

# St Joseph's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	400342
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 June 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Christine Anne Rice
<b>Setting Address</b>	281 Skipton Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 3HD
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<b>Registered person</b>	St Josephs Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Joseph's Playgroup is committee-run and has been established since 1986. The group operates within St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, close to the centre of Harrogate, and serves the local community. The large church hall is used for general play and a smaller room provides space for creative activities.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the group at any one time. The playgroup opens during term time from 09.00 to 12.00 on Monday and Friday, from 09.00 to 13.00 on Tuesday and Thursday, and from 09.00 to 11.30 on Wednesday.

There are currently 27 children aged from three to under five years on roll. All of these children receive funding for nursery education.

There are three members of staff employed to work with the children, two of whom hold the Diploma in Pre-School Practice. The playgroup receives advisory teacher support and can access training through North Yorkshire's Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. It is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and promotes a 'Learning Through Play' method of teaching.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy healthy snacks, such as toast and a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to eat with dips and pitta bread. The children develop independence as they help to cut up the fruit and vegetables and butter their own toast. They learn about healthy eating through topic work, which involves decorating plates with fruit pictures, and they begin to understand that foods with a lower sugar and salt content are more beneficial. When children are thirsty they can help themselves to water, which is stored in covered jugs on a low table in the activity area. At snack time, children exercise their independence by choosing between drinks of milk and water.

The staff successfully promote the children's awareness of good hygiene practice by acting as positive role models. For example, they use anti-bacterial spray to clean the tables and show younger children when and how best to wash their hands. As a result, the children wash their hands at appropriate times, such as before eating, after messy play and after toileting. Thorough policies and procedures regarding accidents, medication and illness further protect the children, as does the fact that most of the staff have current first aid certificates and there is a fully stocked first aid kit readily accessible.

All the children have good opportunities for physical development as they participate in a physical education (PE) session at least once per week. The children are developing a good understanding of the effects of exercise on their bodies, as they appreciate the need to warm up first and drink water afterwards. They move around the hall floor in a range of ways, slithering like a snail, jumping like a frog, walking like a monkey and hopping like a rabbit. Children make further physical developmental progress as they balance on beams, bounce on the trampoline, and use the setting's soft play equipment and climbing frame. Outdoors the children gain fresh air as they play on the lawn. Children develop fine motor skills by sewing, carefully using scissors to cut out shapes and cutting their toast into small pieces. The children demonstrate good coordination and control of their bodies as they pour out drinks and skilfully dress and undress for PE.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a welcoming and safe environment, where there is good evidence of children's play and activities, such as the children's paintings displayed on the walls. Children develop independence as they freely choose their own activities from the toys and equipment, which are spread out on tables around the room and kept in low easily accessible containers. There is a large storage cupboard, which is ample and shared with other church groups. However, during heavy downpours the roof tends to leak, resulting in damage to the equipment.

Staff use toys, equipment and materials effectively to ensure children are provided with a balanced range of activities that promote children's learning in all areas. For example, there are child-sized tables and chairs, plus floor cushions where children can relax and look at books. Toys and equipment are stimulating, fun, interesting and provide sufficient challenge for the children. For instance, there is a train set, construction toys, sand and water play, dressing up, home corner, painting and gluing, and sticking activities, all of which draw and interest the children.

As the staff have a very good awareness of safety, potential hazards are minimised. All sockets are, for example, covered and the children do not have free access to the kitchen. Furthermore, the staff have devised a range of comprehensive risk assessments both indoors and outdoors to protect the children. Staff check, for instance, that the entrance to the building is safe and clear of any dangerous objects and they carefully monitor arrivals and departures. Children learn to contribute to their own safety by regularly practising the fire escape plan and by discussing with staff the dangers of touching hot objects, such as toasters, irons and ovens. They demonstrate their competence in road safety as they discuss the Green Cross Code with staff.

The children's welfare is promoted through the staff's appropriate knowledge of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. There is a written child protection policy, which outlines these procedures, but does not contain the contact details for the local child protection agencies. Most of the staff have undertaken additional training, which serves as an added protection for the children.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The provision meets the needs of all ages attending and the children enjoy access to a very good range of activities and resources, such as cutting and sticking, sand and water play, paint, books, jigsaws and dressing up clothes. They are interested in all the activities and are eager to join in. The activities are linked to the theme of holidays, so that, for example, there is a role play travel agent and a pretend beach, complete with sand, water and shells. The children enjoy good relationships with the staff and happily put the shells to their ears and listen to the sea, before asking the staff to do the same.

