

St Agnes Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	306490
Inspection date	02 May 2007
Inspector	Elaine Murray
Setting Address	St Agnes Church Hall, Darmonds Green, Wirral, Merseyside, CH48 5DU
Telephone number	07811 835440
E-mail	
Registered person	J. Green / C. Gill
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 Agnes Pre-school is a privately owned group managed by an informal partnership. It was registered in 1981 and operates from the hall of St Agnes Church in West Kirby, Wirral. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open Monday to Friday from 09.30 until 12.00, and Tuesday to Thursday from 13.15 to 15.45, during school term times. All children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 59 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of whom 36 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven staff. Five staff, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are developing a good awareness of simple hygiene procedures, such as hand washing at appropriate times. This learning is effectively reinforced through regular topic work about health and hygiene. Children learn about the importance of hand washing and regularly cleaning teeth through discussion and role play. A visit from a dental nurse and a health centre visitor further develops this understanding. Children's awareness of how to protect their health and well-being is promoted as they know to put on a sun hat before going outside in sunny weather. Staff follow hygienic procedures as they clean surfaces and regularly wash toys and equipment, helping to protect children from the spread of germs.

Children's physical development and enjoyment of exercise is promoted well through a variety of activities. Children regularly enjoy climbing using equipment in the outdoor area. Staff also make good use of indoor facilities to give children chances to enjoy exercise. Children make use of an indoor climbing frame and balls to develop skills. They enthusiastically participate in action rhymes and physical play using a large parachute. Children's learning about the importance of fresh air and exercise is further developed as they take part in 'walking week', where staff discuss with them the benefits of walking, and children take part in walks in the locality.

Children learn about healthy eating as staff provide healthy and nutritious snacks, including fresh fruit, daily. Staff make good use of planned activities relating to a topic about healthy eating to develop this understanding. For example, children prepare and make vegetable stew and healthy sandwiches as part of this topic. Children are also involved in a healthy eating week, where they bring fruit and vegetables from home to taste. Children with dietary needs are well catered for. Fresh drinking water is readily available for children at all times, helping to promote their good health. Children confidently help themselves to water from a water dispenser in the outdoor area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment which helps them feel secure. Children's art work is displayed at their level, and books and equipment are visible and accessible. This helps to foster children's sense of security and belonging. The equipment and resources in the large hall are organised so that children can move round safely. Space is appropriately used as areas are provided for different purposes, for example, the children can look at books or be involved in table top activities, role play or physical play. The porch area is appropriately used to provide a quiet area for small group work. The outdoor area is effectively used to develop valuable learning opportunities for children. The broad range of toys and equipment are suitable for different ages and abilities, meeting children's needs effectively. Children's independence is promoted as they confidently select from the many resources provided.

Good safety procedures are in place to protect children from hazards and dangers. Staff make a daily safety check of the premises and outdoor area. Written risk assessments identify hazards and action to be taken. Children show a growing awareness of how to keep themselves safe, as they explain why they must be careful when using scissors for craft work and carrying nets whilst in the outdoor area. They know to avoid walking in front of the rope swing whilst

outdoors. Children learn to protect themselves in the event of a fire or emergency through regularly practising the fire evacuation procedure.

Children are protected as staff have a good knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and hold relevant contact numbers. The clear child protection policy is shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Throughout the pre-school, children are content and secure and have positive relationships with staff. Children arrive happily at pre-school and are clearly settled and at ease with staff. Younger children's all round development is promoted well through a wide range of activities. Staff follow children's interests in choosing and carrying out tasks, helping to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. Staff interact well with children to sustain their interest, ensuring that children are occupied and involved. Their language skills are developed well as staff actively promote this through talking with the children as they take part in activities. Staff make good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to promote learning. Children are involved in a range of sensory activities. They enjoy exploring bubble water and a basket of items made of different materials. They take part in free painting and hand painting and show interest and involvement in making their own creations using glue and collage materials. Staff make regular assessments of children's stage of learning and use this to inform the next steps.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals. They provide a broad range of interesting, practical activities which promote much effective learning. Staff present and develop activities in a meaningful way, which effectively promotes learning. For example, children show a keen interest in helping to transplant sunflower plants which they have grown from seeds. Staff involve themselves well in children's self chosen learning, such as extending their role play. As a result children show good imagination and work with sustained concentration and involvement in these activities. They enthusiastically use their nets to capture 'tigers', and take part in an imaginary train journey. Staff effectively promote children's ability to make choices. Children choose their own activities for much of the session. In addition to this they are encouraged to make choices within activities. For example, children are asked to decide which materials they will use to create a picture from collage materials. As a result, children are confident to make choices and show enjoyment and involvement in what they do. Staff question children effectively to make them think and extend their learning. Children are asked to think about what they need to do next when transplanting plants, and to develop their ideas during role play. Staff know the children well. They make use of regular observations of children's learning to inform assessment records and future planning. However, the present system of recording observations does not give a sufficiently clear picture of children's recent progress and current stage of development in the six areas of learning.

