

St Augustine's Under 5's

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	124113
Inspection date	09 May 2007
Inspector	Jill Nugent
Setting Address	Charlton Close, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, EN11 8DR
Telephone number	01992 460614
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Registered person	St Augustine's Under 5's
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 Augustine's Under Fives opened in 1973. It operates from St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church in Hoddesdon. The group is open from 09:00 until 12:00 every weekday, during term time, and also on Monday and Thursday afternoons when there is sufficient demand. Children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

A maximum of 29 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. Currently, there are 79 children on roll, of whom 50 are funded for nursery education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs seven members of staff, and of these, six hold relevant early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted effectively because staff have good medical procedures in place. Their records are well maintained and the necessary permissions requested from parents. Children are well taken care of in the event of an accident as staff are well qualified in first aid. Parents are informed of any accidents and sign to acknowledge. There is a procedure in place for ensuring accident records are confidential, although this is not ideal and may result in parents seeing information about other children. All staff are made aware of children's medical history, such as, particular allergies, and notices are displayed in the appropriate places to alert adults to any specific needs. Children are protected from infection as parents are given clear information about excluding their children if they have an infectious illness. Staff take precautions to protect children in hot weather outdoors, for example, setting up a gazebo. Overall, their procedures work well in helping children to stay healthy.

Staff pay very good attention to matters of hygiene. They regularly clean the play areas, and toilets, so that children are cared for in a suitably clean environment. There is a designated changing area for children, with all resources at hand, so that children can be changed in a hygienic manner. Staff monitor hygiene closely, liaising with outside professionals if necessary. Recently this has resulted in the purchase of a new fridge to ensure good food quality and the cutting back of a tree to avoid a health risk from pigeons. Children are becoming aware of good hygiene practices themselves. They know to wash their hands after going to the toilet or touching animals. Staff provide wipes so that children can clean their hands before eating at snack time. This attention to hygiene contributes to children keeping healthy.

Children are learning about a healthy lifestyle through the provision of a wide range of healthy snacks. For example, they enjoy choosing from a variety of fruits and vegetables, crackers and bread. They have opportunities to try food from different cultures. Children with specific dietary requirements have their needs met well because all adults are aware of any special diets. Children benefit from the social nature of snack time, joining in conversation in small groups. They have a choice of drinks and water is available at all times to prevent them from becoming dehydrated. Overall, children are well nourished and have good opportunities to find out about healthy eating.

Children enjoy regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors. There is excellent provision for them to develop physical skills in the newly improved outdoor area and recently developed crypt area. They have fun using the climbing apparatus, caterpillar tunnel, hoops and balls. They develop their control and co-ordination as they ride cars, bikes and scooters around outdoors, or balance on beams indoors. They enjoy running around and exploring the various resources, negotiating space and becoming more aware of their own bodies. Children benefit from being able to get fresh air and exercise whatever the weather and this helps them to keep fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very welcoming environment. The surroundings are bright, and comfortable, and extremely well-organised so as to allow children to move freely and safely around the setting. The many colourful pictures and posters are displayed to good effect and

help towards providing a child friendly environment. The radiators and electrical sockets are covered for safety and cleaning materials stored out of reach of children. There are good fire precautions in place and children practise an evacuation plan regularly so that they know what to do in an emergency. Staff minimise potential risks effectively through a system of daily risk assessments and checks. If any risks are highlighted, they are recorded and acted upon accordingly. Therefore, children keep safe at all times.

Children use a wide variety of interesting and stimulating resources. The toys and games are suitable for children of differing ages and abilities, and are checked regularly for safety. The resources are in good condition and made from a variety of materials, making them attractive for children. Staff rotate the resources during each session, and from day to day, according to the current theme and children's interests. Children can access these independently on table tops, carpets or from low level drawers. All outdoor equipment is placed on a safe surface. Safety barriers have been installed in the crypt so that children only play in a designated area. Staff continually monitor the physical activity areas so that children can continue to play safely. They encourage children's awareness of personal safety through discussion, story telling and role play.

Staff ensure that children are secure on the premises. The doors are kept locked and the outdoor area is inaccessible to outsiders. Staff monitor visitors to the setting and ensure children's security at the beginning and end of sessions. Their system for the collection of children works particularly well as all adults enter the building before children finish their group time in a quiet room. Staff ensure that parents and carers are aware of security issues, for example, they have recently added a notice requesting that parents inform them if leaving the building. Staff take care that children only leave with a known adult. They have a very good understanding of child protection issues. There is a system in place for the recording of any concerns and supporting information is easily accessible to staff. They are therefore able to seek advice if they feel it is necessary. Consequently, children are well protected in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are very settled and play happily. They come in to each session enthusiastically and are keen to have a go at the various activities. For example, they enjoy digging in the sand while wearing special 'hard' hats, and fitting together trains to push around a track. They have good relationships with each other and like to play together in pairs, or groups. They have fun in large group times, singing songs and rhymes. Children are gaining confidence as they interact with adults, ask questions and request extra resources. Staff encourage them to be independent in many ways and children confidently access toys and games, and make choices. For instance, they get out bits and bobs for sticking or find alternative tools to manipulate play dough. Children enjoy playing and exploring independently, often becoming very involved in their play. They benefit from the wide range of resources available and delight in finding new things to explore as they move around the setting, for example, rolling coloured balls down a spiral, experimenting with three-dimensional shapes or spinning patterned cogs.

