

# St Pauls Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	323098
<b>Inspection date</b>	25 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Glynis Margaret Kite
<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Pauls Church, 75 Chain Lane, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA11 9QF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 453181
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St Paul's 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. Paul's Playgroup has been registered for approximately 20 years. The playgroup is run by a committee and operates from the community rooms at the back of St Paul's Church, Blackbrook, which is close to St Helens. The playgroup serves families in the local and wider community. The children have sole use of two large rooms during the hours of operation, the outdoor play space and the associated facilities. A maximum of 41 children aged two years six months to five years may attend the playgroup at any one time.

The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 during term time only. There are currently 32 children on roll, of these 20 receive funding for nursery education.

The management committee employ eight staff and are supported by a volunteer. All of the staff hold relevant Early Years qualifications.

The playgroup staff are in receipt of support from Sure Start and the Early Years Advisory teacher. The playgroup has been awarded the 'Flying High' accreditation through the Early Years and complete self evaluations on an annual basis as part of this accreditation.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health and well-being is promoted extremely well. Staff maintain rigorous cleaning routines throughout the day ensuring children's play areas are kept clean and tidy. Children are involved in this routine procedure and as a result are learning how to care for things and the environment in which they play and learn. Children have very good opportunities to develop physical skills and play in the fresh air on a daily basis. Staff have good awareness of the individual needs of children and work hard to meet these through daily routines. For example, quickly changing children who have wet their clothes during water play, thus maintaining the child's comfort and health. Children are becoming very independent as they are provided with opportunities to care for themselves, for example putting on aprons to play in water or to paint and washing their hands independently after messy play. Staff wear disposable or clean protective clothing when changing children or dealing with accidents and handling food to prevent cross contamination. This practice is based on the written health and safety policy which all staff adhere to.

Children enjoy and benefit from a variety of healthy snacks and drinks. Individual dietary needs are catered for because staff are aware of the individual requirements of the children. Fresh drinking water is readily accessible to children with disposable cups for hygiene purposes. Children access water independently. Children's independence is promoted extremely well because they help themselves to breakfast whenever they want to. The organisation of breakfast is managed very well and enables children to choose when they want to sit down and eat. Children competently serve themselves with cereal and then if they wish choose a topping for toast. Staff actively engage children in discussion about healthy foods and children's knowledge and understanding is transferred to their play. For example, a child makes a picnic with healthy foods on his plate. Children also enjoy a variety of fresh fruit later in the morning for snack.

Children are kept safe on the premises regarding the safe management of accidents and the administration of medication, because staff follow the setting's policies and procedures. First aid boxes are checked regularly to ensure they are fully stocked. All entries in the accident records are signed by parents. Staff seek permission from parents to access medical advice or treatment for their children in the event of an emergency. Children are protected well from the spread of infection because the staff adhere to the setting's policies and procedures, which include the exclusion of sick children.

All children enjoy and benefit from physical exercise and fresh air on a daily basis. This is offered outdoors as well as indoors. Physical activities are included in the planning to ensure all children gain physical skills, such as climbing, running, hopping and balancing. Children benefit from opportunities to extend their fine motor skills as they engage in a range of activities which require hand eye coordination, for example, painting, cutting, gluing and hammering. Some children are beginning to show an awareness of their own bodily needs as they help themselves to water or take a little rest after playing outdoors.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in premises which are warm and welcoming. Staff are friendly and greet everyone on arrival. Children's work, alongside photographic evidence is displayed, some at

children's level; this promotes a child friendly environment and encourages a sense of belonging for children as they recognise themselves in the pictures. The play space is organised well to ensure all children have access to all areas during the course of the day. The setting is well resourced with toys and equipment which promote diversity and individual development. The furniture, toys and equipment provided for children are in good condition and suitable for the purpose. Children freely select toys and activities of interest to them from the pre-set activity areas and the continuous provision around the room.

Children's safety is guarded well by staff. They are vigilant and continually follow procedures to ensure the environment and equipment remains safe for use by children. Written risk assessments are in place and used on a daily basis. Additional checks are completed annually by various other services, for example, fire service and electrical engineers to ensure the safety of appliances within the setting. All children participate in emergency evacuation procedures to ensure they will know what to do and where to go in the event of a real emergency. Children remained calm and followed staff out of the building following today's practice. One child even began to 'take the register' to make sure all children were accounted for. Children are kept safe during outings because staff follow the setting's policy which includes a risk assessment prior to visits taking place.

