

# St John's Green Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	402071
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 June 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Anita Bartram
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Johns Green Primary School, St Johns Green, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7HE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 500047 521088
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St John's Green Playgroup Committee
<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 John's Green Playgroup opened in 1981. It operates from a classroom within St John's Green Primary School, which is located in a residential area within walking distance of Colchester town centre. A maximum of 18 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 08.45 to 11.45 during school term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 24 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider area. The playgroup currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs four staff. Two of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate Early Years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children have very valuable opportunities to learn about being healthy. Staff encourage children to follow appropriate hand washing practices and encourage children to be independent in using the toilet. Children need no prompting to clear away their cup and any crumbs from their place at the snack table and think for themselves to ask for a wipe to clean their faces. As a result, children are beginning to learn about measures to take to keep themselves safe from cross-infection.

Children are extremely well nourished with healthy food. Children eagerly eat fresh fruit such as apples and tomatoes and very enthusiastically eat toast, crackers or crumpets after they have spread toppings for themselves. Many children enjoy drinking milk for snack although as the alternative on offer is squash children are not yet developing their taste for the more healthier option of water. Staff are skilled at supporting those children who need extra support to separate from their carers, and as a result, children's emotional well-being is strongly encouraged.

The group's use of the outdoor play area is outstanding. Children are enthusiastic in their play as they move between inside and out. They are energetic and move freely and with confidence. Children's good health is encouraged as they benefit from daily fresh air and exercise. As a result, the incidence of common illnesses in the children such as coughs and colds is significantly reduced. This very valuable outdoor provision has an extremely positive impact on all areas of the children's development and emotional well-being.

Children's physical skills are developing extremely well. The vast amount of outdoor space the children have to play in on a free-flow basis means they can move with freedom. They run and skip with joy, and are able to stop and change direction purposefully. Children make full use of all the available space to explore the large equipment or play large group role-play games. Children's finer physical skills are developing well. Older children are becoming skilled at designing and making things with paper, scissors, hole punchers and various office equipment.

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

The provision is good.

The premises are extremely welcoming to children and their families. Staff make use of every available opportunity in the classroom to display children's work. For example, as children make incidental pictures or designs with paper staff stick them up on the cupboard doors for all to see. This helps children to see their work is valued and appreciated. The atmosphere in the group is warm and friendly and staff make themselves readily available at either end of the day. Consequently, most children settle quickly into the group.

The equipment and resources in the group are plentiful and in a generally good condition. However, some storage and play equipment such as the role-play furnishings and resources are becoming tired and worn. As a result, children are not enticed into the area and missed opportunities arise to enhance children's imaginative play. Overall, the indoor and outdoor space children have to play in is full of valuable learning opportunities and this directly impacts on the very good progress children make in the setting.

Children are very safe and secure on the premises, both inside and out. Staff monitor children's security when they arrive or leave the premises and have taken appropriate steps to minimise any hazards. All staff have an appropriate appreciation of their roles and responsibilities to protect children from non-accidental harm. The manager is skilled and experienced in safeguarding children and as a result, is confidently able to put procedures into practice when necessary.

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

The provision is good.

The care children receive is outstanding in supporting all their developmental needs. Staff strongly advocate learning through play and provide a wealth of purposeful opportunities to suit individual children's interests or needs. The atmosphere is vibrant and busy and children are keen and eager to learn. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy their time in the playgroup and achieve very well.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage is thorough and effective. The manager is pro-active in keeping her knowledge up to date and is an extremely valuable role-model to other staff and parents. As a result, the curriculum children receive is fun, stimulating and exciting. Staff know the children very well and make use of observations and formal reports to regularly assess children's achievements and to highlight the next steps in their learning. As a result, children's individual learning needs are very well catered for and children progress rapidly. Specific extension to older, more able children's literacy and numeracy skills as they near the early learning goals is not always sufficient in keeping pace with their learning.

The delivery of the Foundation Stage in the outdoor play area is exceptional. Children are able to move between inside and out according to the direction of their play or their preferences in the way they learn. For example, for those children who learn on a large physical scale, there are many purposeful opportunities for them to construct, problem solve, explore and create in a wide open space where their movements can be large and their voices loud. This enables those children to progress at a good pace in their development.

Challenges for more able children are effectively woven into their play experiences. Staff are instrumental in extending children's learning incidentally and in more formal ways such as at discussion time at the beginning of the session. For example, staff ask open-ended questions to help children's thinking whilst they play. They accurately pitch discussion about letters and numbers to the age of children sitting in the group at carpet time. Children have plentiful opportunities to learn independently. For example, as they sit avidly designing and making at the table, they begin to develop their early writing skills or hand-eye coordination as they concentrate hard to make holes or join paper together. Staff management of children and their behaviour is calm and consistent, providing a calm and purposeful environment for children to explore and learn in an ordered and positive atmosphere.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is very good. Children are eager and keen to learn and are becoming confident in their relationships with familiar adults. All children are able to listen appropriately and concentrate. For example, they sit eagerly in silence waiting for the 'punch-line' in the rhyme staff are telling and then delight in 'not being scared' when the rhyme ends loudly. Children's communication, language and literacy is very good. Children

willingly offer comments about what they can see or make meaningful remarks as they hear a story read to them. They vary their voices in volume and expression as they play imaginatively, squealing with mock fright as they run to safety. Children are developing a good appreciation of letters and some more able children are beginning to recognise initial sounds in words. More able, older children's literacy skills are progressing rapidly and some are willing to try 'reading' words around them.

