

St Cuthberts Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	310478
Inspection date	18 February 2008
Inspector	Elaine Murray
Setting Address	St Cuthberts Church Hall, Botanic Road, Southport, Merseyside, PR9 7NN
Telephone number	01704 224169
E-mail	
Registered person	ST CUTHBERTS PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP (CHURCH TOWN)
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 Cuthbert's Pre-School Playgroup is a registered charity run by a board of trustees who are members of St Cuthbert's Church. It opened in 1984 and operates from two rooms within St Cuthbert's church hall in Churchtown, Southport. A maximum of 31 children may attend the group at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday from 09.15 until 12.45, and Monday to Wednesday from 12.45 until 15.15, during school term times.

There are currently 61 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of whom 30 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

The group employs 14 staff. There are 11 staff members, including the manager, who hold appropriate early years qualifications. A further staff member is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children show an awareness of simple hygiene procedures as they routinely wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Staff follow hygienic procedures as they clean surfaces and equipment, helping to protect children from the spread of germs. Children learn about dental hygiene as they are involved in activities about the process of teeth brushing and its importance. The pre-school's clear sickness policy is shared with parents and includes a list of communicable illnesses. Staff give out letters to remind parents of the period of exclusion if their child is suffering from sickness or diarrhoea. These measures help to protect children from the spread of infection. Several staff have up to date first aid training, helping to meet children's needs in the event of an accident or emergency. Food, including children's packed lunches, is stored hygienically, helping to ensure children's good health.

Children are developing physical skills and enjoyment of exercise through a variety of planned activities. The group does not have an area for outdoor play. However, staff make good use of the indoor space to provide daily opportunities for children to enjoy exercise and develop control of their bodies. For example, children enjoy using wheeled toys and take part in an obstacle course.

Children learn to enjoy a healthy diet as they are provided with varied and nutritious snacks, including fresh fruit. They develop an understanding of healthy eating through topic work. For example, children draw pictures of healthy foods to make individual books about healthy eating. They take part in preparing the ingredients to make vegetable soup to eat in pre-school. Children are aware of when they are thirsty and confidently help themselves to drinking water, which is freely available from the water dispenser in the main room. This helps to promote children's good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The group operate from shared premises, which means that there is limited space available to display children's work. However, staff make the room attractive and welcoming by displaying work on low level boards, and by putting out a broad range of play materials before children arrive. This helps to foster children's sense of security and belonging. The environment is well organised, helping children to move around safely and independently. Staff make good use of space to meet children's needs. In the main hall, areas are provided for different purposes, for example, for children to look at books, make marks or be involved in creative activities. The smaller room is used effectively to provide an area for indoor physical play, or a quiet area for small group work. The range of toys and equipment is suitable for different ages and abilities, meeting children's needs effectively.

Staff take effective measures to ensure children's safety indoors and outdoors. Risk assessments identify potential hazards and action is taken to minimise the risk to children. Staff make a daily check of the premises, which is recorded. Children learn to protect themselves in the event of a fire or emergency as they regularly practise the emergency evacuation procedure. They develop an awareness of road safety whilst on outings, and learn safe procedures for travelling in a car through discussion with staff. Children also learn to protect their own safety as staff remind them about the importance of tidying toys to prevent a tripping hazard.

Children are well protected as staff have a good knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and are familiar with the procedures to be followed. Some staff have attended recent training in this area to update their knowledge.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff establish very positive, warm relationships with children, helping them to feel settled and secure. Children are happy and content. Staff skilfully settle children who are new to pre-school, providing good support to help them feel secure. Staff make good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to promote learning. Children show interest and involvement as they play in the Chinese restaurant role play area, enjoy dressing up and small world play. Staff interact well with children to sustain their interest, ensuring that children are occupied and involved. Children enjoy looking at a book of photographs of themselves at pre-school, helping to affirm their identity and sense of belonging. They enjoy learning to explore and investigate using their senses as they play with sand, water and dried pasta. Children are involved in a variety of creative activities, including free painting. However, at times children's opportunities to express their own ideas in creative work is limited as staff provide them with pre-drawn outlines to complete. Children's language is developed well through careful encouragement and questioning from staff. Staff make regular observations of children's learning and use this information to inform their next steps.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals. They plan some interesting and worthwhile practical activities that relate to the stepping stones. Children are motivated and enthusiastic in their play. They show independence and enjoyment as they set up the Chinese restaurant role play area. They show a keen interest in examining leaves and flowers using magnifying glasses. Staff question children effectively to make them think and extend their learning. For example, when painting a cardboard circle, children are encouraged to use mathematical language to identify the middle and edges. Staff make good use of everyday routines to promote counting skills. For example, children count how many are present at each table and then select the correct number of plates to give out. Staff effectively develop children's language skills through talking with them about their interests and activities and encouraging them to express their ideas. Staff make regular observations of children's learning and use this information effectively to inform planning. This means that planning successfully builds on what children know and learning is developed well.

