

# St Catharine's Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101639
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Zahida Hatia
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Catherines Church Hall, London Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 3HW
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of St Catharine's Under Fives
<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 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?

St Catharine's Under Fives opened in 1969 as a committee-run group. It operates from the church hall in the grounds of St Catherine's Church in a residential area in Gloucester. A maximum of 24 aged from two years to under five years children may attend the group at any one time. The setting is open each weekday except Thursday from 09.30 to 12.00 during term time.

There are currently 43 children aged from two years nine months to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 34 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The group currently supports children with special educational needs and some who speak English as an additional language.

The group employs five staff. Both the play leader and the deputy are qualified to level 3 and most other staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group has close links with two local primary schools. Support is also given by a mentor teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, a Foundation Stage consultant and fieldworkers from the Gloucestershire Playgroup and Toddler Association.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is well promoted through opportunities to move around freely in the large space available in the hall. They are developing their physical skills and co-ordination as they confidently use equipment such as bikes, toys and other activities to develop their fine motor skills. For example, children take turns to throw bean bags into nets which are fitted to a stand. Children are cared for in a suitably clean and hygienic environment as staff carry out appropriate routines such as cleaning surfaces with anti-bacterial spray. Children are learning to promote their health through the daily routine as they are encouraged to wash their hands before snack time. Children are protected in the event of an accident or illness as some staff hold first aid certificates and there are suitable recording systems for accidents and medication which are appropriately maintained.

Children have a daily snack which includes fresh fruit and a choice of milk or water to drink. Although they do have occasional activities linked to different foods such as fruit tasting, the opportunities to promote their independence by self serving of snacks are limited because the fruit is already served on the plates for them to eat. Children are kept well hydrated because staff ensure that there are plenty of drinks available for children to help themselves throughout the session. Staff are aware that some children have individual dietary needs which are discussed and recorded at registration and this information shared with all members of staff.

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

The provision is good.

Children settle and play in a well-organised environment which offers sufficient indoor and outdoor space for them to engage in quiet activities and be physically active. They have independent access to a varied range of suitable equipment which is in good condition and safe to use. Adult-led activities are appropriately presented and generally provide a suitable environment to promote children's learning. Toys and resources are age-appropriate and children are stimulated and interested in the range of resources available.

Effective policies and procedures are in place regarding risk assessments in the event of an emergency, so helping maintain children's safety. Children generally follow well-established safety expectations and staff begin to help them to understand the reasons for these. For example, the risk of slipping on a wet floor and the need to walk to the outdoor play area in single file.

Staff are extremely vigilant in the supervision of children. The security arrangements for the arrival and departure of children and their parents are extremely well-managed so that children remain safe within the playgroup. Careful attention is given to ensuring children's attendance is appropriately recorded. Strategies are in place that contribute to children's safety, for example, staff ensure only authorised persons can collect children and all visitors to the setting are recorded and supervised. Staff have good knowledge of child protection issues and reporting procedures. They have attended training and fully recognise their duty to protect the children in their care. Therefore, children's welfare is safeguarded.

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

The provision is good.

The care, learning and play experiences for children in the playgroup are varied and interesting. Children of all ages are content and well settled. They enjoy warm and close relationships with their carers. The youngest children enjoy exploring play-dough and water, trying to find out what it will do and what it feels like. They happily build simple towers with small wooden bricks and persevere to fit the right pieces in puzzles. Young children settle quickly in the setting because staff support them well and provide engaging activities such as developing the role play area into a doctor's surgery which the children are keen to become involved in.

Children's progress in their learning is good because the staff know the children well and plan and provide activities which are built on their interests and what they need to do next. The staff are beginning to use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to provide more opportunities for young children to explore and investigate.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. They are aware of how children learn through the stepping stones and what the areas of learning include. However, effective strategies for the assessment and planning of individual children's progression have not yet been fully developed to provide appropriate challenges, progression and purpose to encourage children's sustained independent learning. Some children, therefore, are unable to make steady progress through the early learning goals because activities are not built on what they need to do next.

Children have fun and are interested in the range of planned and spontaneous activities provided. Children are beginning to be confident speakers and they increase their skills and vocabulary during activities provided by motivated staff, who listened to them and initiate lively conversation. Staff ask questions to enable children to think and predict for themselves during general conversations and activities, for example, predicting what will happen next during familiar stories. Children are able to self-select play experiences and therefore many activities are child-initiated with staff providing close support and encouragement to develop their learning. Children work well together and know the importance of co-operation. For example, children take turns and share equipment when playing with play dough. Working in pairs, children help to tidy-up and put their toys away which gives them a sense of responsibility. However, some opportunities are lost for the children to develop their independence further, for example, children do not routinely help prepare their food and put on their coats or manage their buttons and zips.

