

# St. Johns Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	319310
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jayne Utting
<b>Setting Address</b>	Kingston Park Avenue, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2866361
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of St. Johns Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 John's Playgroup was first registered in 1992. The playgroup is located within the Kingston Park housing estate, on the outskirts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is managed by the Trustee Officials of the Church together with two parent representatives. The playgroup operates from St John's Church building. Children who attend come from the locality and surrounding areas. Their social, cultural and religious backgrounds are mostly similar and reflect these areas.

St John's Playgroup is currently registered to care for a maximum of 24 children aged from two to five. There are currently 40 children on roll with 23 in receipt of nursery education funding. None of the children have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities. Staff are experienced at working with children who are learning English as an additional language. There are four morning sessions from Monday to Thursday during school term times, starting at 09.30 and finishing at 12.00.

St John's Playgroup has a total of four permanent part-time members of staff. This includes three staff who hold recognised qualifications in childcare and education. The playgroup also

receives qualified teacher support through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The staff are members of the Playgroup Learning Alliance.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are very well cared for in a warm and welcoming environment where they begin to learn about the importance of good hygiene and personal care throughout their daily routine. Consistent adult support and guidance helps children to gain a good understanding of hygiene and become increasingly independent in their personal care, for example, washing their hands before snacks, after messy play and using the toilet. Children are well protected from the spread of cross infection due to staff's vigilance and well maintained procedures for cleaning. For example, staff wash their hands before preparing food and wash down tables before and after snack times. An effective nappy change routine is followed with all staff wearing aprons and gloves, wiping down changing mats after use and ensuring nappies are disposed of hygienically. A clear written policy regarding sick children, information on communicable diseases and the effective recording of all accidents and emergency contacts, promotes children's health and well-being. All staff hold relevant first aid certificates, positively safeguarding children.

Children enjoy a good range of fun activities which contribute to their good health. Despite having no dedicated outdoor space, the playgroup plans a range of physical activities which help promote children's physical development and help them gain increasing control over their bodies. For example, children thoroughly enjoy an end of term sports day with egg and spoon, running and sack races as well as bean bag games. Children also have lots of fun dancing to their favourite songs and playing parachute games. Staff's commitment to the promotion of physical activity helps children to keep fit and to learn that exercise is lots of fun.

Staff actively promote healthy eating, working closely with parents to ensure that children bring in a range of healthy foods for snack time, including fresh fruit, yoghurts and smoothies. Prominent posters and regular newsletters help to reinforce the importance of healthy food choices and staff use snack time as an opportunity to talk to children about foods that are good for them. Snack time is well planned ensuring that children gain good social and learning opportunities. For example, they sit together at the table and engage in conversation about what they have been doing, each other and their family. Staff and parents discuss any specific dietary requirements a child may have whether for religious, cultural or medical reasons and the relevant information is recorded. This helps to foster good partnerships with parents and ensure that their wishes are met. Children have free access to drinks throughout the session and are offered suitable drinks, such as water and milk.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very secure environment where they are supervised closely by staff at all times. This enables the children to move freely and independently. Children are well protected because the setting has good safety procedures which are understood and effectively implemented by staff. They have a good understanding of the action to be taken regarding a lost or uncollected child. There are effective security systems for entry into the building, and both the arrival and collection of the children is well planned. There is an up to date record in place of persons with permission to collect children, and parents let staff know if there is

someone different collecting the children. Visitors are required to sign in and out of the playgroup, with staff ensuring they have no unsupervised access to children. This helps keep children safe.

Internally, many safety measures have been taken with smoke alarms, a fire blanket and socket covers in place. Staff are vigilant regarding safety and effectively implement procedures to minimise risks. For example, they ensure that risk assessments of the facilities and resources are carried out each day, prior to the children's arrival, although currently there is no space on the sheets for recording any concerns identified. The process of visual risk assessment is ongoing throughout the session. Electrical and fire safety equipment is regularly checked and kept in a safe condition and there are good fire safety procedures in place, with up to date records of practice evacuations. There is a comprehensive outings policy in place, which details effective safety procedures, including maintaining ratios, carrying a mobile phone and contact details, as well as taking other appropriate equipment, including drinks, snacks and sun creams as necessary. Written consent from parents is obtained prior to any outing. The children also learn road safety songs in playgroup and this is reinforced when children go on walks around the locality.

Staff help children to develop an awareness of the need to preserve their own well-being and that of others. This is achieved by gentle reminders from staff, such as requests to pick up toys from the floor in case someone trips on them. Children respond very well to these requests and it helps them begin to take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe.

Children are well protected by staff who are confident and secure in their knowledge of child protection policies and procedures. Suitable information, a clear written policy and referral forms are in place which ensure children's welfare is appropriately protected. In addition, all staff have recently undertaken safeguarding children courses and the playgroup leader has completed the advanced course.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Staff build strong, caring relationships with children. They are given lots of support to help them settle quickly into playgroup, benefiting from the staff's sensitive and calm approach to their care. A very welcoming, stimulating and inclusive environment is created, where all children are acknowledged and respected as individuals. Children interact with staff in a relaxed and warm manner and they build close relationships with their peers. For example, children sit in the book area and read together.