Children have positive relationships with each other. They co-operate well in role play to play imaginative games. For example, children take orders and make food for each other in the role play restaurant. Children learn to identify letter sounds as they join in a game of 'I spy' at snack time. Children make frequent use of the mark making area to write and make marks. They learn to write for a purpose as they write letters to their homes and post them. Children learn to identify two dimensional shapes as they make pictures using paper shapes. They begin to develop ideas of simple addition as they think how many plates they will have if there is one more. Children learn to explore and investigate as they find out how to make boats move on the water tray by blowing through straws. They observe change as they plant flowers and cress seeds and take part in baking activities. Children learn to use a computer to support their learning. They are effectively developing a sense of place through regular outings in the locality, for example, to the post office, church and shops. Children also benefit from regular visitors to the pre-school, such as a school crossing patrol officer and a postman. Children are learning

to develop pencil control and to use scissors correctly. They are familiar with a range of songs and rhymes. Children make use of a range of musical instruments to explore sound. Their learning is enhanced by a visit from a local music group. Children enjoy a range of creative activities, but opportunities for their free expression is limited at times.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff ensure that children are positively included in the activities provided. They pay excellent attention to ensuring that individual needs are met. As a result, children display a high level of confidence and self-esteem. They contribute to the life of the setting as they set up the Chinese restaurant role play area and take part in making cakes and setting the table for a parents' coffee morning. Children are encouraged to develop a responsible and caring attitude as, for example, they collect gifts for harvest festival and raise money for charity. Children develop an awareness of diversity and the wider community as staff make excellent use of resources and planned activities to promote this. Staff invite a visitor to pre-school who uses a mobility aid to talk to the children and demonstrate how the aid works. Children discover the wider world through a broad range of topics including Diwali and Chinese New Year. Children show a keen interest in activities relating to Chinese New Year as they learn to say 'Happy New Year' in Chinese and take part in role play, dance and stories relating to the festival. Staff effectively include and support children with learning difficulties. They work well with parents and outside agencies to meet children's needs.

Children behave extremely well due to staff's clear expectation and positive approach. They are very familiar with the pre-school routines and are learning to share and take turns. Staff act as effective role models, showing respect and consideration for children and each other. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is outstanding. Parents receive a high level of information about current topics through newsletters and plans on display. They have regular chances to be informed about their children's progress as they are invited in to pre-school to see assessment profiles and work. Staff invite parents to help out at the pre-school on a regular basis, helping them to be involved in and support children's learning. For example, parents have helped to introduce children to Spanish and French languages. When discussing children's progress, staff effectively encourage and support parents to develop aspects of their children's learning at home. Newsletters are also used to promote this involvement. For example, children are encouraged to look for shapes in the environment as part of a topic relating to shape. In addition, children regularly take home a book from pre-school to share with parents.

Children benefit from the excellent partnership staff have established with parents. Staff request information about children before a child joins the pre-school and obtain relevant parental permissions. This information is used to help meet children's needs well. Staff value and respect the views of parents and work closely with them to meet children's needs. Parents are invited to complete regular questionnaires giving their views on the quality of care and education for their child. The strength of the partnership with parents is reflected in the extremely positive opinions expressed about the care and education their child receives and the close level of communication between parents and staff. This excellent level of communication helps to ensure that children's needs are effectively met.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager provides positive direction to staff. Roles are clear and staff work well together to plan and teach. The manager has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. The setting produces a written self- evaluation with action plan which is regularly reviewed. Planning and children's progress in learning is well monitored. The managers seek and act upon advice from the early years partnership regarding improvements regarding, for example, planning. This approach has a positive effect on the quality of children's learning.

Children are cared for in a well organised environment. Staff are deployed effectively to meet children's needs. All staff are experienced and most hold relevant childcare qualifications. This has a beneficial effect on children's welfare, care and learning. Children clearly benefit from the staffing levels of the pre-school which are within the required ratios at all times and ensure that children have a good level of attention and support. Policies and procedures are effectively in place and contribute to positive outcomes for children. Staff use records effectively to support the care of children and comply with regulations.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was required to: make improvements to the lost child procedure and the system for registering children's attendance; take action to prevent children gaining access to the kitchen; improve information to parents of children receiving nursery education about their children's progress; improve the use of practical activities to promote children's mathematical development and develop children's physical skills.

These recommendations have been met with positive effect on children's safety, welfare and learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide more opportunities for children to express their own ideas in creative work (also applies to nursery education).

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):

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