Children make excellent progress in personal, social and emotional development. They cooperate very well in role play to create scenarios. They happily share tasks as they mend a construction they have made, using a set of tools including play spanners with nuts and bolts. They take turns to be the train driver in role play. Children show a high level of personal independence as they put on their own painting aprons, give out snacks and pour their own drinks. Children are learning to express their ideas clearly as they talk with staff and communicate their ideas

in role play. They recognise their names on cards as they arrive at pre-school and learn some letter sounds. Children listen attentively to stories and choose books to look at independently. Children freely make marks and write at the writing station, but have fewer chances to write for a purpose. Children are learning to count to 10 and beyond as they count each other at register time, and count how many plates are needed on their table at snack time. Children enjoy taking part in number rhymes and develop ideas of simple subtraction as they take one away each time. They are becoming confident to use mathematical language, as they talk about big and little plastic bears and long and short worms, which they have made on the play dough table. Children learn to explore and investigate as they grow seeds in different conditions. They use magnifying glasses in the outdoor area to observe mini beasts. They learn to make models using construction sets and other materials. Children learn to use technology to support their learning as they operate floor robots and use a computer. They develop a sense of time through discussion about their recent experiences and holidays. Children's sense of place is developed well as they visit the local fire station and have visitors to the pre-school, such as the dental nurse. The role play area is regularly changed to reflect different areas of children's immediate environment, such as a travel agent, hospital, kitchen and bathroom. Children develop a sense of space as they negotiate the outdoor area. They develop skills using a range of tools, such as scissors, dough cutters, and chopsticks. Children enjoy singing familiar songs and rhymes. They make regular use of a good range of musical instruments to explore sound.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff work to ensure that all children are positively included and have equal access to resources. This helps to promote their confidence and self-esteem. Children develop an awareness of diversity and the wider community as staff make good use of resources and planned activities to promote this. For example, children are involved in tasting food from different countries, such as India. They also develop an awareness of more local differences in culture, as they taste haggis and make tartan pictures as part of a Scottish day. Staff invite parents with different cultural backgrounds to come into pre-school to talk to the children, for example, about traditional dress and food. This helps to develop children's awareness and understanding. Older children develop an awareness of different cultures and beliefs through topic work relating to festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali.

Children with learning difficulties are effectively included and supported. Staff work well with parents and outside agencies to meet children's needs. Children for whom English is an additional language are well supported. Staff work with parents to learn words of the children's first language, so that children feel included and valued. Children generally behave well. They are familiar with the routines of pre-school and respond well to praise and encouragement from staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is good. Parents receive a good level of information about the setting and planned activities through an informative brochure, notice board and regular newsletters. They have regular opportunities to be informed about their children's progress as they are invited to the pre-school to see assessment profiles and work. Some parents help out at the pre-school on a regular basis, helping them to be involved in and support children's learning. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning through completing regular tasks with their child at home which relate to the current topic. For example, during a 'walking week' they kept a record with parents of all the places they had walked to, which was then brought in to pre-school. Parents

are also invited to share any relevant expertise they have with the children, for example, a parent who worked as a dental nurse came to talk to the children.

Staff have established positive relationships with parents. They request information about children before a child joins the pre-school and obtain relevant parental permissions. This information is used to help meet children's needs well. Information about children's progress is shared informally through talks at the end of the session. Policies are shared with parents, but the complaints procedure does not make parents aware of the timescale for resolving complaints. Staff value parents' views and contributions and ask parents to complete a questionnaire when their child leaves the pre-school, to establish any areas for future development. This communication between parents and staff helps to promote children's welfare, care and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The joint managers work well together to lead and manage the provision. Roles are clear and staff work well together to plan and teach. The manager has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. Planning and children's progress in learning is generally well monitored. Plans are regularly evaluated. There is a commitment to extending staff knowledge through attending regular training courses and this has a positive effect on children's learning.

Children are cared for in a well organised environment. Staffing levels are organised so that they are within the required ratios at all times and that children have a good level of attention and support. Most staff hold relevant qualifications, which has a beneficial effect on children's learning and welfare. The required records are in place, helping to ensure continuity of care for children, although not all are stored confidentially. Most policies and procedures are effectively in place and contribute to positive outcomes for children. Space and resources are organised well to promote children's safety, care and learning.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was required to: develop the registration system; amend the child protection and behaviour management policies; provide more opportunities for children to learn to be independent; and improve the provision for children for whom English is an additional language.

These recommendations have been met with positive effect on children's safety, welfare and learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- ensure that all records are stored confidentially
- provide more detailed information in the complaints procedure so that parents are aware of the timescale for resolving complaints.

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 system for observing and assessing children's learning to make clear children's current stage of development
- provide more opportunities for children to make marks and write for a purpose.

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