Being aware of the varied needs of the children, the staff differentiate some activities, so that at story time, for instance, there are two groups. This enables the staff to pitch the learning opportunities at the optimum level for all the children, allowing them to fully engage and participate, rather than becoming restless and bored. The children relate well to one another and to the adults in the group, they confidently approach the staff, such as when they ask for the hairdresser's salon equipment.

The children enjoy good interaction with the staff, who take time to listen to what the children have to say. There are many spontaneous conversations, ranging from plans for Father's Day on Sunday to impending holidays. The staff encourage the children to develop their conversation and self-esteem, by inviting them to talk and sing nursery rhymes in front of the other children at circle time.

Children enjoy creative activities, such as painting and making box craft models. Making a boat out of a box proves particularly popular, prompting the children to cooperate with each other as they develop the project, thinking how best to propel it, for example. Many children gravitate towards this activity and enjoy playing together in a group, whilst others are equally content playing alone with a train set. All the children are settled in their environment. The staff are attentive to the needs of the children, ensuring that they are wholly involved and included.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Teaching is differentiated and designed to meet the needs of individual

children. The staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and plan a varied and interesting range of activities, which reflect, for instance, the changing seasons and the children's choices. Comprehensive planning clearly links to the early learning goals, ensuring that all the areas of learning are covered and encompassing outdoor as well as indoor play. Regular meetings enable staff to fully prepare for forthcoming topics and activities. Activities are accessible, attractively set out and provide sufficient challenge for the children. Assessment records indicate the children's approach to learning and their achievements and progress. Staff then use this information to plan effectively for the next steps in the children's learning. The staff react very positively with the children, answering their questions, stimulating their thoughts and giving them lots of praise and encouragement.

All children separate from their main carer with confidence; they are curious and sociable, initiating conversations with adults, enquiring what they are doing. They talk freely about their home and community, such as discussing their family's plans for the weekend. The children are adaptable, able to sit down quietly at story time and can concentrate on tasks, such as making their Father's Day cards. They pursue their chosen activities for sustained periods of time, such as when they play the shopping game. This involves their sitting down in a group and patiently taking turns until the game is finished. The children are very helpful not only at tidy up time, but also spontaneously. For example, children sweep up the sand that has spilt onto the floor. Children are caring towards other children, putting a reassuring arm on their shoulders when they are upset and seeking adult help.

The children listen to others in small groups when the conversation interests them, such as when they are caring for their 'babies' in the home corner. They link sounds to letters as they work out how to write their names and ascribe meaning to marks as they say that they are drawing a pop star. Some children can form recognisable letters and make good attempts to write their names, without copying the letters. The children know how to handle books carefully and enjoy participating at story time. They enthusiastically sing, 'Five Little Ducks', quickly calculating how many ducks are left when one swims away. When cutting up their toast, the children demonstrate how they can form triangles and squares, and they construct racing cars with rectangular seats. The children confidently count up to 10 and recognise the numerals four and nought. They use positional language, explaining that they are sitting at the back of the boat and that the baby is under the cover. They clap to the side, to the front and to the back. The children describe a space as 'small' and getting 'smaller' as the staff move the screens towards each other and they understand the concept of height, as they work out who is the tallest.

Children learn about the natural world by growing tomato plants and investigating spiders and their webs. They watch snails, noticing how they move, and bake a variety of foods, such as pizza muffins, scones and scotch pancakes, remarking on the changes in the food before and after cooking. The children make trains out of several pieces of construction materials and inventively develop a cardboard box into a boat. When they decide they need a steering wheel, they improvise with a plastic plate from the kitchen. The children are able to recall significant events in their lives, such as their daddy's birthday, and show an interest in the world around them by describing the weather as not sunny, but wet. They know how to operate simple everyday technology in the form of a computer program and a mouse. Children benefit from a range of activities which foster their creative development, particularly painting, craft activities and imaginative play. They differentiate colours very well and experiment with using different coloured crayons on green paper, discovering that some colours show up better than others. The children freely choose how and what to paint, exploring with rollers and paintbrushes to produce different effects. They produce colourful collages, combining various materials and

textures and become highly engrossed in their role play as they imagine they are rowing their boat and talking to the captain.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

