and assessments are completed routinely and show an accurate record of attainment. Staff are actively involved in contributing and completing the weekly planning. As a result, staff are well informed and have a sound awareness of intended learning.

Children benefit from careful organisation of staff, play areas and resources to significantly enhance their independent learning. Children are happy and relaxed because the staff work very well as a team and facilitate their learning successfully. Staff arrive early to the setting to present the setting nicely and create a stimulating and inclusive environment for children.

The play leader is an effective role model and sets clear directions through weekly staff meetings and daily evaluations, which are leading to positive improvements. The management and staff have a clear vision for the setting and a generally good understanding of their strengths and areas for development. The committee values staff's commitment to the children and encourages personal development. Staff attend regular training to enhance their skills and knowledge and commit to occasional appraisals to highlight additional areas for development.

The operational plan is currently being up-dated to reflect new legislation. However, the recruitment procedures are not rigorous and the induction process is not formalised and requires further revision. Although the attendance and accident records are not complete, all the required records are in place, stored confidentially and available to parents. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting was asked to up-date the complaints and accident policies and develop the child protection statement to include the procedures to be followed in the event of allegations of abuse or neglect. The complaints policy reflects the new legislation and includes reference to the regulator to inform parents. Staff show a sound awareness of the procedure to follow if a child has an accident. The child protection policy has been up-dated but does not contain sufficient detail if an allegation is made.

At the last nursery education inspection, the setting was asked to develop challenges within everyday routines to help children identify initial sounds, write recognisable letters and use mathematical awareness to solve simple problems; and to improve information to parents about

the Foundation Stage and stepping stones. Suitable progress has been made to extend children's skills in identifying initial sounds and practising emergent writing. Effective questioning from staff is enhancing children's mathematical awareness. Details to parents about the Foundation Stage and stepping stones still requires further thought on the best way to share this information.

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):

- devise and implement rigorous vetting and induction procedures to reflect new guidelines and develop the child protection statement to include procedures to be followed in the event of allegations of abuse or neglect made against staff.
- ensure the attendance register shows an accurate record of all children, staff and visitors present at any one time.
- take positive steps to promote all children's safety through regular practise of the escape plan so that new children learn safe, appropriate action to take in an emergency.

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 systems to monitor children's assessments to show more clearly children's progress and next steps.
- further develop the methods to inform parents of the Foundation Stage, stepping stones and their children's on-going progress.

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