



St Mark's Pre-School Group Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	301174
Inspection date	20 June 2005
Inspector	Donna Suzanne Lancaster

Setting Address	St Marks Church Hall, North Road, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL1 3BH
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Registered person	Christine Nicholson
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 Mark's pre-school Playgroup opened in 1985. It operates from the church hall, which includes two play rooms, a kitchen, toilet facilities and outdoor play area. It is located to the North of Darlington. The pre-school serves the local area.

There are currently 63 children from 2 to 4 years on roll. This includes 21 funded 3 year olds and 10 funded 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. They support children with special needs children and who speak English as an additional

language.

The group opens five days a week during school term time. Sessions are from 9:00 - 11:30 and 12:45 - 15:15.

Eight part time and one full time staff work with the children. Four have early years qualifications. Three are currently on training programmes and two are unqualified. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care through the good support and guidance of the staff. Children have a clear understanding of why they must wash their hands. For example, after use of the toilet and before eating snacks to reduce the risk of cross contamination.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contributes to their good health. Each day there are both indoor and outdoor activities to help children learn the importance of physical activity in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. For example, as they ride on wheeled toys, dig in the sand and use the climbing and balancing equipment. This promotes children's physical development, gives them confidence to try out new skills, set their own limits and know when to ask for help.

Children begin to understand the benefits of a healthy diet. Children's individual needs are taken into account to ensure children remain healthy. However, children do not receive sufficient opportunities to help themselves to drinks throughout the sessions or to enjoy snack time as a sociable occasion.

Staff use Birth to three matters guidance well to adapt a good range of activities and play experiences to promote younger children's learning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-organised setting where risks are identified and minimised. This means that they are able to move around safely, freely and independently. Staff give high priority to helping children understand how to keep safe and to maintaining children's safety, both indoors and outdoors. For example, children are taken outdoors in small groups with appropriate adult supervision.

Children select activities from a wide range of good quality, safe and developmentally appropriate resources. They are well-organised at child-height to encourage safe, independent access. Staff explain to children safe practices. For example, at circle time when they are gently reminded of the settings rules and to be helpful to each other. This helps children learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe.

Children are well protected. Staff have a secure understanding of child protection procedures in line with the local Authority Child Protection Committee procedures and have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in the setting. All children arrive happy and are eager to participate. Children are confident and have a strong bond with staff and each other. They achieve well because staff are skilled and use their experience of early years guidance such as Birth to three matters and the curriculum guidance to the foundation stage to provide good quality care and education.

Children become independent as they choose between a variety of toys, books and activities which appeal to all. Early communication skills are well supported through good quality adult - child interactions. Children begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they join in a diverse range of exploring and sensory experiences. For example, preparing their garden plot to grow flowers and salad vegetables.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the foundation stage and how children learn effectively. Staff plan interesting activities which they adapt to meet individual needs and interests. They link to areas of learning. Assessment records are used, however, they do not always identify the children's next steps in their learning. Careful attention is given to adapting activities to enable children who have special educational needs and English as an additional language to participate. For example, one to one adult supervision and resources in child's own language.

Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet each other and staff enthusiastically on arrival. They are eager to learn and are self assured in their play. They are motivated to try new experiences. Children speak confidently and listen to stories. However, younger children's behaviour in large group situations does not always allow older children to participate fully in the story time activity.

Children work well together. For example, children learn how to operate computer equipment following the guidance of each other. Children use numbers confidently in their play and recognise different shapes in planned activities and daily routines. Their physical skills develop and improve through a variety of experiences, including P.E. They develop a sense of time and place, and gain a good knowledge of their environment through well planned activities and visitors to the setting, for example, the travel agents, the fire safety officer, road safety patrol person and the police. Staff increase children's understanding because they plan experiences and follow up children's ideas to encourage them to observe and explore the world around them.

Children use their imagination in their play. For example, music and movement and role play activities. They develop good levels of eye-hand co-ordination and receive a

broad range of opportunities to improve their large physical skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from a variety backgrounds are warmly welcomed into the setting. Staff ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This enables children to develop a positive attitude towards others.

Children are generally well behaved and show concern for others. They respond well to the staff's calm approach and the use of praise and encouragement. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children benefit from the positive partnership staff have developed with parents. Children settle well because staff work closely with parents to ensure home routines are followed. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. Children benefit fully from a two way sharing of information between parents and staff to enhance their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children feel settled and relaxed in the warm and caring environment. The rooms used are well organised. Children are able to initiate and extend their own play and learning. Space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for children.

Children's care needs are well-met. The good leadership and management of the nursery education has a positive impact on children's learning. Most staff are appropriately qualified and the manager has ensured those who work with the children in receipt of funding for nursery education have a sound knowledge of the curriculum to enable them to help all children achieve well.

Most records, policies and procedures for the safe management of the setting are in place. Induction training for new staff and in combination with on going training in child protection, first aid and Birth to three matters help staff keep children healthy and safe and guard their welfare. Overall the needs of children are well met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended that the pre-school should ensure that the child protection policy included the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation made against an adult; to include the regulatory contact details in complaints procedure; to provide suitable outdoor storage; to organise resources so that children can access them easily and to improve activity plans to enable children to initiate their own activities and explore freely.

Staff have made significant improvements for the safety, health and learning of children. Children are able to access resources more easily and to initiate their own play and activities. For example, resources at child height, and planned activities are less rigorous and include time for free play.

The staff have consulted with church committee to provide suitable outdoor storage facilities when renovation of outdoor space is completed.

Documentation has been reviewed and up dated to include the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation made against an adult and the complaints procedure includes the regulatory contact details.

Overall, the action taken has improved the care for the children.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- develop snack time to promote children's independence and to make snack time a more sociable occasion
- develop procedure to inform Ofsted when staff leave the facility and to record times of arrival and departure of children and adults.

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):

- consider the impact younger children have on older children in large group activities
- ensure all assessment records clearly identify the next steps in children's

learning.

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