Children's mathematical development is very good. They are becoming aware of numbers and many can reliably count purposefully to approximately 10. They recognise familiar numerals and delight in answering simple number counting problems. Children use their fingers to represent numbers and are becoming familiar with taking away or adding on numbers, such as when they sing 10 Green Bottles. Children make appropriate use of simple mathematical language as they play, for example, using 'bigger' or 'smaller' to compare their shape constructions. Older, more able children recognise more complex terms such as 'least' or can name more unfamiliar shapes such as 'hexagon'. Although children are very aware of numbers, opportunities are not always sufficient for older or more able children to use numbers for purpose, such as to record or label.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. They are gregarious and eager to explore and discover and make efficient use of tools to help them. For example, they use the magnifying glass to have a closer look at the toy bugs placed on mirrors and use 'office' tools to help them design and make. Many children's skills in designing and making are excellent. They cut paper to size, fold and join it together, discussing as they go how to stick it and what would work best. Children are skilled at using the computer. They deftly move the mouse and can ably select software programs. Children's creative development is very good. They are developing extremely good imaginative play skills. For example, they organise themselves as a group, and use expression and movement to act out their play. Children enjoy singing and can recall simple songs from memory. For example, during a discussion with staff about the weather during the night, children start to sing 'I hear thunder, I hear thunder' as they remember the thunder and lightning.

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

The provision is good.

Staff have very strong working relationships with parents. Staff readily welcome parents into the group to help out for the session, or to chat through any concerns or issues about their child. Staff have a very strong ethos of supporting the families of the children who attend. As a result, children's individual emotional and developmental needs are extremely well supported. Children who have more specific learning or physical needs benefit from the experience and skills of the group's special educational needs coordinator and as a result are included fully in the life of the setting.

Children and their families who have English as an additional language are welcomed and encouraged to share their culture and traditions with the rest of the group. For example, staff encourage children to try the different snacks provided by a parent following a visit to their home country. Staff learn key words to help children feel settled and welcome in the group. Resources are generally plentiful in reflecting positive images of diversity. Consequently, all children are able to build a balanced view of their wider world and appreciate and value their differences and similarities. Staff have an excellent understanding of child development and manage children's behaviour in a way that is positive and appreciative of their age and stage

of understanding. Consequently, children are calm and secure in the setting, and are beginning to appreciate the consequences of their actions as they learn right from wrong.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are kept fully informed about their child's achievements at the playgroup and what their next steps in learning are. For example, every half term staff complete written individual plans for each child to take home. Here they note children's achievements and suggest the next stepping stone in the Foundation Stage to work towards. Parents are encouraged to comment on any achievements they have seen their child do at home and share this with staff. Staff provide valuable information to parents about the value of play in children's learning, thus encouraging children's learning through play. Consequently, children's progress through the Foundation Stage is encouraged and nurtured consistently between playgroup and home.

Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The established team of staff working in the group are instrumental in the high quality of provision children receive. The high staff ratio means staff know the children very well and this enables them to individualise the support they give to meeting children's individual needs. Staff are pro-active in supporting children's independent self-care skills through effective organisation of staff deployment. For example, enabling children to learn to visit the toilet when they need it rather than as a whole group activity. Staff have a strong commitment to ongoing improvement and attend short courses or welcome new initiatives introduced by the manager. Consequently, children's learning environment is vibrant and lively.

The committee are aware of their roles and responsibilities and have been pro-active in establishing what these are since recently changing members. All staff have been appropriately checked. Volunteers or visitors to the group do not have unsupervised access to children. This safeguards both children and adults. All documentation is stored confidentially and reviewed regularly. Policies and procedures work effectively in practice to promote children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution.

The leadership and management of the playgroup is good. The manager is experienced and knowledgeable in Early Years practice and is an extremely effective role-model for other staff. The manager leads her team confidently and openly values the strengths different staff bring to the group. As a result, children benefit enormously from the experienced staff team who are committed to providing high quality care and education for all the children. Overall the strong leadership and management of the nursery education firmly contributes to children's very good progress towards the early learning goals

Overall, children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

### **Care**

At the last inspection, the provider agreed to; devise a written statement regarding the procedures to be followed in the event of a child being lost or a parent failing to collect a child; update the statement of procedures where a parent has a complaint to include Ofsted's address

and telephone number; and update the child protection statement to include procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation made against a member of staff.

The group have now adopted policies and procedures from the National Childminding Association and all documentation is in good order. As a result, robust procedures are to hand for staff to follow in the event of a child being lost or uncollected or should a child protection allegation be made against a member of staff. Parents are now able to access Ofsted's contact details more readily in the event of a complaint about the group.

### Nursery Education

At the last inspection, there were no significant weaknesses to report, but the provider agreed to review the siting of the computer to allow children easier and more comfortable access. The computer is now readily available to the children during the whole session, meaning children are becoming very skilled and knowledgeable in operating simple information and communication technology equipment and processes.

### 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):

- encourage children's access to drinking water to develop healthy tastes
- make the role-play equipment and low level storage more inviting to the children to use

#### 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):

- increase the frequency of opportunities for more able children to start to recognise and use familiar words during everyday activities and make use of written numbers to label and record

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)