

St. Vincent's Pre-School Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	316434
Inspection date	12 December 2007
Inspector	Judith, Mary Horsfall
Setting Address	St Vincent's Parish Centre, Caldershaw Road, Norden, Rochdale, OL12 7QL
Telephone number	01706 345 052
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Registered person	St. Vincent's Pre-School Group
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. Vincent's Pre-School opened in 1987 and is organised by a local committee. It operates from the Parish Centre which is a detached building within the grounds of St Vincent's Primary School and church in the Norden area of Rochdale, Lancashire. The group is open every weekday from 08.30 to 12.30, term time only. Children access a three hour session during these hours due to flexible entitlement. Children have access to the school playground for outdoor play.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 27 children aged three to under five years on roll, and some attend on a part time basis. All the children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from a local catchment area. The setting employs eight members of staff, five of whom, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning about good health and hygiene practices because the staff teach them about the importance of washing hands after using the toilet. Children say that if they do not wash their hands they get 'germs in their tummies' and then they 'get sick'. Children are well protected in cases of accident or illness because several members of staff have a suitable first aid qualification and there is a first aid kit. Risks of cross infection and contamination are reduced as staff have robust routines, such as regularly cleaning tables with anti-bacterial spray and using colour coded mops and separate washing up bowls for different areas.

Comprehensive policies and procedures to deal with sickness, accidents and medication ensure children are kept safe and well during their time at the setting. Children benefit from regular exercise both indoors and outdoors where they learn to balance, develop hand to eye co-ordination and use large wheeled toys. There are also weekly physical education sessions and children enjoy action songs and music with movement. Children have access to a quiet area should they need to rest.

Children are well nourished during the session as the staff provide healthy snacks, such as carrot and cucumber sticks with savoury dips. Fresh drinking water is available at all times. The setting has been awarded the 'Golden Grin' award for helping the children care for their teeth and eat healthy foods. Once a term, the dental hygienist attends the group. Each child receives a toothbrush, toothpaste and lessons on how to brush their teeth. Children who are staying for a longer period of time bring packed lunches and socialise well around the tables with their friends. Children's individual dietary needs are discussed with parents and recorded on record forms, with staff remaining very vigilant about allergies and preferences.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed by staff into the setting and are proud of their art work which is displayed on mobile screens. Children's sense of belonging is further enhanced by the provision of individually named coat pegs with a picture to help children who are not yet able to read their name. The indoor premises and outdoor area are safe, secure and suitable for young children. The premises and furnishings are clean and well maintained with suitable cleaning procedures in place to ensure risks of infection are minimised. However, the book area is neither attractive nor welcoming to children which reduces their interest in using this space. There is a broad range of toys and play resources which are generally accessible to children and staff are currently improving systems to give children more choice from storage areas.

Children remain safe as staff are vigilant. For example, they remind children not to run too quickly whilst children push a toy pram to reduce the risk of collision. Detailed accident records are countersigned by parents to ensure relevant information is passed on. Children are well protected in case of fire as there are regular fire drills, the emergency evacuation procedure is displayed and fire extinguishers are regularly checked. Risk assessments and relevant consent forms are in place to further protect the children. A clear, comprehensive policy with a list of relevant agencies telephone numbers, ensures that children are kept safe should concerns be raised regarding child protection. However, staff are not aware that they need to contact Ofsted with concerns regarding child protection when the children are in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle happily in the setting and are contented in their play. They enter the pre-school with confidence and leave their main carer with assurance. Staff plan experiences to support all areas of children's development. Children independently select resources from a displayed range which are suitable for their ages and stages of development. Staff are reviewing the ways toys are stored, to try to make a wider range of resources more accessible within the continuous provision. Children benefit from trips out into the community. For example, they visit the garden centre where they pot up a plant to bring home, and each week on a rota basis they go to the shops to choose healthy snacks with the staff.

Children are learning the daily routine of welcome, prayers, register and snack, and enjoy free access to a variety of play activities. Staff interact with care and patience towards the children, comforting them when they stumble. Children move with confidence both indoors and outdoors during designated times in the school playground. During the inspection the children's Christmas show was proudly performed and the children demonstrated their skills in singing, recalling lines and an understanding of the Christmas story.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, so that children make good progress towards the early learning goals. The staff understand how three and four year old children learn and are familiar with the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Children have experiences in all areas of learning, using both the indoor and outdoor environments. They are motivated to learn and use initiative to develop their own play ideas. Planning and observations of adult led activities clearly outline what children are intended to learn. Staff routinely evaluate activities, observe children's individual progress and record their achievements against the stepping stones, to help plan the next steps in their learning.

Staff have good relationships with the children and hold high expectations of children's behaviour. Children benefit from a good balance of activities as they work happily in groups with an adult or alone. With the new staffing structure, adults are beginning to regularly assess and record children's progress towards the early learning goals and much of the information is now used to plan the daily activities. An action plan has been developed to improve observation procedures and this is working well in practice.

