

St Chads Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218229
Inspection date	24 April 2007
Inspector	Sarah Jane Rhodes

Setting Address	Liverpool Road, Red Street, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 7AF
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Registered person	St Chads Playgroup
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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. Chad's Playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the playgroup. It opened in 1987 and operates from St. Chad's Church in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open term time, Monday to Thursday from 09:00 to 11:45. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 34 children aged from two-and-a-half to under five years on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local community. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs five members of staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment. They enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. Being active is encouraged. Physical activities are undertaken on a daily basis, such as music and movement, acting out familiar action songs, for example, 'Row, row row your boat' and extending this to include going on a treasure hunt or riding bikes and playing with hoops outside. Most children join in enthusiastically as the staff support and monitor their play. Children develop their physical skills and have a positive attitude towards exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene through daily routines. They are able to use adequate hand washing facilities and are generally independent in their self care skills. They know that they need to wash their hands before eating their snack and after using the toilet. However, the risk of cross-contamination remains for both adults and children through the use of communal hand towels for hand drying after using the toilet. Children's medical needs both in an emergency and with regard to ongoing medication are met through the use of accident and medication procedures that are clear and understood by all the staff. Clear procedures for sick and infectious children help prevent the spread of infection through this avenue and keeps children healthy.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. They have access to drinks throughout the session ensuring they are not left thirsty. The playgroup provides a mid-morning snack of toast and sometimes fruit, with milk or water. All dietary requirements are discussed with parents, no special diets are currently catered for. The involvement of children in buttering their toast at snack time, along with appropriate encouragement from staff, helps children develop their independence and a positive attitude to healthy eating.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment. It is a church converted during weekdays into a playgroup. The building is a bright, friendly environment with posters and children's art work displayed, it is particularly warm and welcoming, organised to interest children and meet their needs. Risks to children are limited through adequate safety and security procedures. Staff monitor access to the group at all times. Risk assessments are completed inline with the insurance company's requirements and daily checks ensure the hall and equipment are suitable for the children to use. Emergency evacuation procedures are fully understood by staff and practised twice a term. Staff explain safe practices to children, such as, not to run in the building. They plan activities that cover safety topics, like crossing the road, through a visit by the school's crossing patrol officer. This helps children remain safe, and allows children to develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Children can access a wide range of safe resources, appropriate for the interests of pre-school children. These are well-presented by staff and children are able to choose from the inviting range on tables, floor space and dedicated areas, such as the book corner. This creates a pleasant and safe environment that children can enjoy and facilitates their ability to be independent and play constructively.

Staff have an adequate understanding of child protection procedures and reporting processes, which ensures children are protected. All staff are aware of the setting's child protection procedures and where to report concerns, which ensures that staff fully understand their responsibilities in protecting children from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have warm and comfortable relationships with staff and each other, they play happily together and with adults. Confident in the setting's welcoming and caring environment they use the whole of the hall, which is creatively set up to provide areas that are cosy, such as the book corner, areas for creative play with paint and glue, or imaginative role-play. Throughout the sessions children confidently decide which areas to play in; they are very comfortable to play alone or in groups sometimes with adult support. They concentrate for good periods of time, for example, building a tower 10 bricks high and starting again when it falls. Children's language and communication skills are promoted by staff through constant conversation and regular singing sessions. Consequently, children are learning to develop their speech and are able to express their needs confidently. There is a good range of resources throughout the setting to promote imaginative play and children play together in small groups, for example, with small world play on the road mat or preparing for a wedding with the dressing up. As a result children's social skills are developing well. Staff plan activities which cover areas identified in the Foundation Stage but do not make regular reference to the 'Birth to three matters' framework in their planning. This means they are not fully utilising the, 'Birth to three matters' framework to develop children under three years. Staff take regular observations of what all children in the group can do, they have a good understand of individual children's personalities and learning styles. However, currently the next steps in children's learning they may identify are not linked into the planning of future activities to help maximise children's progress.

Early Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a generally sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and an acceptable understanding of how young children learn and progress. Planning is broad, links to the stepping stones and in a few instances the 'Birth to three matters' framework, covering general play activities and adult focused activities. It provides some guidance for staff to ensure a range of activities and experiences are provided for children to extend their learning in most areas. However, the short term plans do not include sufficient detail to enable staff to make the best use of activities and experiences to promote the learning of all children to the maximum extent. Staff use active methods to maintain children's interest, sitting with children, asking questions, providing help and support and extending their play. Staff help raise children's awareness of the community and the wider natural world in a variety of ways. Assessment and evaluation of children's achievements during activities is undertaken. However, only limited use is made of observations to help staff plan for the next steps in children's learning. Staff are therefore, not utilising all their knowledge to help children reach their full potential. Behaviour is well-managed and this results in a calm and caring environment for children. The room is well-organised and offers a stimulating environment with a good range of resources set out by staff to promote children's learning.

Children are interested and eager to take part in activities. They show good concentration, are actively engaged and some persist for considerable periods of time. This they do with or without adult support as they play with, for example, building blocks or with dressing up clothes. Children behave well and have warm relationships with both staff and each other. They are able to start

to take care of themselves, being able to visit the toilet independently and are very competent at buttering their own toast at snack time. Children's language skills are appropriate for their age. They speak clearly and often with confidence, sharing their experiences in one-to-one conversations. Children show good interest in books and enjoy sharing stories with staff that are always on hand in the book corner. They even start to 'read' stories to each other. They listen and interact with stories in group situations. Writing skills are developing with staff providing opportunities for children to write at each session.