Children participate in a wide range of activities which support their development and learning. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework effectively in their planning so as to meet the needs of young children. They offer excellent opportunities for children to explore, and to be creative and imaginative. Very young children are allowed to play freely and independently to help them settle and develop social skills. For example, staff are very flexible in their organisation of afternoon sessions in order to encourage children to enjoy themselves. Children develop

communication skills as staff join in play with them and engage them in conversation. Children respond positively to staff's interest, for example, taking up suggestions to share a book or draw a picture.

Staff promote learning through play particularly well. They share information with children, for example, about a collection of sea animals. They demonstrate how to make things work, such as, musical instruments. They take opportunities just to talk with children. Consequently, children develop many new skills in play activities which are relevant to their age and ability. For instance, they learn how to complete puzzles, construct models and shape play dough. They discover how the words and pictures in a book express meaning and they become aware of numbers and patterns. There are good opportunities for children to take part in imaginative play and explore art and craft materials. They enjoy much praise for their attempts and achievements which helps to develop their self esteem.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use a variety of teaching methods to implement the Foundation Stage and these are very successful in helping children to gain knowledge and skills in all the learning areas. Children show much interest in the activities on offer. They persist at self chosen tasks and are especially pleased when they succeed. They are developing language skills through discussion, for example, when talking about what they did at the weekend. They enjoy 'chatting' on telephones and mark making in notebooks. Children are learning to recognise their names and how to write them. When doing jigsaw puzzles with adults they practise counting and learn to recognise numerals. They count confidently as they work out how many are present at registration time. They like to join in with number rhymes which help to increase their awareness of simple calculation. In pattern making activities, children become aware of shape and colour. Overall, children are developing good skills in language, literacy and numeracy in both free play and organised activities.

Children learn about their environment and living things. They enjoy looking closely at caterpillars and learning about their lifecycle. They learn to recognise different animals when matching toy animals to pictures. Children develop skills required in technology through fitting together construction pieces and making models using recycled materials. They learn to use their senses in various activities. For example, they listen to different musical instruments and to everyday sounds on tape. In creative activities, they make items related to particular themes, such as a textured picture of Elmer elephant and sound shakers. They also have opportunities to develop their own ideas in free painting and printing activities. Children are developing very good physical skills through a variety of activities, for example, doing actions to music or finding different ways of using hoops. The recent introduction of a new computer has provided them with an opportunity to extend their learning in all areas.

Staff plan the educational programme around various themes and provide a good balance of activities across the six learning areas. The plans are very clear and manageable, showing what children are expected to learn and how their learning is to be organised. This helps staff to offer a stimulating learning environment for children and also to focus learning through small group activities. They explain clearly to children what each activity involves. They offer children informed choices and encourage them to think through asking questions and developing conversation. They take opportunities during free play and group times to extend children's learning. For example, encouraging the use of mathematical language, challenging children to listen carefully to sounds, counting items inside shakers. Small group times work extremely well in providing extra learning opportunities, for example, playing games, feeling objects,

cutting out or drawing. Staff make observations on children's progress during activities and when engaged in specific tasks. These are used to mark progress on assessment sheets, although there are limited categories of assessment in some areas. This means that the achievements of more able children are not always noted in order to enable further extension. Staff make good use of their evaluations of plans, and their knowledge of children's needs, in order to guide the future planning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children feel valued, and included, because staff have a very good understanding of how to promote equal opportunities in the setting. They liaise with parents to find out about children's backgrounds and take these into account in providing appropriate care. 'Happy helpers' are chosen each day from amongst the children and this helps them to feel particularly special. Children have a real sense of belonging. They receive a friendly welcome from staff and have their own pegs, attractively labelled, on which to hang their belongings. They gather together for a registration time, when they are able to show any items they have brought in. They are becoming aware of others' needs, for example, older children look after younger children and all take part in fund raising events. Children learn about a wider society through using a range of multicultural resources. They celebrate the various Christian festivals throughout the year and also learn about other religious and cultural festivals. In these ways, they develop respect for other people.