Staff have a sound understanding of how children gain independence and they are given the freedom to explore and investigate through a range of stimulating activities. Weekly plans are organised to allow for flexibility and spontaneity, which gives scope for each child to choose what they want to do and introduce their own ideas. In addition, the well planned layout of the main playroom allows all children very easy access to a wide range of stimulating and good quality resources, encouraging them to make independent choices, allowing their play to evolve naturally and at their own pace.

Children are enthusiastic learners. They thoroughly enjoy joining in the races on sports day as well as writing lists in the home corner and making models out of play dough. Children work well together sharing a broad variety of materials. Priority is also given to ensuring that children take part in a range of activities to stimulate and promote their sensory development. They

enjoy listening to music, singing and joining in with their own musical instruments. Children of all ages have good opportunities to represent and experiment using a good range of media, such as paint and play dough. This introduces them to the concepts of colour, texture, form and balance.

Staff have a good awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are implementing it in their planning for children under three. Staff are highly motivated and have a good knowledge of child care and development. This has a positive impact on children's learning and achievements, as staff support them to see ways to extend their play and encourage them to maintain concentration and develop confidence. As a result children are confident and have high self-esteem.

### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are well supported and helped to gain confidence in their abilities and build positive relationships through their interactions with staff and their peers. There is opportunity for children to participate in a wide range of new and stimulating experiences and they are encouraged to take an active role in the group. Staff communicate well with children using clear and simple language, which in turn helps children to learn and develop well.

Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage, early learning goals and the six areas of learning. There is effective planning in place which covers all six areas of learning and ensures that a wide range of purposeful activities and learning experiences are provided for the children. Key workers regularly monitor and observe children as they participate in activities and use this to inform future activities, ensuring they are sensitive to the differing needs of each child. Staff use effective teaching methods and tools for example, they make very good use of open-ended questions to encourage children to extend their thoughts and ideas and to solve simple problems. Staff prepare well for the sessions and ensure that there is a broad range of activities in keeping with the six areas of learning, whilst achieving a balance between planned activity and additional free play. Staff manage children effectively, valuing their contributions and adapting activities to ensure that all children are able to participate. Children's achievements are well recorded and there is good use made of photographic evidence to support written observations. Children's assessment files do not currently identify the next steps in each child's learning. This has an impact on the effectiveness of planning for the specific needs of individual children.

Children have a positive attitude to activities and are eager to take part. They have clearly formed close relationships with the staff, are self-assured and have high self-esteem. For example, they are happy to approach visitors and ask questions, relate well to their friends and play together happily. Children are kind and respect one another, waiting patiently for their turn in the sports day race. All children help to tidy up when asked by staff, they know where things go and successfully put toys away. Children show developing independence, opening their yoghurt pots and pouring their own drinks at snack time.

Children's communication skills are developing well. They show good speaking and listening skills as they take turns to speak during snack time. Children are able to express themselves clearly and have an extensive vocabulary; they talk about the different parts of the computer, their brother's and sister's and their favourite books. Children thoroughly enjoy looking at books and their listening skills are developing well. For example, they pay close attention during story sessions, answering questions correctly and can follow simple instructions. Children are

beginning to recognise and name letters, such as those in their names or on labels displayed in the playroom. They are also beginning to link them to the correct letter sound. They successfully find their names and pictures on their self-registration cards as they enter playgroup. Children have frequent opportunities to practise early writing skills as they hold pencils correctly and write shopping lists in the home corner. Children are starting to form recognisable letters and some write their first name unaided.

Children use lots of mathematical language during construction activities, such as big, tall, tallest and shortest. Staff encourage children to recognise shapes, use numbers and count in everyday play. For example, children show a keen interest in shapes and colour as they correctly identify the shape they need whilst playing a party game. Children are beginning to practise early calculating skills as they correctly identify the number of toys left on the parachute during a counting song. Children are also beginning to learn the basic concepts of weight and volume as they measure liquids and weigh ingredients during baking activities.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, they thoroughly enjoy exploring the interest table with a magnifying glass and talking with one another about what they have found. This learning was successfully extended into the home during a recent topic on animals which linked into the 'Springwatch' series. The provision of reference books at the interest tables provides further opportunities for children to learn about the world around them. Children also have good access to a computer and a range of programmable toys.