Children understand and use numbers appropriately for their age. Some count up to ten without help and are able to match number to object as they count the number of blocks in a large tower or the number of children on the bus display. They demonstrate that they understand shape during construction activities and use concepts of quantity in activities like weighing out reindeer food. They develop an initial sense of time and place through discussion with staff and activities such as recounting a journey. They explore and investigate, through adult lead activities, for example, looking at how a musical box operates. Also through their own role play, using play equipment in small world situations. Children have limited access to information and communication technology, for example, remote control cars and musical key boards.

Music and movement sessions allow children to express themselves through dance and to learn to control their bodies, they develop a sense of space and the ability to move safely avoiding others. For example, when they row their boats towards an island, dig up treasure and move with speed away from the imaginary island. They use tools competently as they draw their pictures and use glue sticks to create a musical collage. They are able to express themselves freely through painting and use their imagination well as they play with dressing up clothes and with the cars and roadway.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are seen as individuals and their confidence and self-esteem is developed by staff, with use of praise and encouragement on arrival and during their play throughout the session. New children are well supported with one-to-one care to help them settle and reduce any anxiety. Children feel a sense of belonging, they move confidently round the hall, are settled and happy, they make choices and take decisions between play activities. They have warm relationships, know the routine very well, are comfortable and enjoy the session. Staff ensure that the resources and activities positively represent the children who attend, as well as individuals from the wider community and festivals are celebrated. Children are developing their knowledge of the wider world, through visits by members of the local community, such as the school crossing patrol officer and for this terms theme, people who can play a variety of instruments. The setting's policies promote inclusion for all children and the premises are suitable for all to access. Good support is provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their needs are met well.

Children behave well, and respond positively to boundaries set by staff. They take turns and share, help each other to tidy away and are learning to use their manners. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being fostered.

All children benefit from the positive partnership staff are developing with parents and carers. Children settle well because the staff work closely with parents to ensure their child's needs are met. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents on a daily basis. Parents are now made aware of how the setting operates through discussion both before children start to

attend and on a daily basis at the beginning and end of the sessions, as well as regular letters. However, some parents whose children have attended for more than six months are unaware that they can access the playgroups policies and they have no knowledge of most policies and lack a secure understanding of how their child will be cared for. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive early education is satisfactory. Limited information on the educational programme is shared at the beginning of the placement and parent's thoughts are gathered for the start of the 'stepping stones' booklet. However, the system to ensure parents receive ongoing information about their child's progress and how they can be involved in and enhance their own child's learning is not fully in place.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are adequate staff recruitment and vetting procedures in place for when new staff or long term volunteers are recruited, which ensures children are protected. Most staff who work with the children are qualified or are attending additional training courses. This contributes to the quality of care and experiences provided for children. Staff are appropriately managed and there are systems in place to provide direction, support and leadership, for example, regular staff discussions take place. Appropriate guidance is given by the manager and committee to ensure that staff are clear in their roles; they work as a supportive and stable team. Staff are confident to take on a variety of roles within the setting and during sessions. Policies and procedures are in place to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. There are systems in place for recording accidents, medication and attendance.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. Guidance and support is given by the manager to ensure that the educational programme is delivered appropriately. There are systems to develop the curriculum through attending local 'cluster groups' and visiting other playgroups. Additional support is provided through regular visits by the local authorities advisory teacher, and staff are active in implementing her suggestions. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed to; devise and implement a clearly defined procedure to be followed in the event of a child being lost and ensure that the child protection procedure for the playgroup complied with local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures.

A lost child procedure has been drawn up and the child protection procedures comply with the latest government guidelines. This ensures staff have clear written guidance on these issues.

At the last Early Education inspection the group agreed to; improve systems to monitor the quality of the setting and the educational provision, also to develop plans and procedures to effectively monitor and evaluate children's progress and to promote and challenge children's learning across the six areas.

There are systems to develop the curriculum through attending local 'cluster groups' and visiting other playgroups. Additional support is provided through regular visits by the local authorities advisory teacher, and staff are active in implementing her suggestions. The manager also completes self evaluation forms on a regular basis to review all areas of practice. Children's progress is observed and recorded, throughout sessions. These observations are entered into the stepping stones profiles to provide a record of children's progress through all six areas.

Finally the group agreed to; develop opportunities for parents to share children's developmental progress.

Limited information on the educational programme is shared at the beginning of the placement and parent's thoughts are gathered for the start of the 'stepping stones' booklet. However, the system to ensure parents receive ongoing information about their child's progress and how they can be involved in and enhance their own child's learning is not fully in place. A recommendation regarding this has been raised as part of this inspection.

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 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):

- improve hygiene practices with regard to hand drying for children and adults
- develop all staff's knowledge and use of the, 'Birth to three matters' framework, to maximise positive outcomes for younger children
- ensure all parents have clear information about policies and procedures available to them.

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 the assessment system and evaluation of activities to identify individual learning targets for children and use these to inform future planning [also applies to care]
- ensure short term plans include sufficient detail to enable staff to make the best use of activities and experiences to promote the learning of all children
- develop the information exchange with parents of children receiving early education, so parents are aware of their child's progress and achievements and also how they can extend their child's learning at home.

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