Children receive very good support from staff. They are very happy in the setting and always involved in purposeful play. The atmosphere is calm, and busy, as children enjoy numerous choices of play activities. Their individual needs are met effectively by members of staff, for example, unsettled children are given one-to-one attention to encourage them to join in. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to develop appropriate skills through target setting. Staff liaise with outside professionals, and parents, in order to set up individual programmes for these children, based on close observation using a specific toolkit. Children have excellent personal independence. They learn to make decisions through having routine choices during the session and a selection of resources from which to choose within each activity. They look after themselves at snack time, wiping their own hands, selecting foods and pouring drinks. Consequently, children are self confident and able to make their own positive contribution to the group.

Children's behaviour is extremely good. They are learning to negotiate and share fairly. They are attentive at group times and sit quietly when asked. Children are all actively engaged during group activities and so benefit fully from the experience. They are reminded of safety rules when necessary, for example, not to run or play under tables. They cooperate well with requests from staff and join in at tidy up time in response to the music being played. Children learn to behave responsibly because staff explain issues to them, encouraging an apology and giving children time to calm down. Therefore, they are aware of their boundaries and learn to distinguish right from wrong. Staff make very good use of incident forms to keep parents informed about any recurring or serious issues. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff work very closely with parents and carers in order to offer the appropriate care for children. The policies are readily available to parents and the prospectus includes information about the procedures, and daily routine. The notice boards are used to good effect to ensure that parents are aware of all the relevant procedures. Staff liaise with parents to help settle new children in

and there is a rota for parent helpers. This helps parents to feel involved in the setting, and also with their children's care. Staff seek parents' views about their provision so that they can take these into account when considering possible ways to improve.

The partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is good. Parents receive detailed information about the Foundation Stage and early learning goals. They complete a questionnaire about their children when they start so that staff are aware of each child's stage of development. Parents are invited to talk with staff at any time if wanting to discuss their children's progress. The assessment files include a handy visual chart outlining children's progress that can be easily used in discussion. There is information about the educational programme in the regular newsletters which describes what children will be learning in the planned activities. This enables parents to be involved in their children's learning. Overall, children benefit greatly from the close working partnership between staff and parents.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The policies and procedures work successfully in practice to promote the outcomes for children. The documentation provides an excellent framework for the overall provision of care and education. All paperwork is kept neatly in labelled files and is easily accessible. The policies are regularly updated and cover every eventuality. Information about children is kept securely in the office and emergency contacts are readily available. The attendance records are very well maintained with specific times entered if necessary. There are good employment and induction procedures in place and staff records are detailed and confidential. The written planning for the educational provision is always on display a week ahead of time so that staff can be well prepared for each week. Staff undergo formal appraisals and also peer observations. In this way they are encouraged in their professional development and also contribute to the ongoing monitoring of the provision. Since the previous inspection staff have attended training in various areas including, Special Needs, the 'Birth to three matters' framework, and aspects of language and numeracy. Children benefit from their acquired knowledge and skills.

Staff have a very high regard for the well-being of all children. They always set out the resources and activities prior to opening and are therefore ready to welcome children and join them in play. They work to good ratios so that there is an extra member of staff available at all times. They make very good use of the available space by offering a wide range of activities to children in the various rooms, and outdoor areas. The recently developed outdoor area is an excellent facility and particularly child friendly. In good weather staff take various other activities outdoors and children can make use of the grassy area in the church garden. The organisation of the daily routine, and use of music at transition times, helps the sessions to run very smoothly. The splitting of children into groups at various times helps them to be included and involved in each experience. This excellent practical organisation of the provision results in a stimulating environment and purposeful play atmosphere. Children can enjoy and achieve in a safe, healthy and exciting environment. Overall, children's needs are met.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The team leader manages the setting very effectively through supporting the whole team, being actively involved and always on hand. She works closely with the church and primary school in order to continually improve the provision for children. She has worked together with staff to find a system for planning the nursery education which is both manageable and flexible. She monitors the provision through discussion with staff and is very open to new ideas, encouraging the integration of care and learning to enhance children's learning. At present, staff are renewing

their accreditation with the Pre-School Learning Alliance and also the Hertfordshire Quality Standards. The team leader's vision and contribution to the group ensures that it maintains its high standards in all areas.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection, staff were asked to ensure that there is a procedure in place in case of a child being lost. They were also asked to make sure drinking water is available to children at all times. A written procedure is now in place and drinking water is available to children throughout the day. This response has improved the health and safety outcomes for all children.

At the previous nursery education inspection, staff were asked to review the provision of activities that challenge children in language, literacy and mathematics, and ensure that assessments of children's progress are used to inform future planning. There is now a collection of extended learning sheets available to children and these are used to challenge and extend their learning in these areas. The planning of the educational programme has been improved through the introduction of regular meetings and closer monitoring of children's needs.

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):

- review the procedure for recording accidents so as to ensure that records remain confidential.

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):

- extend the assessment system so that the more able children can be extended further in their learning.

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