All children are included, since they are valued and respected as individuals in accordance with the setting's equal opportunities policy. Children learn about their community and the wider world through activities, such as visits to the local primary school and through visitors coming to the playgroup, such as a nurse and a police officer. Children learn about the diversity of the world through access to a good range of resources, such as welcome posters, books, puppets and dressing up clothes, which reflect positive images. This is augmented through the celebration of a range of festivals, such as Easter, Christmas and Chinese New Year, when the children eat noodles. The setting respects and celebrates the cultural festivals of all the children attending. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are effective arrangements in place to care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, since staff keep their training updated and there is a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in place. The staff demonstrate considerable expertise in recognising and handling learning difficulties. In addition, there is a key worker system and staff liaise closely with parents and professionals to ensure that they meet the specific needs of children extremely well. For example, they devise very practical individual learning plans to help maximise children's development and monitor these carefully through observation. The staff manage the children's behaviour positively and consistently and according to the children's level of understanding and maturity. They use lots of praise to encourage good behaviour with child friendly explanations for any negative behaviour. There are timely reminders about not snatching, not pushing and the need to share, so that children behave well and recognise the setting's rules, explaining that the toys belong to playgroup and therefore are for everyone to share.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff form strong partnerships with parents, they are very accommodating in working with parents in order to optimise the care and education of the children. When parents join the setting, they receive a welcome pack, which contains the main policies, plus detailed information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Subsequently they can refer to the policy file at any time as it is always available in the entrance. Communication is sustained with half termly newsletters and information on the white board about the current topic and the week's activities. Parents are encouraged to support topic work by bringing in items from home, such as when they provide vegetables in connection with the healthy eating theme. Parental involvement continues with their helping on the duty rota. Staff use this as an opportunity to help parents become more informed about the curriculum and their children's development. At the end of the year parents receive a written report on their children's progress. In the interim, parents are welcome to see their children's records at any time and enjoy verbal feedback at the beginning and end of a session. However, there is no facility for parents to add written comments to their children's records. Additionally, the setting benefits from a good deal of parental support in terms of practical help and accompanying the children on outings.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The environment is well organised by the two joint managers, who ensure that the children receive a good standard of care and learning through stimulating activities. The staff complement one another well and work effectively as a team, knowing their roles and responsibilities. They are organised, committed to improvement and are fully involved in planning, evaluating and developing practice, for example, through staff meetings. Staff are keen to keep their training up to date and are already booked onto a refresher first aid course in anticipation of the expiry of their first aid training, plus a food hygiene course. Children benefit from well-deployed staff, who consistently interact with them and provide effective support and encouragement. As a result, children feel secure and confident.

Thorough recruitment procedures are followed to ensure that staff who work with the children are suitable to do so, for example, background checks are carried out and references taken up. Staffing ratios are maintained at all times to ensure that the children receive good levels of adult support. There is a comprehensive range of policies and procedures in place, which provide a structure for the safe and efficient management of the setting. All of the required documentation is in place, such as registration and emergency contact details, and is stored securely in the interests of confidentiality. The registration system is effective and clearly shows when children, staff and visitors are present.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Two of the three staff are trained in the Foundation Stage and share their knowledge so that all staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the National Standards. Parental helpers are assisted by the provision of specific information, on laminated cards, about how to implement the Foundation Stage. The managers oversee the planning and monitoring of the educational programme, with input from the third member of staff and advice from an advisory teacher. The full engagement of the children is promoted since the children's interests heavily influence the planned themes.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection, the provision was asked to include details of the regulator in the complaints policy and make sure that all electric sockets are inaccessible to the children.

Since the last care inspection the provision has included the regulator's details in the complaints policy and covered all electrical sockets.

At the last nursery education inspection, the provision was asked to develop the 'Special Needs Policy' and provide more information to parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Since the last nursery education inspection, the provision has updated the 'Special Needs Policy' and now provides comprehensive information on the six areas of learning within the Foundation Stage, in the parents' welcome pack.

## **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):

- extend the child protection policy to include the contact details for the local child protection agencies.

#### **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 opportunities for parents to add their comments to their children's developmental records.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)