

Footsteps - St. Andrews Church Playgroup
Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	316846
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Inspector	Christine Marsh
Setting Address	St. Andrews C of E School, Graves Street, Radcliffe, Manchester, Lancashire, M26 4GE
Telephone number	07967 714 534
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Registered person	Footsteps - St. Andrews Church Playgroup
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?

Footsteps - St Andrews Church Pre-school Playgroup has been registered since 1994. It is run by a voluntary committee and operates from a pre-fabricated building located in the grounds of St Andrews Primary School in the Radcliffe area of Bury. The pre-school has access to a large play room, with adjacent toilet facilities and a cloakroom. A secure outdoor play area is available for the sole use of the pre-school. The pre-school also has access to the school facilities on site.

A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. The group operates five mornings a week from 09.15 to 11.45. The group also operate afternoon sessions on Tuesday's and Thursday's between the hours of 13.15 and 15.15. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from both the local and a wider catchment area.

There are currently 38 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, one child receives funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The pre-school employs nine members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an attractive, well maintained environment. They are protected from infection by staff who promote good hygiene practices. For example, children wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating. Staff wipe tables thoroughly after messy activities and before snack times. However, food is passed directly to children so they do not have anywhere to put it down other than the table. Snacks include different types of fresh fruit and biscuits and children have access to drinks throughout sessions, which keeps them refreshed. Older children bring a packed lunch. Any foods that need to be kept cool are put in the fridge to ensure children's good health is protected. Children learn about healthy eating, and where food comes from, through themes, such as 'Food the farmer has grown' at harvest time.

All staff have current first aid certificates and their knowledge helps to maintain children's health in the event of any minor accidents. Where children have specific health problems staff seek professional advice so they can administer medication and treatment if this is needed.

Children take part in regular physical play outdoors. For example, they ride bikes and push dolls in buggies round the track learning to control their bodies; access large scale play equipment, and draw with large chinks on the blackboard. Indoors they use scissors to cut soft play dough, build towers with construction materials, and play on the climbing frame and slide. Children are developing their large and their fine motor skills through these varied activities. Children enjoy these activities that contribute towards a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children and their parents feel very welcome in the attractively decorated and well maintained setting. Children are kept safe as the building and outdoor areas are secure. The door is kept locked and staff are extremely vigilant in checking adults who come to collect children. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken on all toys and on outdoor areas before children go outside. These measures help to maintain children's safety.

The room is divided into areas which helps to ensure children experience a balanced range of resources. These are well laid out so that children can access them freely. For example, toys are stored on the floor or at child height which enhances children's independence in selecting and tidying away resources. Child- sized tables and chairs are set out with toys for children on arrival, together with further toys and equipment on the carpet area. This provides children with a variety of surfaces and heights to play on.

Toys are rotated regularly to ensure children's interest is maintained and to support the current theme to reinforce their learning. Toys are of a very high quality, they are in good condition, age- appropriate and many of them are made from natural materials.

Children are cared for by adults who are vetted, well informed and extremely experienced. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection issues and the procedures to follow in the event of any concerns. This promotes children's welfare and safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are becoming well settled in their setting. They are well motivated and eager to learn. Children access activities concentrating carefully on their self-chosen tasks. Children enjoy playing with malleable materials, such as helping to make play dough. They use tools, for example, to make play dough into long shapes, and use cutters to make impressions on it.

Staff have a sound understanding of young children's needs and this is used to plan first hand experiences, such as exploratory play with paint on tables. Children express their creativity through their mark making. These experiences are planned taking into account children's developmental needs and appropriate curriculum documents.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Planning records long, medium and short term plans to support children's learning, however, it does not currently provide full details of the ways in which individual children are to be supported, in order to learn effectively or detail the next steps in their learning. Children are progressing well for their ages and staff motivate them by providing activities that are stimulating, developmentally appropriate, and appeal to children's current interests.

Children engage in mark making and understand that print carries meaning. For example, children write their name on their paintings and use their name cards to register themselves when they arrive. Stories play an important part in their learning and displays are frequently based on favourite books and characters, such as 'Elmer the elephant'. Children's work is used to contribute towards attractive displays on these themes. Singing takes place regularly. Children join in with enthusiasm doing the actions to rhymes, such as 'Two little dicky birds' and 'Incey, Wincey spider'.

Children enjoy creative activities, such as role play and dressing up. Mathematical experiences are developed and consolidated through all activities. For example, in the home role play area, children concentrate carefully pegging pairs of socks on to the washing line. Children play in the water tray using fishing nets to try and catch matching toy fish. They sequence blankets into small, medium, and large developing their language skills and their understanding of size. Carpet times are used to teach children about colours and shapes, for example, children draw a large circle in the air with their fingers. Tables are set up with interactive displays to reinforce children's learning.

