

Haycorns - St Marys Pre-School Unit

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	139340
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Inspector	Mary Daniel
Setting Address	St. Marys Catholic First School,, Lucetta Lane, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 2DD
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Registered person	The Haycorns Association
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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

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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?

Haycorns Pre-School has been registered since 1988. It operates from two mobile units situated in the grounds of St. Mary's Catholic First School, which is based in Dorchester. Children have use of two playrooms, and an enclosed outside play area adjacent to the pre-school. They also have use of the school hall, and share toilet facilities with the school.

This parent committee run group is registered to provide full day care for a maximum of 32 children aged two to under eight years of age at any one time, and there are currently 50 on roll. The pre-school is in receipt of Government funding for nursery education and there are currently 35 funded children on register. The group is open Monday to Friday from 09:00 - 11:45 with a lunch club running until 12:30. Afternoon sessions are offered as numbers demand, and in the autumn term these sessions are provided for reception children from 12:00 - 15:15 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. A play scheme is offered during the summer holidays to children who attend Haycorns that operates on various days over a period of three weeks.

The pre-school employs an overall director, assistant director, two unit supervisors and seven unit staff, the majority of whom are qualified in childcare and early years education. The group receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's awareness of healthy eating is very well promoted. For example, the group operate a 'cafeteria' table where children are offered a lovely variety of fruits, such as cherries, strawberries and bananas for their snack. Children show interest in the 'snack' picture cards of foods and fruit, which they eat each day. This encourages their discussion on 'healthy foods' and they chat about favourite fruits in circle time. Consequently, children develop a good understanding of nutritious foods. Children can easily access drinks throughout the session and help themselves to cups of water from the dispenser. This helps to keep them well hydrated. They all wear sun hats outside in warm weather and encourage parents to administer sun cream on their child before arrival at the group. A shaded area is provided outside, which helps to protect children from the dangers of the sun and still enable them to enjoy their outside play. Children's dietary needs are effectively managed as staff record any particular requirements and keep parents informed of ingredients used in cooking activities. Children's health is appropriately supported through recording clear details of any accidents and obtaining parental permission for any necessary emergency medical treatment. As a result, clear continuity in care is maintained.

Children are well supported in developing suitable hygiene routines as they use 'Mr Soapy Soap' to wash their hands and use paper towels to dry them. They talk about the germs, which need to be washed away and can easily reach tissues to wipe their noses. Tables are wiped after use with an anti-bacterial spray and staff wear disposable gloves when attending to any accidents. Consequently, clear procedures are in place to help prevent the spread of infection. The majority of staff are trained in first aid for children and an appointed member of staff ensures contents of first aid boxes are updated. This helps support children's good health in any emergency.

Children have great fun playing outside. They run with excitement across the grass, climb on the slide or large wooden train and enthusiastically dig in the outdoor sandpit. Many are able to competently pedal their ride on toys around a given path. They laugh as they blow bubbles and see them float away in the wind. As a result, children benefit from being outside and using up their energy in the fresh air. Children's large muscle skills are promoted as they move around an obstacle course in different ways. They slide backwards along a bench, crawl through a tunnel and try to do a head over heels on the mat. They help to make the parachute float up in the air and down again and wriggle their toes and stretch their arms in a circle game. This provides opportunities to develop their physical skills in play, although at times some activities are not organised effectively to maximise children's abilities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play with a variety of suitable toys and resources, which are easy to handle and show as clean and in reasonable condition. For example, they use colourful child sized cups for their drinks and make models with easy to hold bricks and shapes. They sit on small primary coloured chairs at low tables to play and can relax on comfy cushions in the book corner. The play areas

have bright displays of alphabet, number, natural life and travel posters, and children see their art and craft designs around the room. This encourages their learning and overall provides inviting play areas.

