

Bents Green Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	300771
Inspection date	02 July 2007
Inspector	Karen Cockings
Setting Address	Bents Green Methodist Church, Ringinglow Road,,, Sheffield, S11 7PS
Telephone number	0114 2584788
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Registered person	Bents Green Pre-school
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?

Bents Green Pre-School first opened in the 1960's and is owned and run by a voluntary management committee which includes parent representatives. It operates from Bents Green Methodist Church and serves children and families living locally. There are two rooms available for children's play and children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor area. The pre-school is open every weekday morning during term time, between 09.15 and 11.45.

A maximum of 28 children aged between two and five years may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 47 children on roll of whom 39 receive funding for early education. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and with English as an additional language.

A team of eight staff work directly with the children. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from their development worker and the community teacher in the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The outdoor area at the setting provides an exciting place for children to enjoy fresh air and exercise, which helps to keep them fit and well. The group has worked hard to improve this space and has been successful in securing funding to develop a varied range of interesting resources and activities. There are gardening plots where children grow vegetables and flowers, learning how to care for them and how foods are grown and harvested. Children use natural resources, such as logs and beams, for balancing, climbing and construction. They dig in the large sandpit and practise throwing and catching as they play with balls and hoops. There are opportunities for imaginative play in the play house and with the woodworking and home corner equipment. In fine weather most activities are brought outside although children are also encouraged to play outside in all weathers. They have recently participated in a sponsored obstacle course, which they all enjoyed. Indoors, children demonstrate good control as they use tools and equipment, such as scissors and paintbrushes, and handle small world and construction toys.

Healthy eating patterns are strongly promoted and children enjoy a good variety of nutritious snacks. For example, they have a drink of milk with fresh strawberries or breadsticks with cheese dips. Children sit sociably together and the 'snack bar' system works well, enabling children to make choices about when they eat. Letters to parents provide information about how the group is encouraging children to eat healthy foods and thank them for their contributions of fruits and vegetables. Children are involved in food preparation activities, which helps to encourage independence and self-help skills. For example, they make their own sandwiches for a picnic and they decorate buns and biscuits. Staff have a good awareness of special dietary requirements and undertake training where necessary to help them to deal appropriately with serious allergies.

Children are cared for in a clean and comfortable environment, where they learn the importance of good hygiene practice. They know that they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. They dispose of paper towels safely in the bin provided near the snack area, although the availability of terry towels in the toilet areas means that children tend to use these in preference to the paper towels also provided. This exposes children to the risk of cross-infection. The pre-school's policy with regard to the care of sick children is shared with parents, together with information about communicable diseases. All members of staff have completed recent first aid training, so that they are well equipped to deal with any accidents or emergencies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in secure surroundings where the staff give high priority to children's safety. They supervise children carefully as they move around in the playroom and between indoor and outdoor areas. Staff overcome the constraints of shared premises by escorting children to the toilet and taking care to ensure that the playroom door is secured. A record is kept of visitors to the setting and staff oversee any contact they have with children. Daily checks and risk assessments help to ensure that risks to children are minimised.

Staff organise space and resources effectively to provide safe and interesting play areas. For example, children sit comfortably on floor cushions and low chairs in the book corner and there is open floor space so that they can move around freely and extend their play. A trolley near

the water tray contains a varied range of utensils and aprons so that children can choose from a range of interesting resources, such as whisks, jugs and sieves. They select the materials they need from the low-level shelving unit near the mark making area and the cupboard doors are left open for children to access small world and construction toys. Staff work hard to overcome the difficulties of having to set out equipment each day and are keen to develop further ways of making toys easily accessible to children. Resources and equipment are checked and cleaned regularly to ensure that they are safe and suitable for children's use.

Staff make good use of opportunities to develop children's awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They give gentle reminders to children as they play, explaining, for example, that they need to walk carefully when wearing the high-heeled shoes from the dressing-up corner so that they do not fall. A story about a visit to the park sparks off lots of conversation about the dangers of walking too close to the swings and the need to take care near dogs and other animals. Visitors, such as the community policeman, are sometimes invited into the setting, providing opportunities for children to learn about them and the work they do.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities with regard to child protection. The designated member of staff has attended training in this area and has updated the group's policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect recent changes.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle very well and enjoy their time at the setting. Most are familiar with the daily routines of finding their names and gathering together for a few minutes as they first arrive. Staff are very warm and welcoming so that even those children who are a little anxious about leaving their parent, soon relax. They join in happily with their welcome song. Staff set out the environment effectively to capture children's interest and they are eager to know what is available for them. Sessions include a good balance of quiet, active, indoor and outdoor play experiences.