Parents and the local community, are involved in the children's learning. For example, during a theme on pets parents brought in children's pets and the garden centre staff brought in a large lizard and tortoises. Through such exciting first hand experiences children are learning about different creatures. Children say prayers, celebrate festivals, such as Christmas, and learn about seasonal times throughout the year, for example, Harvest. Children use a camera to take photographs of shapes, such as squares, in the environment. Their photographs are displayed. This develops children's self-esteem as they see their work is valued. Through these activities children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing.

Personal, social and emotional development is developed through the use of a 'helping hands' system where children have jobs assigned to them, such as going to get the register, that help to promote their self-esteem. Staff praise children for kind acts and encourage them to play together and help one another. Staff explain things carefully and talk at an level appropriate to individual children's current developmental stages, which helps to ensure that they benefit fully from their experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The staff work very effectively to ensure that they have a deep understanding of children's individual needs. There are positive images displayed around the room, such as posters that portray children of different cultural groups and say 'welcome' in different languages. Staff have knowledge and experience of different types of learning difficulties and disabilities which informs their practice. Children develop positive images of the world they live in through access to an extremely good range of resources that reflect diversity and positive images, and through discussions with staff as issues arise. These experiences encourage children to view difference positively. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are extremely well behaved and good manners are promoted by staff. They are learning to work harmoniously with others as staff support them in sharing and taking turns. They respond well to the positive behaviour management strategies employed by the staff who are exemplary role models. They model appropriate behaviour, for example, by answering the register themselves, as well as by their use of consistent strategies to promote acceptable behaviour. This helps children to learn what is acceptable and desirable and helps to prepare them for school.

Parents are exceptionally pleased with the setting's provision. Parents who have moved out of the area continue to bring their children here because they, and their children, are so happy and confident in the setting. Parents and carers are extremely pleased with the way their children's social skills have improved since they started attending. A gradual admissions policy helps to ensure that children become well settled quickly. Parents visit with their child initially then gradually leave them for longer periods as they settle. This gives staff opportunities to discuss children's likes and dislikes with parents, which helps them to support children. Staff monitor new children closely providing support when needed, for example, if a child is unsure about accessing different toys or needs support in using equipment, such as the slide.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive detailed information about the educational provision. This includes written information on the Foundation Stage when the child starts and is continued through planning which is displayed for parents to see. Staff discuss children's progress regularly with them. Parents and carers comment on how much their children have learned, for example, about shapes and colours. They extend children's learning at home through knowing the themes children are learning in the pre-school group.

Parents also visit bringing in resources related to topics. For example, when children were learning about farms, a parent brought a horse to show to the children. Photographs of such occasions are made into attractive books. Children enjoy these as they recognise their older brothers and sisters taking part. This provides interesting talking points and helps new children to settle effectively and develops their sense of belonging. Parents volunteer and assist during sessions which gives them further opportunities to become involved and learn about their

children's education. Children express their enjoyment at the setting. For example, a child's drawing of children at play, with 'thank you' written on it, is prominently displayed in a frame.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The manager and her staff are committed to providing a quality service for the children who attend. The ratios of staff to children are always appropriately met and contingency arrangements are in place in the event of staff illness to ensure these good ratios are maintained. Staff attend training to update and increase their knowledge and several are currently undertaking professional qualifications. This commitment helps to promote children's welfare and development within the setting.

Routines are organised so that the day runs smoothly. Space and time are well organised to ensure children benefit from their experiences. The high staff to child ratio helps ensure staff are readily available in each area to support children and develop their learning further as they play.

Documentation required by the National Standards is readily available and suitably detailed. Records provide details of each child's needs and parents give signed consent, for example, for emergency medical treatment to be sought. This promotes the health and well-being of the children.

Leadership and management within the setting is good. Children benefit from the good leadership of the provision. Staff know children and families well. Children are cared for in a positive and supportive environment which promotes their development. All children are valued appropriately and are able to develop fully in their learning, supported by well qualified, knowledgeable staff. The manager is well organised. The curriculum is evaluated to see if any aspects need modifying in future teaching. This is especially important as some children attend for two years. Staff work together well as a team to promote children's health, safety, their ability to enjoy and achieve and to make a positive contribution.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to continue to develop the child protection policy in accordance with current requirements and guidelines. Clear documentation and procedures are in place, these address this issue successfully.

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, that can be seen 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):

- provide appropriate utensils for children to eat snacks.

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):

- continue to develop short term planning systems to include the children's next steps and the desired learning intentions.

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