

St Augustines Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303481
Inspection date	07 February 2008
Inspector	Susan Patricia Birkenhead

Setting Address	St. Augustines RC Primary School, Conwy Court, Castlefields, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2JJ
Telephone number	01928 568936
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Registered person	St Augustines Under Fives
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 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. Augustine's Pre-School has been registered since 1991. It is owned and managed by a committee made up of parents whose children attend or have attended the setting in the past. The pre-school operates from two main activity rooms within St Augustine's primary school situated in the Castlefield area of Runcorn. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12.30 to 14.55 during term time only. All children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and use of the school hall weekly.

There are currently 38 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 27 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the immediate and surrounding area. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties, disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. Of these, four staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two staff are working towards additional qualifications.

The setting receives support from the Quality Support Teacher and is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's understanding of personal hygiene and their health are suitably promoted through the practices and procedures staff follow. For example, they know by washing their hands after using the toilet they 'get rid of germs'. However, the children do not wash their hands before eating snacks, therefore compromising their well-being. The sickness policy makes the parents aware of the effective procedures, and includes details of exclusions for infectious illnesses. This contributes to the protection of children from the risk of infection. A good level of staff is qualified in paediatric first aid and resources are in place for treating minor injuries, which successfully contributes to safeguarding the children's welfare. The systems for the recording of prescribed medication respect confidentiality and contain the necessary detail. Children benefit from the established routines for keeping the setting clean, which include the use of anti-bacterial spray for the cleaning of surfaces and equipment.

Children have very good opportunities to develop their physical skills both indoors and outdoors. They negotiate space outdoors well as they manoeuvre the wheeled toy backwards and forwards with their feet or the pedals. They complete warm up exercises where they develop a good understanding of spatial awareness. They discuss the effects of physical exercise by feeling their heart beat, recognising it beats faster following exercise. Children take part in the well organised weekly physical education sessions (PE). This enables smaller groups of children to move around the varied apparatus to promote skills for jumping, balancing and throwing, which they do with great enthusiasm. Some children are consulted about making activities harder, to which they respond to excitedly. For example, they use their arms and feet to push themselves along the balancing beam as they lay on their back; rising to the challenge, they successfully complete the task, commenting 'that was good'. The children develop their smaller, physical skills well by using varied resources indoors, such as scissors, paint brushes and tools to drill holes in the sand with precision, therefore children develop good control and coordination over their bodies.

Children's dietary needs are suitably met in accordance with the snacks they receive. They enjoy the varied cereals with milk and alternatives, such as fresh fruits are made available. Food which represents the time of year, such as pancakes on Shrove Tuesday is incorporated into the snack times and children bring in cookies they have made at home to share with their friends. Children have a choice of drinking water or milk and some bring in their own drinks from home. They can request additional drinks at other times, however, drinking water is not freely accessible to children during their play, to further promote their independence. Children contribute to the organisation of snack time by handing out cereal bowls and spoons to others and sit in their key worker groups, providing a socially interactive time. However, opportunities for developing their self-help skills at snack time are limited.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the good use of the bright and stimulating facilities which are set out to incorporate the different areas of learning. Children move freely between the two rooms with

confidence to access a range of free play experiences and some structured activities. Therefore contributing to all aspects of the child's development and fostering enjoyment. The abundance of children's art work, posters and information on display successfully contributes to the welcoming, child friendly environment. The provision of individual drawers for older children to keep items of work which they produce to take home, contributes to their sense of belonging. Children have access to an extensive range of good quality play materials to support, extend and challenge their learning indoors and outdoors. Equipment and resources are checked regularly for cleanliness and safety and any damaged items are removed. Visual risk assessments of the children's areas are completed daily. As a result, children remain safe. Children develop their independence well during play as they make choices by self-selecting play materials from the organised storage systems in place.

Children are cared for in a safe environment. Staff are diligent in their care of children and the provision of a safe environment through the use of suitable safety equipment and procedures, good staff ratios and supervision. For example, the exit doors are secure, staff oversee children and visitors arriving, low level sockets are protected and during the inspection 20 children are cared for by five staff. The completion of the Pre-school Learning Alliance risk assessment and visual checks of the setting daily, ensure risks to children are minimised. Children are learning to keep themselves safe because the staff make them aware of unsafe practices and explain the consequences of their actions. Children learn about fire safety as they practise evacuation drills every half term at least and the procedures are on display.

