

St Gabriels Parish Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305319
Inspection date	16 July 2007
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	St. Gabriels RC CP School, Well Lane, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST7 2PG
Telephone number	01270 875770
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Registered person	St Gabriels RC Church
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. Gabriel's Parish playgroup is run by a management committee. It has been a pre-school facility since 1975 and operates from a building in the grounds of St. Gabriel's school in Alsager. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30, term time only. Afternoon sessions are offered depending upon demand, from 12.30 to 15.00. All children share access to the school playground at designated times.

There are currently 45 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 34 receive funding for early education. Children mostly come from the local area and intend to move into the school. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties, but there are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and have access to advisory staff from Sure Start Cheshire.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay very healthy because practitioners employ a thorough knowledge of appropriate health and hygiene guidelines and procedures. They keep toilet and hand washing areas very clean and equipped and talk to children about hygiene and health through the routines and activities of the day. Three and four-year-olds are highly independent to manage their toilet and hand washing arrangements with minimal support and also participate enthusiastically in keeping their play environment clean and tidy. For example, they wash down the tables before and after snack and help to wash some of the chairs at the end of term. Children have a good understanding about what to wear according to the weather and temperature and protect their clothes by putting on aprons for painting, messy play and baking activities. However, there is currently no thermostatically controlled hot water available for hand washing and staff therefore prepare bowls of warm soapy water instead.

Activity plans include trips and visitors who help children to learn about how to look after their teeth, how to handle and care for animals and how to enjoy nature. In addition, good attention to individual children's health needs means that dietary requirements and administration of any necessary creams or medication are hygienically undertaken according to each child's needs and their parents' wishes. For example, parents give written consent for medication to be given should an asthma sufferer require their inhaler during a session. Medication is only administered with written instructions and consent from parents and the record is signed by parents to acknowledge every entry. Sufficient staff are trained in first aid and food hygiene. They and parent helpers follow clear written cleaning, food preparation and sickness policies and procedures. They also keep parents well informed about childhood illnesses and diseases. Accidents are properly recorded and parental signatures of acknowledgement are obtained every time.

Children enjoy good levels of physical activity indoors and outdoors, whenever weather permits. They use bikes, chucks, beanbags, balls and streamers in the playground and grow flowers and plants, role play or undertake cleaning activities outside on the grass area. Parents give written permission for various local nature or community walks so that children have as much fresh air and space as possible. Children also participate in numerous craft, construction and role play activity to practise their small hand movements, using equipment, such as scissors, glue, brushes, tape dispensers and crayons. All these activities develop children's large and small movements and support their physical health.

Children are well nourished and enjoy a healthy diet with minimal sugar through snacks, such as toast, bread sticks and dips, crackers, cheese and fruit. Water or milk is offered to drink and children are very involved in table laying, working out how many plates, cups and chairs they need and serving the snacks. Staff sit with children and encourage very good manners and discussion during the meal, where every child can talk about what they have enjoyed doing today. A 'healthy me' topic provides a focus on all aspects of children's health which is built upon throughout subsequent pre-school daily routines, discussions and activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe environment with an extremely stimulating and purposeful atmosphere. The activity room is well set out to use the available space, with most resources stored on low shelves and in clear boxes so that children can select and put away items themselves. Children and parents come into the setting at the beginning and end of sessions and the door is manned to ensure security at these times. Gates to the school campus are locked during sessions and children are safely escorted to the playground area, with registers, phone and first aid kits always taken out ready to use if needed. Displays and large photo album project books show children's work and remind them of stories and discoveries that they have made.

Children use a good range of innovative and stimulating resources which contribute significantly to children's enjoyment and achievement. For example, children enjoy a good range of construction materials, table top games, craft materials, books, domestic role play equipment, information technology and small world resources, with varied bats, balls, hoops, ride-on, climbing and push-along equipment for physical play. Children also set up and create many of their own activities, for example, making a junk model submarine. Opportunities to explore, create, innovate and play independently are mostly well balanced with safety. This is because the staff are vigilant and confident, providing support and appropriate behaviour boundaries to assure that children can take risks and extend themselves as much as possible. However, standing water in an open tank is left outside the setting unattended which constitutes a potential drowning hazard.

