

St Vincents Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305334
Inspection date	03 December 2007
Inspector	Sue Anslow
Setting Address	Manor Park South, Knutsford, WA16 8AL
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Registered person	St Vincents Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Vincent's Pre-School Playgroup and Out of School Club is run by a voluntary committee made up of school, parish and parent representatives. It opened in 1996 and operates from two rooms within a static unit in the grounds of St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School in Knutsford. A maximum of 35 children may attend the pre-school and the out of school club at any one time.

The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 15.00 term time only. The out of school club is open from 08.00 to 09.00 and 15.00 to 18.00 term time only. There is also a lunch club open to pre-school children which operates from 11.30 to 12.30 every weekday. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 52 children aged from two to under five years on roll at the pre-school; of these, 36 children receive funding for early education. There are currently 54 children aged from two to 11 years on roll at the out of school club. Children come from a wide catchment area and do not necessarily attend St Vincent's school. The pre-school and out of school club

supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities although none are currently on roll. Both groups also support children who speak English as an additional language.

St Vincent's Pre-School and Out of School Club employs 13 members of staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification. The pre-school receives support from teachers within the school, Cheshire Sure Start and the local Children's Development Centre. St Vincent's pre-school are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and have gained accreditation status.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, stimulating and hygienic environment. They thrive because staff follow effective procedures and practices which meet children's individual needs, for example, checking if children feel hot or cold. Effective cleaning systems to prevent risk of cross-infection are in place, such as different cloths for specific tasks. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through daily routines. For example, they wash their hands independently after messy play, before eating and after using the toilet. They are aware of their own health needs and respond to the colourful pictures, photographs and signs in the bathroom showing the hand washing routine. Good levels of adult support help children stay healthy and most staff hold first aid and food hygiene certificates. Effective procedures ensure children are cared for appropriately if they feel unwell or have an accident and records are kept as required. Jugs of fresh drinking water are available for children to help themselves to during each session and milk or water is served with all meals and snacks. Healthy snacks of fresh fruit and cheese are provided at pre-school sessions and the children attending the out of school club enjoy a nourishing breakfast and cooked tea. Children staying for lunch bring their own packed lunch and advice is given to parents about healthy contents and the use of ice packs in the summer. Individual diets are respected, in consultation with parents and lists are kept in the kitchen area to ensure all staff are aware of children with particular dietary requirements.

Children explore, test and develop physical control during stimulating daily indoor and outdoor activities. They benefit tremendously from being able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor activities and happily use fleeces, boots and umbrellas if needed. Children are confident when using a range of wheeled toys and the climbing and balancing equipment. Well planned and spontaneous activities enable children to explore and extend their physical capabilities. They walk confidently up and down the ramp, jump into and out of car tyres, crawl through tunnels and throw balls and bean bags at desired targets. They explore concepts, such as over and under during circle games and use a range of small tools with increasing control and confidence, for example, glue spreaders, scissors and cutters.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy ample play space, both indoors and outside, in this lively, stimulating environment. Children's art work and photographs are displayed around the room, which together with windows on both sides, gives a feeling of welcome in this bright, attractive setting. The free flow of activities into the garden area enhances the children's learning experiences tremendously. A wide variety of play equipment, organised tidily and safely on low shelving, allows for freedom of choice and independence. Effective cleaning and checking systems support the health and

safety of all the children and they thoroughly enjoy helping to wash the dolls, bricks and wheeled toys. Children use a wealth of natural play materials, such as leaves, feathers, sand and wood which enhance their creative skills and extend their knowledge of different textures. They enjoy endless hours of fun with large cardboard boxes, using their imaginations to create cars, space ships, boats and beds.

Good safety procedures are in place to keep children safe and effective staff teaching develops the children's awareness of potential hazards. For example, not running down the ramp outside and listening for hidden cars when out for a walk. Children learn how to keep themselves safe through regular activities and discussions. They know the fire drill procedure and how to cross a road safely. Effective systems are in place to ensure children are collected by named persons and the buzzer on the entrance door alerts staff to any visitors. Children attending the out of school club are taken and collected from their classrooms by staff, to ensure their safety and security. Children are very well protected by adults who have a clear understanding of child protection policies and procedures, and give top priority to children's welfare. The manager has attended relevant training courses and a written policy is available for parents to read. However, the procedure for dealing with any allegation made against members of staff is not in line with official guidance which compromises children's safety in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the pre-school and the out of school club. The older school age children enjoy the relaxing atmosphere of 'their' club where they can choose to be active or quiet according to their mood. Outdoor sports are a great favourite along with a wide variety of art and craft activities. Children can play board games, watch films or do their homework, with staff around to help and guide if needed. They enjoy being involved in decision making which promotes responsibility and independence and they hold meetings to decide what activities they would like to do in the coming weeks. They also make suggestions about menus for the after school meals and draw up 'wish lists' for new toys or games.