Children's welfare is clearly safeguarded because the staff have a good understanding, awareness of the signs of abuse and the procedures for reporting concerns. Reference materials regarding the local safeguarding procedures are on display, which staff can follow should they have concerns about a child. The written child protection policy is available for staff, parents and carers, outlining the procedures they follow in the main. However, information regarding the procedure should allegations be made against staff is not included.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children enter the pre-school environment with confidence, settle well and develop an understanding of the daily routine. For example, on arrival older children take part in the self registration scheme and make their way to the carpet area for circle time. Others who are less confident are comforted well by staff and as a result, soon settle, explore their environment ,making choices from the play opportunities set out for them. They are further supported by the procedures followed for induction, where gradual build up to their attendance and parents accompanying them is encouraged. The established key worker system in place encourages the development of positive relationships between the staff and children. For example, they come together in their smaller groups at certain times of the day, at snack times and physical activity time.

The good balance of adult and child initiated experiences enables children to make decisions about their play, as well as receive support to promote their learning. They explore their environment and move freely between play that interests them. For example, they manipulate the play dough, paint pictures freely and play with the sand alongside others. However, the planning of activities does not include aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. All children are included in activities, which are adapted according to their age and stage of development, and where necessary supported by staff. Developmental profiles are held for

each child and are linked to the Foundation Stage or 'Birth to three matters' framework accordingly.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The manager has a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. Other staff are developing their knowledge through the support she offers them and the ongoing training they attend. They work together as a team to provide a broad and balanced curriculum in the main, linked to themes they follow. The recent changes to the planning of activities and the introduction of the key person enable the staff to plan for individual children within their groups. Although, their understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum is developing, not all areas of learning are consistently reflected in the activity planning. Systems are in place for all key persons to complete observations and assessments, which inform and monitor children's developmental progress. However, this system has recently been introduced, therefore entries are limited. The manager interacts well with children and uses good questioning skills to extend and challenge children's learning during play and activities. Other staff are developing this skill. The manager recognises the need to support staff through a period of change to ensure children are making positive progress towards the early learning goals.

Children are developing good relationships with each other. For example, a small group dress up as princesses and as they walk through the room holding hands one announces 'these are my friends'. Children play well together and the games they instigate are positively received by others. For example, a small group of five children take part in a game of picture dominoes as one child takes on the role of the leader. They develop some independence when changing into their PE clothes, and putting their coats on to go outdoors. However, opportunities during snack time are not built on. Children are attentive when listening to stories and responsive to questions staff ask them. They are comfortable to speak out in the group and are becoming confident communicators as they engage in conversations. The writing area provides opportunities for children to make marks or write for a purpose. However, children did not use the writing area during the inspection and materials are not available within other parts of the rooms, such as the role play area. Some children are confident at recognising their own names from their name cards and sounding the initial their name begins with when asked. They show interest in the books, which they access independently or recruit a member of staff to read to them. For example, two boys comfortably sit together on the large chair and look at the pictures of a book together, chatting freely about what they see.

Children's understanding of number and associated language during planned activities and every day situations is developing well. They count the number of children present to 19 and anticipate the manager's next question as they shout in unison 'this is a one and a nine'. They recognise written numbers by name as they are shown the number cards and act out the familiar song of 'five little ducks'. Children count objects and select the corresponding number. They take part in measuring exercises as they plot their own height on the chart on display. Children begin to learn simple addition as they recognise that one more than four is five and recognise familiar shapes by name.

Children have worthwhile opportunities which enable them to explore and investigate both spontaneously and during planned activities. They clearly recognise the change in colour as they choose to mix paints and share the result with adults. The children learn that by mixing water with dry sand they can make sand castles. Children develop a positive understanding of the natural world because they plant sunflower seeds, grow cress seeds and nurture them to