Children's safety is supported through good documentation and visits from community safety personnel. Careful arrangements are made and a diary used to ensure that staff know exactly who is collecting a child if this is not a parent or designated carer. Registers are taken promptly and parents also sign their child in and out at the entrance so that exact numbers are always known in case of emergency. Periodic fire drills are held and records kept of these and regular safety checks and risk assessments are acted upon to continually upgrade the safety in the setting. For example, additional socket covers and door jam guards are in place and staff belongings are now more securely stored. Electrical appliances, wiring and fire equipment are checked and documentation about what to do in the event of any emergency is posted. Enjoyable visits from police and fire officers help children to learn about community, road and fire safety.

Children are protected from abuse because all staff have sufficient understanding of their role in child protection. Staff know who to contact if they are concerned about a child. Up to date reference information about child protection is available and the child protection policy is suitable. However, the contact numbers for the local police and social services are still not easily available because they are not displayed or placed on the policy document.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are developing high levels of confidence and self-esteem because purposeful staff talk and listen to them constantly and have high expectations of what they can achieve. They separate easily from their carers, showing them what they have been making or playing with and then going straight to play. Circle times are led exceedingly well, successfully using techniques which help children to listen and take turns to speak, so that children behave well, know what there is to do and are responding, learning and communicating. Children also enjoy

a variety of topic based role plays, constructions, interactive stories and dramas, creative crafts, dressing up and media to explore. For example, they make their own gloop and experiment with how it feels and changes as they add more water or add glitter to it. Children are able to take photos of their activities and they take time to discuss and review what they are doing as part of their snack time. This enhances their social skills and consolidates their learning.

Children are happy, settled, and interested in what they are doing because staff are committed, enthusiastic and work well together as a team. Staff and parent helpers know all children very well and use individual, small and large group activity to provide inspiring learning experiences. For example, small groups are making party hats for the end of term party or re-enacting the story of the three bears with the small world house and figures. In large group situations staff are promoting good physical skills as children practise their coordination using the scooters, jumbo chinks or shape bean bags. Children's social skills and knowledge of number and letter are also becoming increasingly good, for example as children put their name apple onto the tree or write their name on the things they make. Throughout sessions, children are given opportunities and support to pursue their own ideas and complete activities so that they are stretched to achieve as much as they can. For example, children try both glue and sticky tape from a dispenser to see which will be best for sticking the junk model they are making. Staff watch, advise and suggest. Then they generously praise children's efforts and success so that they are delighted with their achievements and are confident to persist.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are highly committed to providing a caring, welcoming atmosphere, a varied programme of activities covering all the areas of learning and an approach which fosters self-confidence and good social behaviour. Children enjoy a fine range of activities professionally delivered by the experienced staff. These are usually based on themes or are based upon children's own choices. Learning is then consolidated through ongoing discussions, conversations and reference to photos and things that children have made. As a result, children's confidence and social skills are well developed, as is their sense of place and community.

Children behave exceedingly well, use very good manners and are making good progress in all areas of learning, based upon their starting points. This is because staff are very successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development. Staff know each child and their family well and encourage friendships between children, so that they can take turns and consider one another. Each child feels special from the moment they are greeted in the morning to the time when they are collected to go home. Children also enjoy very good opportunities for creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, they make good use of computers and digital cameras to enhance their learning in all areas. Children are confident with hand tools, such as brushes, pencils, crayons and scissors and this is promoting their early writing skills. Communication skills and knowledge of number, shape, space and measure are also good because staff challenge and question children as they role play, complete puzzles, dress up or tidy up and lay the tables ready for snack. However, children are seldom attracted to use the book area.

Teaching highly motivates children and inspires their play. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Planning is clear and detailed, is evaluated for future use and is linked to the six areas of learning. Observation notes are regularly taken on every child to be used as evidence of individual children's progress. Plans are also sometimes adapted to provide for individual children's next steps, perhaps to pursue a particular interest