Children's mark-making skills are fostered on a daily basis with a variety of materials made available. For example, children use paints and brushes as well as pencils, chalks and crayons. Writing pads and pencils are not always provided in the role play areas which limits opportunities for children to mark-make spontaneously as part of their imaginative play. Children follow the letters and text when they access books and listen to stories; they have opportunities to learn that the printed word has meaning, as familiar items within the playgroup environment are clearly labelled and children's name cards are used.

Children's mathematical skills are developing. Some children are able to count competently from one to five and others are learning to go further by counting the number of children present at registration time or by counting threaded beads. However, opportunities to increase

their mathematical awareness are not rigorously pursued. For example, through the use of display of numbers, posters or labels around the pre-school or through more frequent use of information and technology equipment. Simple addition or subtraction exercises are not always promoted although some children enjoy using ascending and descending numbers from memory, as part of familiar songs and rhymes.

Children develop their creativity through the use of a range of activities and art materials as they paint, crayon, create collage pictures and model with play-dough. They use their imagination to express their ideas and feelings in role-play situations that reflect their home and the wider community. They dress-up and play in the home-corner as part of focused activities, for example, going shopping. Children remember and sing familiar songs and they listen and move to music with enjoyment.

Staff ensure children feel a sense of belonging and all children are sensitively supported including those with special needs so that they are fully involved, settle well and become more confident. Children's needs are met as staff work very closely with parents to ensure they have all the relevant information about their child's changing care needs, for example, during toilet-training. Children are encouraged to have positive attitudes towards people within the wider community and each other by the provision of a good range of resources and the celebration of festivals such as Diwali, Eid, Easter and Chinese New Year.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally confident and settled in the setting and they enter the room happily. Children behave well as they learn to treat each other and their belongings with care and concern. For example, one child shows concern for another who has bumped his head and an older child helps a younger one to tidy away the small wooden bricks. Children are helped to recognise and deal with their emotions as they talk about what makes them happy or sad during a focussed activity.

The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through the use of a good range of resources, books and topic work, children are learning about their own and other cultures and about the different needs of others. Staff show sound regard to children's individual needs and take steps to ensure these are met. Key staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the relevant code of practice to enable them to fully support children with special educational needs. Overall children behave well in the setting and staff manage children's behaviour in a positive way, by diverting their attention, listening to them and praising their achievements. In the main staff assist children in their negotiations in a calm consistent and encouraging manner. However some staff are unsure of the settings own policy on behaviour. This can lead to uncertainty about how staff should deal with challenging behaviour. Children are generally aware of the rules as they tidy away their toys and when they are asked to sit on the carpet at story-time. Staff remind older children to help the younger ones. They are encouraged to take turns and share their toys. This encourages children to work co-operatively with each other and adds to their sense of responsibility. Staff are polite to each other and to the children, always using 'please' and 'thank you' and encouraging children to do the same. As a result children behave well and harmony and co-operation is promoted.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Children's on-going care needs are met as staff communicate verbally with parents on a regular basis. Parents are aware of what is planned for their children as the settings short term plans are clearly on display. Systems for sharing

children's development are largely informal. As yet parents do not have a chance to view their child's developmental assessments or to contribute to them. Therefore, parents have limited ways to become involved in their child's learning at home.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is enhanced by the well-organised environment. Indoor and outdoor space is arranged effectively to maximise play and learning opportunities for all children. Children have the confidence to initiate their own activities because good levels of adult support provide them with imaginative opportunities for their play.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. However, there is no procedure to check staff knowledge, understanding and practical applications of these policies. For example, some staff are unclear about the setting's own policy on behaviour. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and is regularly reviewed to ensure that children's needs are well met.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The playgroup leader is effective with a clear vision about how to provide a quality service that meets children's individual needs. The group is effectively supported by a conscientious committee team who have regular contact with the staff and support them with the day to day running of the playgroup as well as with fundraising. Both the play leader and the chairperson from the committee are committed to staff training and development. This ensures that all staff have good opportunities to develop their practice which benefits the quality of the provision. Regular appraisals ensure that staff's needs are acknowledged and staff members valued. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the group was asked to; ensure good hygiene practice is in place regarding hand drying before snacks; request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment, and ensure the parents sign the written record of children's accidents. A new committee has been elected since the last inspection and they are working towards building and developing good hygiene practice. A robust system has been devised to ensure all medicines given to children are correctly recorded by staff. Accurate records of medications administered are maintained. Each record is witnessed by another member of staff, dates and dosages are recorded and parents are given written evidence of this procedure each time.

## **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

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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 the opportunities within the daily routine such as at snack times to support children's growing independence and social skills
- ensure policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current practice and that these are shared with staff with particular reference to the behaviour policy

#### 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 home to setting links to promote continuity of children's learning so parents are better informed of their children's progress
- ensure assessments are used to inform planning in order to set clear challenges for children's next steps in learning
- increase children's mathematical awareness, for example, counting, calculating, sorting, measuring and using technological equipment

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