Pre-school children under three join in with the general programme of activities, with some allowances made for their lower levels of concentration. Groups are mixed to promote good relationships between all ages and the older children are happy to help their young friends build extra tall towers of bricks or put complicated train tracks together. Generous staff ratios allow time to comfort, help or talk to the younger children, as they follow the day's routine. All children arrive happy and eager to meet with their friends and the staff. They are keen to try out all the games and activities prepared for them that day and excitedly choose which area to start with. Children achieve well because staff are highly skilled and use their knowledge and sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework to provide high quality care and education. Close and caring relationships with staff increases the children's sense of trust and helps them develop a strong sense of self. Early communication skills are extremely well supported through high quality adult-child interactions. Children begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they join in a diverse range of exploratory and sensory experiences.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are excited and interested in the extensive range of stimulating activities relevant to their needs. The well chosen toys and play materials including those from the natural world, such as sand, water, food products and textiles,

all support children's learning across the areas of development. Children are eager to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen to stories and often join in with their favourite lines. Appropriate questions from staff help children think and predict what might happen next. For example, 'What sort of animal makes a noise like that?' and 'Where do you think the dog is hiding?'. Children practise their mark making skills in the writing area and have very good opportunities to write for different purposes in other areas, such as in the 'office'. Letter and number displays help children recognise the correct shapes and they register themselves on arrival by selecting their name cards and posting them in the letter box. Children confidently count how many plates they need at the snack table and how many books have been collected in at the end of the reading session. They sort and match objects by size, colour and shape and calculate how many monkeys are left on the bed during the singing of their favourite song.

Children thoroughly enjoy the role play activities using their imaginations to create offices, car washes and Santa's Grotto. They love music and singing and eagerly join in with the visiting musicians who play the guitar and use puppets to accompany their songs. Children enjoy the many and varied activities available to use their creative ideas and imaginations. They use small world figures hidden in sand, water and jelly, merrily wash their cars and bicycles with soapy water and sponges and create beautiful pictures with hand prints in paint. Children proudly show off the displays of their work on the walls and enjoy sticking up their own pictures on 'their' wall themselves which gives them a tremendous sense of pride and self-esteem. Exceptional use is made of the garden, with children enjoying the usual outdoor activities as well as bringing indoor toys outside. Exciting and innovative ideas and surroundings provide children with superb stimulation and wonder. Books and writing materials are used in one of the playhouses whilst the other one may be a house or an office. Letter and number shapes are hung from trees alongside home made wind chimes. A line of kitchen utensils are strung on a line between two trees which children bang on to make musical sounds. Children discover the wonders of nature by doing bark rubbings on the trunks of the mature trees, raking leaves, digging in the soil, planting bulbs and helping to create a tunnel from the young willow saplings planted by school children.

Right from the start staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs, and build on this information effectively to help children achieve as much as they can. A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child led activities allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's interests and needs and use effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements, and to plan experiences that help them take the next step in their learning. Children thrive in this excellent environment because of the consistent, dedicated staff team who have sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Staff work closely with parents to ensure children make good progress in all areas of learning, whilst having lots of fun and enjoyment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality and the family context for each child. They have many opportunities to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them through planned activities and resources reflecting diversity. Children celebrate different festivals through their craft work, such as making Christmas cards and Diwali lanterns, dressing in particular colours for the Saint's days and sharing appropriate songs and stories. They learn about nature through watching the changing seasons outside, for example, the flowering of bulbs they have planted or raking

leaves that have fallen from the trees in the garden. Children with learning difficulties, or who speak English as an additional language, receive appropriate care and education from staff who liaise closely with parents and other professionals appropriate to each child's specific needs. This ensures all children make good progress with their development and maximises opportunities for their learning.

Children behave very well and are learning to share and take turns as they help each other 'mend' the toys with their tools or zip up the back of their friend's 'elf' costume. They help to tidy up when asked and are learning ways of negotiating with others through guidance from staff. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff which boosts their self-esteem and confidence. They particularly love being chosen to give out the cups or collect in the books and are learning to sit still on their mats to listen to a story. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The management of care within the setting is well supported by written agreements with the parents and full sets of policies and procedures, for both the pre-school and out of school groups, are available in the entrance hall. Photographs of staff, together with their names and qualifications are displayed in the entrance hall alongside an abundance of photographs of children participating in a wide range of activities. This gives parents an insight into who will be looking after their children and what they will be doing during their time at pre-school or in the out of school club.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive a range of good quality information about the provision and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Daily verbal handovers on children's activities and achievements, regular newsletters and lists of ideas on how parents can participate in pre-school activities, encourages close partnerships between home and pre-school. Parents have ready access to their children's records and the twice yearly parent's evenings enable staff to talk through each individual child's progress and plans for future development. New parents complete a profile of their child, their interests, abilities, characters and family background. This helps the key workers make the settling in process run smoothly and provides a starting point for their learning. Staff ensure parent's satisfaction with their children's enjoyment, development and progress by sending out written questionnaires before each parent's evening.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The qualified and experienced staff team work well together to provide good quality care and excellent nursery education for all children. Staff update their knowledge and skills by attending relevant courses and workshops and sharing their experiences at regular staff meetings. The enthusiastic and innovative manager is highly motivated and committed to improving and enhancing the outcomes for the children in both groups. The close liaison with school staff and leaders of other local pre-schools contributes significantly towards the varied range of exciting and interesting activities. This results in the positive promotion of all areas of learning and enjoyment for all children.

Children thrive in this interesting and stimulating environment. The well organised programme of activities both indoors and outside provides the children with a balanced range of experiences, fun and achievement. The ease of movement and good access to the play equipment allows for freedom of choice and independence. Children's health, safety and well-being is extremely well supported by written policies and procedures and parents are kept very well informed of their children's progress throughout the year. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider was asked to amend two of the group's policies in line with the National Standards. This has been completed satisfactorily and serves to further protect children's care and safety.

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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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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):

- amend the safeguarding children policy in line with current guidance.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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