in modelling for example. However, individual planning for every child's next steps is less clear. Children's individual developmental profiles are completed comprehensively using observation notes, photos and examples of children's work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children join in very well, take responsibility and play a productive part in the setting because the friendly, purposeful staff help children feel at home from the outset. Parents are welcomed into the setting and many take a regular turn to assist on the parent rota. Staff are particularly warm and nurturing in manner and are clearly and successfully promoting kindness and appreciation amongst adults and children. As a result, children have a very secure sense of belonging, enjoy being in the setting and confidently use the resources and approach adults for help. Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are good books, dressing up costumes, dolls, play figures, puzzles, posters and games which show positive images of culture and disability. The setting has a Catholic basis, but undertakes activities to bring various cultures and religious festivals to life. In addition, the pre-school participates in various fund raising activities, such as carnivals and collecting Christmas gifts for children in need. This further promotes children's sense of community responsibility. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's individual needs are met well because the small staff group use their time and skills constructively to encourage children with disabilities, concentration, behaviour, language or other particular needs to join in with group activities. Staff provide one to one assistance where necessary and model appropriate play skills, using short and simple language. Children and adults with physical disabilities and behaviour or learning needs are included fully in the life of the setting because the setting is on one level and staff are committed to inclusion. They liaise well with parents and relevant professionals to ensure that they plan and work together using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit children with emerging learning difficulties or disabilities.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff praise children when they clear up properly, sit well for group time, or wait their turn and always make it clear what the child is being praised for. They use small bells to gain children's attention after a free activity session and encourage children to sit quietly as a group with their finger on lips and hands up to be chosen. Children conform with ease and are delighted to be chosen to sing a song to the other children or to help lay the snack table. There are good behaviour, equal opportunities, parent partnership and disability policies. However, an incident record is not used. This means that documentary evidence is not available to support discussions with parents about how to resolve a child's potential behaviour difficulties.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive consistency of care between home and pre-school because staff communicate well with parents and obtain details of children through a detailed enrolment and consent form. Parents receive a prospectus about the pre-school, including details of the Foundation Stage, the routine, how to help their child settle and important procedures for safety and health. Thereafter, parents can view details of the activity planning and the areas of learning it relates to and they support the setting daily by helping their child to bring in items for the sharing time. Parents receive their child's developmental records and reports at the end of year and they regularly see their child's work as they bring home things that they have made. However, they are not clearly informed about

key things children are learning about on a day to day basis, or given ideas of how to consolidate or extend this with their child outside the pre-school environment.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff deployment contributes well to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff ratios are satisfactory, but staff use their time very skilfully to maximise the learning and enjoyment of every child. This is because they are highly motivated, vigilant, competent and approachable, organising the session so that almost all tasks are undertaken alongside children, so that children quickly acquire necessary independence skills and confidence for themselves. Staff concentrate upon a simple session routine, know their key children well, but can make observation notes on all children they are working with each day to share with the relevant key worker for that child.

Policies and procedures work well in practice to promote good outcomes for children. Some documents are organised in files, while others are in record books or displayed materials. Child details provide sufficient information to enable good care to be given and the medicine and accident recording systems work well. The signing in register works efficiently and the policies are clear and appropriate, detailing the principles and practices of the setting. However, the contact details for contacting the regulator, Ofsted, are not clearly stated or displayed for parents. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager provides thorough and sensitive support to all staff and treats all adults as equal partners in the team, with the committee behind the scenes providing support. The staff group is well informed, prepared and motivated because they have good opportunities to attend training and procedures are well organised for them to understand and follow. Staff have a good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and regularly discuss the group and how individual children are progressing. In addition, they spend time evaluating the setting's strengths and weaknesses and together make ambitious plans for continuing improvement in both the environment and the delivery of the curriculum to children.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were five recommendations and two points for consideration made at the last inspection in May 2004. The recommendations concerned the policies and procedures of the setting and improvements have been made so that these now support the setting fully. For example, the daily register is now signed by parents and overseen by staff so that every child is accounted for, with the time they arrived and departed. In addition, the policies for behaviour, equal opportunities and uncollected children now contain all the required details and information for proper action to be taken as necessary. The child protection policy is also improved and now includes all required elements except the contact details for the local police and social services.

The points for consideration for nursery education have been addressed to improve the evaluation of the teaching so that all children make progress according to their abilities. Strategies are also in place to improve parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum which their child is following. For example, staff make daily observations of what children can do and ensure that individual children have opportunities to practise and improve in areas where they are weaker. Likewise, information about the Foundation Stage is given to parents in the prospectus. This is brought to life in large photographic and annotated record

books, one for each area of learning, which are displayed and show how children's various play and activities lead to their learning in each of the six areas.

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.

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The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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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):

- ensure that standing water does not pose a hazard to children
- ensure that the child protection policy contains the contact numbers for the local police and social services
- ensure that incidents involving behaviour, including incidents of physical intervention by staff, are recorded and parents informed of them on the day
- ensure that parents have the correct contact address and telephone number for contacting Ofsted.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to enjoy books and for parents to be involved in consolidating and extending their child's learning outside playgroup.

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