Children have lots of opportunity to use large physical equipment and to manipulate small tools freely. For example, during active play they confidently climb the slide and participate in running games. They use rolling pins, glue spreaders, pencils and crayons successfully. Children are also able to express themselves freely and creatively through a very good range of media and activities, such as paint, collage, sand, 3D model making, dough, music and movement. All children are well supported and very well challenged.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the staff's positive attitude towards equal opportunities and respecting individual and differing needs, as they lead by example. There are good opportunities to learn about the world around them and their local community through a variety of planned activities and play materials. There is opportunity to gain awareness of other cultures as children participate in a range of celebrations, including Chinese New Year and Diwali, as well as more familiar festivals, such as Christmas and Easter. Children also learn about other countries having recently completed a project about Malaysia. Staff aim to ensure that activities within the playgroup reflect the culture and background of all children who attend. Children further have access to a range of multi-cultural toys, books and images that reflect positive non-stereotypical roles, racial and cultural diversity and disability.

Staff work hard to ensure that the individual needs of all children are met and that they are cared for in a consistent and appropriate manner, collecting good comprehensive information from parents in order to achieve this.

Staff are calm, competent and good role models. They sensitively support, praise and encourage all children, promoting their self-esteem, confidence and sense of belonging. Children are polite, well behaved and enthusiastic to take part in all aspects of playgroup life. Children listen

and respect staff, and appropriate supervision ensures that all children are beginning to learn right from wrong and how to share and be kind to one another. Good behaviour is reinforced through praise and positive, age appropriate methods of behaviour management are used when necessary. This positive approach ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The playgroup is proactive in working with children with learning difficulties and disabilities and as a result all children are well supported and fully included in the setting. Key staff take responsibility, offer one-to-one care where necessary, follow individual plans and have completed relevant training. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of individual children and are committed to working with parents and relevant outside agencies so that specific care and education is provided for all children. The playgroup has a policy in place for children for whom English is an additional language and work closely with parents to ensure the appropriate resources are in place.

Partnership with parents is good. Staff clearly recognise the importance of working closely with parents to ensure that children's needs are well met. Parents receive good quality, comprehensive written information about the setting and the policies and procedures in place. Copies of these are made available to parents as well as lots of other relevant literature. For example, activity plans, daily routines and the registration and insurance certificates are all clearly displayed. Parents have access to their child's records which include detailed information about their child's developmental progress. All parents receive regular verbal feedback from the staff at the end of each session. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's learning. This enables staff to work in partnership with parents and ensures that children's needs are best met. Feedback from parents is extremely positive. In particular, they comment on the friendly, supportive and welcoming staff, the good variety of activities on offer and the good progress that they feel their children are making. Many parents have had several children attend the playgroup over the years, reflecting its ongoing commitment to providing good quality care for children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Staff take an extremely professional approach to their work, a fact reflected in all aspects of playgroup life, including the very well organised layout of the room, the highly effective safety measures taken and the excellent range of activities and opportunities available to the children. Clearly defined daily routines, combined with excellent staff to child ratios, help children to settle well and feel secure.

Detailed and informative files and notice boards are available to keep staff and parents informed about what is happening in playgroup. An extensive and detailed range of policies and procedures, such as child protection, behaviour management and equal opportunities, are used to inform practice and protect the welfare of the children who attend. There are extremely well maintained registration systems in place to record attendance, as well as effective recording systems for medication administration, accidents and allergies. These are all meticulously kept, monitored and stored confidentially. Children are made aware of visitors present that day so they are aware of why strangers are in the setting. All staff are subject to rigorous recruitment, vetting and induction procedures. This ensures that they are very aware of their roles and responsibilities, and confirms their suitability to work with children.

Leadership and management is good. The manager is committed to the staff and children and this is reflected in the effective management of the setting. Regular meetings offer staff opportunities to discuss career plans and training courses as well as issues concerning any of the children for whom they are key worker. The educational planning and assessment systems are well organised and aim to meet the individual needs of the children who attend. Committed to improvement and an ethos of reflective practice, the manager works closely with her team to identify areas for further development and strategies to improve these having detailed action plans in place. Priority is given to ongoing personal development and staff are well supported and given clear direction. All staff are fully committed to the ongoing improvement of the setting and are well motivated, ensuring that the care of the children and the service delivered is of good quality.

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 it was recommended that the playgroup develop resources to support children with English as an additional language, provide healthy and nutritious food at snack times and review documentation, including policies and procedures to ensure all information is accurate, contains the necessary information and is in line with current legislation.

The playgroup has made excellent progress in each of these areas and has drawn up a detailed action plan covering each recommendation made. There is a detailed policy in place regarding the procedures to be followed to support a child in the setting with English as an additional language. This details their commitment to providing support, working closely with parents and local schools to provide the appropriate resources. In relation to the provision of healthy and nutritious snacks, parents are now requested to provide food for their children. Staff work closely with parents to encourage the provision of healthy snack food promoting the benefits of healthy food choices through posters and regular newsletters. Staff also use snack time as an opportunity to discuss with children the importance of a healthy diet and choosing foods that are good for them. In relation to documentation, staff ensure that policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and remain up to date and in line with current regulation. All documentation was in place at the time of this inspection.

### **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**

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 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):

- review current risk assessment sheets to include space to record any actions required to minimise identified risks.

### **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):

- further develop children's assessment files to include a record of the next steps in each child's learning.

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