Overall, health and safety issues are monitored well through regular risk assessment systems. For example, comprehensive plans were made to support children's safety on a recent group trip to the seaside. Clear fire drill procedures are in place and suitable systems followed to ensure staff are aware of their individual responsibilities in helping children to safely evacuate the premises. Children's own understanding of safety issues is supported through discussion and the organisation of road safety activities. This encourages them to start developing an awareness of how to keep themselves safe from harm. However, although children are supervised when playing outside, the different levels of a paved area are not clearly marked, which leaves a risk of tripping. Space in the play units is limited and at times furniture and resources are not effectively organised to ensure clear negotiation of all parts of the premises. Systems have been implemented to improve children's security at arrival and departure times and clear procedures are in place for parents to record any alternative carers collecting their child. This helps to promote children's safety and well-being. However, current security systems are not fully effective in preventing visitors gaining entry to the group, although this shows to be addressed within the arrangements of the proposed new building. Staff have a clear awareness of child protection issues and incidents are recorded and monitored. A named co-ordinator is in place, which helps in the management of any concerns arising and ongoing training opportunities attended. This helps in safeguarding children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enter the pre-school happily and settle easily to play. They relate well to the staff who give a friendly, reassuring approach. This helps children feel at ease within the group. Children enjoy their play and have fun as they roll out some play dough to make their 'biscuits', or sort out the small world firemen and their vehicles in an imaginary game. This encourages their small muscle development and imagination skills through play. Staff plan some activities for the younger children based on the Birth to three matters framework and use nursery rhymes appropriately as their themes. For example, children make tall hats to wear and flags to hold as they march up and down singing 'the Grand Old Duke of York'. This encourages them in becoming a 'skilful communicator'. Children are provided with interesting activities to support their development, and overall they are satisfactorily occupied. However, at times, particularly for those attending for several sessions each week, there is little variety offered and some lose interest in what is available.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff use effective questioning well to encourage children's interest and communication. For example, in discussing a group outing to the seaside or a recent local carnival event. This supports children in asking 'How?', 'Why?' and 'What if?' and helps them to think for themselves. Children enjoy self-chosen challenges and make regular use of the 'practical life resources'. They concentrate well as they sort out the 'grading pegs' and carefully use tweezers to pick up grains of rice. This encourages their hand eye co-ordination and fine motor skills. Children use their imagination in craft as they tear strips of selotape to stick their junk modelling boxes together to make an unusual creation. They carefully cut out picture cards and use glue sticks easily to stick these to their paper. They explore different textures as they make yellow felt ducks and cotton wool sheep pictures following a visit to an

activity farm. As a result, they learn how to represent their experiences in art and craft. Children discover their natural world through interesting themed activities. For example, they look at different life cycles and see how a caterpillar grows into a beautiful butterfly. They find a web of baby spiders in their wooden climbing train in the garden and talk about the 'spotty' ladybirds they make to hang around the play room. Consequently, they are well supported in finding out more about the 'living things' around them.

Children use numbers regularly in their play. At circle time they willingly help to count how many friends have come to pre-school. They start to recognise some number shapes, such as on a birthday cake and sort the number line cards, hanging in the outdoor play area, into the right order. Some children are able to match numbers to pictures of objects and know which number comes next in a sequence. However, they are not always sufficiently challenged to build on these skills. For instance, in helping them start independently solving simple practical problems and using the written number. Children become familiar with shapes as they use colourful squares to make a snail picture and some recognise a triangle, circle and square within their sun print pictures. Children use their imagination well in role play, for example, at the groups 'travel agents office' or the 'florist shop'. They enjoy dressing up as 'sleeping princesses' or having a tea party using the play food. This helps them act out their ideas, although at times the home corner area is not always effectively arranged to encourage their participation.