make them grow. Children have access to a good range of resources to promote their understanding of technology, and show preference for the battery operated computers rather than the real computer during the inspection. They wear the head phones to listen to and develop an understanding of different sounds. The programmable 'bee' enables children to use positional language, such as backwards and forwards. Children engage in many worthwhile opportunities to express themselves creatively using a variety of techniques and materials. For example, they express themselves freely when painting pictures of their faces, which are on display, use cardboard tubes to make three dimensional pictures and make models using a variety of malleable materials. They enjoy a wide variety of construction materials some of which are magnetic, creating structures that interest them and contribute to them having fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff develop knowledge of their individual needs through information obtained from parents, using the standard forms in place, for example, health needs and dietary requirements. Good quality play materials represent positive images of diversity which include ethnically correct dolls, books, play figures and puzzles. These are readily accessible to children and assist in developing their understanding of the wider world. In addition they celebrate various festivals. For example, they make lanterns in recognition of Chinese New Year. The pre-school provides an inclusive environment for all. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities receive a positive level of support. For example, staff are employed to work individually with children, where necessary educational plans are developed and activities are adapted to meet their needs. In addition a picture card system is in place to aid communication to enable the children to make their needs known. The designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) works closely with parents and the Qualified Teacher Support (QTS) to assess the children's needs and monitor their progress. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children behave well and learn about appropriate behaviour through the consistent and caring staff approach and the need for them to intervene to diffuse minor squabbles is rare. They receive regular praise and encouragement from the staff for their good behaviour, achievements and children receive 'well done' certificates. The star chart provides a reward system for children contributing to tidying toys away. Therefore, the children's confidence and self-esteem is developing well. Children learn to share, take turns and cooperate well. For example, they wear blue bands in the sand tray and when all four are in use, children know to wait their turn. The very effective methods for getting children to tidy up means they respond extremely well to tidying toys away as part of the routine. They become familiar with some rules which they repeat at circle time. Children are polite and say 'excuse me' when attracting adults attention and are responsive to reminders about using manners at snack time.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Introductions to the pre-school are generally managed well because of the sufficient information they receive about the setting. This includes the policies, procedures and the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, there is no system in place for obtaining information from parents about the children's developmental starting points on entry to the pre-school. Parents are welcome into the setting at the start of the session and verbal feedback is offered informally at the end. Regular newsletters make them aware of changes and events within the pre-school and parents' days provide opportunities to discuss the children's developmental progress. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the running of the pre-school by joining the committee and taking part in the parent rota. However, few take up the opportunity to get involved. Parents are happy with the care and education

their children receive, talk about their children's enjoyment and know they can approach the staff at any time. The written policy outlines the procedures for handling complaints, however, this has not been updated to reflect the changes in regulation and a system for recording complaints is not in place.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are generally protected as a result of the suitable systems in place when selecting and recruiting staff. For example, individual's qualifications, references and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearances are sought and a record of their personal details is accessible. Most of the committee members who make up the registered body are known to Ofsted, however, not all have completed the relevant clearance, which constitutes a breach in regulation. The procedure for recording information about the staff and committee members who have completed clearance is insufficient because not all details are listed. Staff are aware that persons employed and going through this clearance cannot be left unsupervised with the children. A good ratio of qualified staff is employed and others are in the process of extending or working towards a recognised qualification. They are committed to attending short courses to further develop their knowledge and skills and enhance the children's learning in all areas. Staff are clear about their key person role within the group and also have designated roles within the staff team.

The written policies, in the main, provide sufficient detail regarding the pre-school practices and procedures, however, these are currently under review. As a result, the behaviour management policy does not make reference to bullying; the complaints procedure lacks some detail and the child protection policy does not refer to allegations made against staff. All legally required documentation that contributes to the children's health, safety and well-being is generally in place. However, entries to the accident record are not acknowledged by parents and the attendance register does not reflect the hours staff and children attend, which is a breach in regulation. All records are stored securely to maintain a confidential approach, however, systems used for the recording of accidents means confidentiality is compromised.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. In the main, they contribute to the positive progress children make towards the early learning goals. The manager is clear about her role and organises regular staff meetings to support the professional development of the staff. She attends the 'Hello' meetings locally and values the regular support they receive from the Qualified Teacher Support (QTS). She works with them to monitor and further develop the educational provision. Positive links are developed with the school because visits by the reception class teacher into the setting eases the children's transition into school.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom care is provided.

Improvements since the last inspection

During the last inspection the provider was asked to maintain confidentiality when completing the accident record and include in the child protection policy the procedures to follow in the event of allegations being made against a member of staff. Since the last inspection a new record system has been ordered to overcome the issues raised regarding the recording of accidents, however this has not yet been received. The Pre-school Learning Alliance policy regarding allegations against staff is accessible and staff are aware of the procedures. However, the child protection policy has not been updated to reflect the procedures.

During the last education inspection the provider was asked to give attention to increasing children's independent learning opportunities at snack time and provide more opportunities for children to develop skills in moving under, over and through balancing and climbing. Since the last inspection children's independence at snack time has been given some attention, however, aspects of independence are still not fully promoted, therefore, the recommendation has been raised again. The development of children's physical skills are well met through the introduction of the planned PE sessions which contribute to their well-being.

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 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 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):

- promote children's personal hygiene at snack time and develop systems for children to access drinking water independently
- review and update the current policies, with particular reference to complaints, behaviour management and child protection; ensure the daily system for registering staff and children reflects their hours of attendance, and ensure parents sign against all accidents recorded
- develop robust systems for recording details of staff clearances and ensure all committee members complete the necessary clearance.

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):

- further enhance children's self help skills during snack times
- ensure all areas of the children's learning outlined in the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework is promoted through the planning of activities (this applies the care inspection also) and further develop children's interest in mark making during play opportunities

- encourage parents to provide information regarding children's starting points developmentally on entry into the pre-school
- further develop staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

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