Children play cooperatively together, building positive relationships with each other and with the adults who care for them. For example, they work in a small group to build the train track or they develop an exciting story together as part of their role play. Staff enable children to make choices and develop their own play but are nearby to support and extend children's learning. They encourage children to respect the needs and feelings of others so that children can all benefit fully from the play opportunities provided. Staff skilfully adapt activities, such as story time, to ensure that children are not distracted and to meet individual needs.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Staff are committed, enthusiastic and have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They have attended a range of relevant courses to support and enhance their practice. Activities are well planned to engage and sustain children's interest and to cover all areas of learning. Planning and assessment systems are continually reviewed and staff identify this as an area for future development.

Most enter the setting confidently and are eager to join the group. Older children show good levels of independence as they put on dressing-up clothes and manage hand washing routines.

They are full of wonder and curiosity when they rediscover a bird's nest on the wall in the garden and as they gently touch a new baby brought in by one of the parents. They are helpful and show concern for others, offering to show a younger child where to go and suggesting that they tidy up together. There are opportunities for them to share news about their families and to talk about themselves as part of different groups and communities. Children concentrate well on activities they enjoy. For example, they carefully pour jugs of water into a container and spend a long time fixing a train track together, extending it across the floor.

Children have many opportunities to engage in conversations and most use language confidently as they play. They are eager to share their news at group times and interact in a lively way with each other and with the adults who care for them. They reflect on what they are doing and explain what they could do next as they develop a story line in the role play area. There is a comfortable book corner where children like to sit and enjoy books together, sometimes fetching a member of staff over to share a story with them. Children engage in activities which foster early writing skills as they paint and draw, make appointments in the diary in the home corner and chalk on the ground outside. They begin to link sounds to letters and to recognise and form the letters of their names.

Children develop good counting skills as they play and during everyday routines. They count the number of steps they take while playing 'What time is it, Mr Wolf?' and count each other as they sit at circle time. They match, sort and begin to make simple calculations as they play with collections of plastic bears and puppies. Spontaneously, during role play, they count the number of pizza slices they have in their dish and accurately identify how many they have left when one is given away. Their awareness of shape and size is nurtured as they play with a variety of construction toys and games.

Staff make excellent use of the outdoor space to promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They grow vegetables in their garden plot and use large crates, tubes and cartons to design and build models. Visits to nearby farms provide opportunities for children to find out more about living things and to learn how young animals grow and are cared for. Children explore the properties of different materials as they handle collections of natural objects, such as shells, leaves and fir cones. They are eager to play on the computer and are well supported as they learn how to complete simple programmes. They develop a good sense of time and place as they talk about significant events in their lives, such as a visit from grandparents, or to a local park.

Children's creativity is nurtured as they experiment with different media and explore their own ideas. They pat, roll and mould dough into shapes and explore how colours change as they mix them together. Staff use effective questioning to encourage them to experiment. For example, they ask what the children think will happen if a little more of a certain colour is added. Children very much enjoy large scale painting activities, covering the paper with colour for a display. There is lots of enthusiastic singing during the session as children greet each other and help to tidy up. Interesting activities, such as a visit to a music exhibition at the Millennium Gallery, stimulate children's enjoyment of music and leads them to make their own instruments and set up a band. Dressing up is a great favourite and children become deeply involved in imaginative play, pretending they are dragons and princesses or simply waving scarves around and having fun.

Staff interact effectively with children to stimulate their curiosity and extend their learning. They make good use of space and resources to create an environment which enables children to be independent in their play, successfully overcoming the constraints of shared premises.

For example, they have a collection of photographs of all their construction toys so that children can look through and identify what they would like to play with. Staff consistently reinforce expected behaviour, encouraging children to play cooperatively together. They skilfully adapt activities to suit different ages and levels of understanding, such as using more props to help children to focus at story time. There is a happy, lively atmosphere and children use activity areas productively. Staff make regular observations of children, identifying and developing their particular interests. They use this information effectively to help children to make the next steps in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a strong sense of belonging at the setting, where they and their parents are warmly welcomed by friendly and familiar staff. They see their artwork on display and are familiar with the daily routines. Staff find out about their interests by talking and listening to them and by carefully observing their play. This helps them to plan activities that will appeal to individual children and assist their progress. Children build positive relationships with trusted staff and their individuality is nurtured. Good use is made of training to improve practice and support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Staff respond sensitively where there are concerns and carefully monitor children's progress.