Children can easily access mark making tools and some can form recognisable letter shapes, such as when writing their postcards to tell about their trip to the seaside. They see their names on their coat pegs and on the paper strips of names, which they cut off to put with their pictures. This helps them to learn familiar simple words. However, name cards are not often used for general daily routines, such as circle time to encourage all children in recognising each others names and getting to know who else comes to their pre-school. Children develop an understanding of simple technology as they use a magnifying glass or tap the keys of a keyboard in the 'travel agents'. Most become competent in controlling the mouse to operate the group computer and know batteries are needed for a toy train to work. They have fun experimenting with objects that float or sink in water play. They discover what happens to ice when it melts and see more changes as they help to make some bread. As a result, children start to show curiosity in why things happen and how they work. Children enjoy listening to a favourite story and join in willingly with well known songs and rhymes, for example, as they touch their heads, shoulders, knees and toes in circle time. They move around outside confidently and develop their large muscle skills as they climb up on the wooden train or through the hoops. They follow the actions on the 'sticky kids' tape and some can jump off the gym horse landing with two feet together. This helps them in developing their gross motor skills, but at times some physical play sessions do not provide clear challenges for all children.

Staff are dedicated and know children well. Overall, they support children appropriately in learning through their play and use interesting themes to plan activities, such as the weather, mini beasts and life cycles. They aim to provide activities, which follow from children's lead. This approach encourages children well in learning through their own interests and ideas. Staff make clear use of the stepping stones with a recent group train ride to the seaside, where children enjoyed a paddle and a picnic. This shows how all areas of children's learning were promoted. However, daily plans do not always give a clear learning intention, which does not fully inform staff of aims and impacts at times on the success of some activities. Staff keep assessments on children's development and some observations made are linked to the stepping stones of the Foundation stage, but this is not consistently followed and does not reflect a clear picture of the stage each child is at in their learning. Consequently, there are times when a sufficient variety of suitably challenging activities are not provided for some children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and their families welcomed. Children benefit from the friendly relationships staff form with their parents, and this contributes to them settling in happily. Parents are kept well informed of general activities and events within the group through regular newsletters and daily discussion on arrival and collection of their children. Their views and ideas on different aspects of the group, such as the proposed new pre-school building, are actively sought through questionnaires and discussion. This effectively encourages parental involvement and helps them feel included within the group. Parents receive an informative welcome pack on registration with the group and have clear written opportunities to record their child's particular needs. This shows how well the group recognise the importance of valuing all aspects of a child's lifestyle. Children's specific individual needs are discussed with parents and clear procedures followed to ensure sufficient support is provided to help each child achieve. Staff liaise with other professionals where required and clear consideration is given to how any set targets can be incorporated within the general daily play activities to enable all children to participate. This promotes children's integration very well.

Children celebrate a variety of festivals, for example, as they make clay diva lamps for Diwali. They play happily in the 'travel agents' where they see brochures showing other countries and they talk about where they go on holiday. They see positive images of other ways of living within their play resources such as story books, small world figures and dolls. As a result, children are effectively encouraged to start recognising differences within their world. Children's behaviour is promoted very well through use of effective, age appropriate strategies. For instance, they excitedly receive stickers with favourite cartoon characters on for being helpful or achieving well. This helps them in developing positive self esteem. Staff talk to children at their level and frequently use praise and encouragement to promote good behaviour. Children benefit from this consistent and positive approach, which helps to actively prevent unwanted situations. Suitable boundaries are well maintained, which supports them well in developing clear expectations. Consequently, children start to develop their own sense of self-discipline, for example, in naturally using good manners. Children are encouraged to be kind to each other and share their toys. They join in with a sponsored 'toddle' to raise money for charity and celebrate special occasions, such as with their 'birthday walk'. They learn to care for others as they look after 'Harry' the group's teddy bear. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are kept informed of current themes relating to the funded nursery education provision and are encouraged to contribute their ideas and skills. They receive termly reports and have an opportunity to discuss their child's progress at an end of year meeting. This encourages their involvement, but overall, little information is provided for them on the Foundation stage of learning. Assessment profiles are not effectively linked to the stepping stones and so do not give a clear picture of how a child progresses across them. This does not fully support parents to share in all areas of their child's development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's well-being is suitably supported through the clear daily routines established. For example, they know when they hear the timer buzz, toys need to be tidied, and they go to sit for circle time. This helps them in feeling secure and know what happens next. They have opportunities for quiet and