Children are confident communicators. They happily share their own ideas and experiences, talking about Christmas, their holidays and favourite pets. Although there are books available, the book area is not well furnished and the children do not make good use of this area. Children are beginning to understand about writing for a purpose as they make their mark on their paintings saying 'that is my name'. However, opportunities for mark making are limited throughout the pre-school and this restricts children's chances to develop writing skills. Children are becoming familiar with numbers and count with confidence, as they enjoy lots of number songs and rhymes. Planning identifies activities to promote mathematics, such as ordering Santa's numbered stockings in correct order on a washing line. Most three year olds can count to 10 and beyond and staff use many opportunities throughout the day to reinforce counting and mathematical skills with the children.

Children learn about the natural world, growth and change. They are curious about the world around them. Children enjoy trips out to post letters to their homes and having visitors who bring in pets, such as parrots and rats to view. However, there are few programmable toys and children's learning opportunities are limited in this area. Staff interact very positively with children, encouraging their interest, asking open ended questions and supporting their learning.

Children enjoy physical play, both indoor and outdoors. Particularly popular are music and movement and gym sessions where the children move freely, with confidence and develop skills, such as balance, hand to eye coordination and spatial awareness. Children are also developing fine motor skills as they adeptly handle tools and resources, such as scissors, glue, string and play dough. They benefit from a wide range of creative play activities and are currently making calendars using a variety of materials in collage form. They happily dress up in various costumes and imagine themselves to be different characters, such as fairies or characters in the Christmas show.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy warm, caring relationships with staff and with each other. They are regularly praised for their efforts and achievements and are valued as individuals. For example, children are encouraged to bring in items from home, such as swimming certificates and theatre programmes to discuss their wider lives and accomplishments. However, there are limited resources and activities which promote an understanding of the wider world and this limits the children's play and learning in this area.

All children are welcomed into the setting and there is a coordinator for special needs who works closely with parents and external agencies to help children if necessary. This work is supported by a good quality policy and clear understanding of learning disabilities and difficulties.

Children's good behaviour is sensitively encouraged and rewarded. Appropriate strategies, such as diversion and explaining to children why certain behaviour is not suitable, ensures children begin to learn about good conduct. Staff actively reinforce kind and caring behaviour and gently remind children about rules and boundaries, so that children are learning to negotiate difficulties and help each other. There are rules which include 'being kind to each other, speak nicely to each other, take care of our setting, treat all living things with care and respect'. As the children actively follow these guidelines, their social, moral, cultural and spiritual needs are fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. There is a large notice board for parents and this contains useful information including the topics the children are currently focussing on, registration certificate, Ofsted telephone number and infectious diseases procedures. Parents are given a 10 page booklet as the children join the setting and this covers the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum, together with the aims and philosophy of the pre-school. Parents say staff are very friendly and approachable. Newsletters, discussion on arrival and departure and free access to children's individual records ensure parents are informed of their children's progress. Parents enjoy positive relationships with staff, saying they are very friendly and approachable. Settling in procedures encourage parents to spend time in the pre-school with their child if they feel this is necessary, whilst at the end of their time at pre-school, children enjoy a smooth transition to reception classes.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children remain safe because appropriate procedures are in place to ensure staff and volunteers undergo necessary checks. Although the group do not have sole use of the space, the environment is generally well organised to promote children's welfare and safety. Daily routines and organisation of space and resources supports children's varying needs and interests. Staff are deployed effectively to ensure appropriate levels of care at all times. Clear attention is given to consistency and continuity of staffing to support individual children, particularly in the use of keyworkers. There are robust induction procedures and strong contingency strategies to ensure adequate staff cover in times of absences. Adult to child ratios are maintained and records are maintained of times of arrival and departure to further enhance the children's safety.

The staff and children benefit from effective support from the local authority, particularly in reviewing policies, procedures and planning. Documentation is generally of a high standard with relevant records relating to children in place and some policies exceeding the minimum requirements of the National Standards.

The quality of leadership and management is good. There are two members of staff who work jointly to organise the practice. Both are strong leaders and are clearly motivating the highly committed staff team. Regular staff meetings and planning sessions ensure staff practice is constantly monitored and assessed. Staff training needs are identified and addressed to ensure staff's knowledge base continues to develop. Observations of children are helping staff to identify children's interests and these are being embedded into the pre-school following a recent change in management.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection two recommendations were made. One was concerning risk assessments and the other related to increasing opportunities for children to be more independent at snack time.

Each of these have been addressed, increasing safety and independence for the children.

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):

- develop furnishings in the book area to make it more attractive and accessible to children
- revise the safeguarding children policy to ensure the designated person liaises with Ofsted when required.

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):

- expand the resources and activities which promote equality of opportunity, particularly in the areas of gender, disability and culture
- increase children's access to programmable toys
- provide more mark making resources throughout the setting.

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