There are many opportunities for children to learn about the wider society and the community in which they live. They visit local farms and museums and sometimes go to the shops to buy vegetables and fruit for their snacks. Visitors are invited into the setting to talk to children about their roles and to share experiences with them. A varied range of resources, such as dual language books, multi-cultural posters, dolls and dressing-up clothes, help to increase children's awareness and understanding of different lifestyles and varying needs. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff fully recognise the importance of working closely with them to meet children's needs and to provide appropriate links with home. Parents express very positive comments about the service provided and are appreciative of the care given. They particularly comment on the kindness and approachability of staff and the encouragement they give children to help them to achieve their full potential. A good range of information is shared effectively by means of notice boards, newsletters and the welcome pack. In addition, the committee produces a helpful booklet explaining their roles and responsibilities, so that parents know who to make contact with about different aspects of the setting. Policies and procedures are made readily available, including how parents may raise any concerns.

Staff ask parents to complete an initial profile of their child, which helps them to understand children's starting points. There is regular verbal communication about children's progress and an annual appointment is made to share children's records more formally. Activity plans are displayed and a series of helpful booklets has been produced, with collections of photographs, to show the range of activities offered and what children are learning from them. Staff make sure they inform parents of any changes to the organisation of the sessions and the reasons for them. Newsletters are informative and include helpful suggestions about how activities can be extended with parents at home. These effective measures help to keep parents well informed and involved in their children's learning.

Children build positive relationships with adults and with each other. They respond well to the guidance and support given, which helps them to play harmoniously and develop social skills. Staff give praise and encouragement, commenting positively on children's achievements. They are alert to potential difficulties and monitor carefully, while allowing children time to try to resolve things if they can for themselves. This helps children begin to manage their own behaviour. They are helpful and develop a good sense of responsibility, singing cheerfully as they help to tidy toys away.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The pre-school environment is suitably organised to promote children's welfare and safety. The well qualified staff team use their knowledge and experience of childcare to provide a good variety of resources and play experiences. Staff are strongly committed to the setting and the children in their care. Many have worked at the pre-school for a number of years, providing continuity for children and their families. Staff are deployed well and there are well established systems for ensuring that each area of the provision is supported. Suitable recruitment and vetting procedures are in place although not all documentation is readily accessible at the setting. The management committee is actively involved and is able to oversee the group through regular contact.

Record keeping is maintained well overall, but the organisation of some paperwork means that it cannot always be easily accessed. A comprehensive collection of policies and procedures underpin the smooth running of the setting and are regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management of the educational provision is good. The manager works alongside staff and provides a good role model for them. All staff work effectively together and have complementary skills. There is a strong commitment to the continuous evaluation of practice, reflected in the use of the self-evaluation form as a working tool to identify improvements over time. Clear training plans demonstrate that the setting supports and encourages staff development. Staff also work closely with the community teacher and development workers to improve and enhance the very good service they offer.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was required to develop an action plan to show how the person in charge would achieve a relevant level 3 qualification. A suitably qualified manager has now been appointed so that requirements are met. The provider was also required to identify a nominated person from the management committee and to provide Ofsted with details of committee members. The chair of the committee acts as the nominated contact person and changes to the committee are notified to Ofsted as they arise. This ensures that the relevant checks on committee members can be undertaken in order to safeguard children's welfare.

It was also recommended that policies and procedures be reviewed and updated. The setting is steadily reviewing all policies to ensure that they reflect changes to legislation and guidance and underpin current practice. This means that staff and parents have access to up-to-date information about the service and helps the setting to operate smoothly to support and safeguard children.

The last nursery education inspection recommended that the provider improve the opportunities for parents to see their children's development records. Arrangements are now made for children's records to be shared formally with parents on an annual basis. This is complemented by regular informal communication and parents can also see records upon request. As a result, parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

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

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):

- review the organisation of paperwork to ensure that it is easily accessible.

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):

- review and further develop the systems for assessment to guide planning and teaching.

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