active play, as they sit quietly to do a teddy bear puzzle and then go outside to run around in the sunshine. This encourages their enjoyment of different types of play. There is a range of toys and games available, and overall, these are appropriately organised for children to make independent choices in their play. However, there is not always sufficient variety offered in the activities provided through the day, to ensure all children, such as those attending regularly each week, are kept fully interested and occupied in play. Relevant documentation and records are overall in order and maintained efficiently. Children's personal records are stored securely and confidentiality is regarded in use. Group policies are reviewed within staff meetings and support the general daily practices. However, Ofsted has not been informed of all significant events, such as a change in chairperson and committee. This impacts on aspects of children's welfare.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff are committed and work well together as a team. Overall, they support each other effectively to provide a smooth running session. This helps children in feeling settled and to know what happens next. Clear induction and appraisal systems are in place, which encourage staff to attend ongoing training opportunities. Staff meet weekly to review general daily practices and have regular in house training days. Minutes are kept of weekly meetings and action plans set to address the identified areas for improvement. This helps to monitor issues arising within the group, although systems for evaluating planned activities are not fully effective in measuring the success of all provided. For example, the organisation of some large group activities, such as physical play sessions, does not effectively keep the attention of all children and some become restless and bored. Consequently, assessments systems are not effectively supporting staff in consistently providing sufficient challenges to build on children's existing skills.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of care recommendations were set relating to the condition of room furnishings, safety, behaviour management and space requirements. The carpet in the smaller unit has now been replaced and is cleaned daily and shampooed termly. Overall, this helps to ensure floor areas are kept clean for children's play. Management of the collection of children has been reviewed and staff now implement a new system for parents arrival. This has helped to improve children's security at these times. All staff have now attended behaviour management training and have written information to which they can refer. The behaviour policy has been reviewed and now gives a positive approach to preventing and managing unwanted situations. Space requirements are now maintained appropriately, as arrangements for when additional children may attend, such as for outings, have been re-organised. This means adequate space is available for the registered number of children.

At the last inspection of Nursery education key issues were set relating to sharing children's records of progress with parents, providing more challenges for children in their personal, social and emotional development, their communication, language and literacy and their mathematical development, and improving assessment systems for monitoring the groups strengths and weaknesses. Parents are now provided with a termly report on their child's progress in each of the six areas of learning and they can also discuss their child's developmental issues at an annual interview with staff. This provides more opportunities for parents to become involved with their child's learning. All staff are involved in regular reviewing of practices offered through discussion at meetings, training days and use of questionnaires, for example, on the proposed new pre-school building. Overall, this means ongoing issues are monitored more effectively. Children's personal development is supported as they have frequent opportunities to develop their independence skills. For example, they attempt to put on their shoes and socks after

playing in the sand. The general ethos of the group supports their emotional and social development as they are encouraged to share and play nicely together. Children use mathematical language regularly as they talk about 'big' and 'small' objects, and they can choose from a variety of number games and activities stored on the choosing shelves. As a result, children are supported in becoming more familiar with using numbers in play. Children's use of language is promoted through themed nursery rhyme activities and sharing of songs. For example, they take part in a 'leavers' concert where they sing songs they have learnt through the year. They join in a 'chatterbox challenge' where they recite favourite rhymes to raise money for charity. This supports their language skills well through enjoyable activities.

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 any complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain some 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):

- continue to develop current risk assessment systems to ensure children's safety in all areas of the premises, with particular regard to security, organisation of space and the outside play area
- extend the range of play experiences provided to consistently give children sufficient variety in their play and improve the organisation of some large group activities to effectively maximise children's learning opportunities.(also applies to Nursery education)
- ensure Ofsted is kept informed of any significant events or changes within the pre-school

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 planning to clearly identify the learning intentions of activities and ensure assessments clearly reflect children's development across the stepping stones
- provide more information for parents on the Foundation stage of learning to support their ongoing involvement and sharing of their child's development

- develop the systems of monitoring and evaluating the funded nursery provision to ensure children are sufficiently challenged in all areas of 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