Children are safeguarded from harm because the staff know and understand the child protection policy and procedures. Staff know who has responsibility for reporting concerns and some staff have attended child protection training. Managers are pro-active in protecting the welfare of children and act upon concerns, for example, records are kept and then, if it is felt appropriate, referrals are made to the relevant authorities and the registration body informed.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy and settled and those who have only just started have also settled very quickly. Staff plan and prepare a range of activities for children based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework for younger children and the Foundation Stage curriculum for older children. Staff use observations of children and evaluations of how activities worked to plan future activities. Staff take into account individual needs and interests as well as the group as a whole and differentiate the play plans accordingly. Activities are interesting and well presented to children. The children are eager to begin play as soon as they arrive. Children spend a short period of time in their key groups with a focused planned activity, such as mark making for a purpose. Children then enjoy free play where they use their skills and knowledge in a variety of ways, for example, writing their names on pictures. Children select toys and activities of interest to them and sometimes seek out others to play with. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of children in their care through practice and discussion, and are particularly focused regarding the care needs of the children. Staff take every opportunity to promote children's independence with regard to their own care needs and play.

All children have access to a wide and interesting range of resources and enjoy a variety of experiences throughout the day, such as planting bulbs and looking at mini beasts in the playground. Children are becoming more confident each day because staff enable them to make choices and freely select toys and equipment to extend their own play. Children enjoy first hand experiences which involve activities within the wider community, such as pond dipping in the local park and visiting a local farm where they can handle the small animals. All children enjoy creative play and have lots of opportunities to do this both indoors and outdoors. Older

children are building positive relationships while younger children are happy to play alongside each other.

#### Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are supported by staff who hold appropriate early years qualifications and demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding regarding the Foundation Stage curriculum. All staff participate in planning and use their knowledge of the children in their key groups to plan appropriate activities to promote the development of each child. Written observations, evaluations and photographic evidence of children's achievements are used well to record children's progress and inform future planning. Children are extremely interested in the activities offered and remain focused for sustained periods of time. Through well planned activities and opportunities for children to follow their own interest, children are making good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Staff find out what children already know through discussions with parents and the use of a booklet 'all about me'. The booklet provides staff with lots of information about starting points for children, such as what colours they know, this helps them to plan suitable activities during the early weeks when children first attend.

Children separate from carers with confidence. All children are allocated a key worker and this helps children to settle in. Children spend some time in each session in their allocated groups where they can get to know each other and their key worker, helping children to develop a sense of belonging to the group. Children are very independent in selecting and carrying out activities of their choice. Children talk freely about their home and community showing a clear distinction between home and the setting. Most children play happily alongside each other while some are beginning to develop specific friendships. Children have a strong sense of pride in what they do and eagerly share with staff their paintings and other creations and achievements. Children remain engrossed for extended periods of time while playing and see activities through to the end result, for example while painting or completing puzzles.

Children have excellent opportunities to explore with mark making, using a variety of materials. Children now write for a purpose, such as in the role play area where they are writing recipes for cakes and menus, or putting their names on pictures. Some children are beginning to form recognisable letters in their names. Children are beginning to recognise that print carries meaning and this is supported by the use of labels all around the setting. Staff demonstrate to children how to do things and then encourage them to go and try for themselves by providing lots of resources and opportunities. Children enjoy story time and listen well in small groups, they handle books with care. Children are learning new words everyday and therefore beginning to increase their vocabulary. When new words are introduced to children, they are also given an explanation about what that word means; therefore staff are helping children to expand their knowledge. Children are very confident and verbally inform staff of their interest. They are curious and ask questions in relation to what they are doing. Children use a variety of tools with increasing control, such as pencils, scissors and construction tools, which contributes to the development of good hand-eye coordination and pre-writing skills. Children confidently talk about their own experiences at home and at the setting, demonstrating that they are continually building up a range of vocabulary which reflects their own experiences. Children use their knowledge and language skills to explain what is happening at the present time and to anticipate what will happen next. For example, a child playing with cars and shapes explains that when he rolls the car down the shape it will fall off or go right across the room. He has already done this a couple of times and therefore is sharing his knowledge and experience.

Children's opportunities to engage in activities which promote communication, language and literacy are featured in all areas of the provision, giving children rich and meaningful experiences.

Staff promote the use of number and mathematical language very well through daily routines and planned activities. As a result some children also use number in play. Some children can count independently up to ten with the numbers in the correct order. Children use calculations during play and know when they need one more; they know what number comes next as part of sequencing and can identify some written numbers. Children use positional language appropriately during play, such as 'next to', 'under' and 'on top', and talk about 'big' and 'little', for example, I only need one big teddy. Children are enjoying exploring different shapes through various activities, such as matching and sorting. Staff recognise those children who know basic shapes, such as circle, square and triangle and are introducing them to semi circles and ovals. Children enjoy exploring shape in many ways, for example they are building with large foam shapes in one area, while weighing smaller foam shapes in another. Children enjoy using programmable toys and re-visit them several times.

Children particularly enjoy creative play and experiment with colours, textures and various materials everyday. They are provided with a wonderful and exciting range of equipment to create and explore with. Children explore with a range of media, such as sand, dough, paint and glue. Children use gross motor movements when playing creatively outside, for example making large patterns on the floor and walls with large paintbrushes and chalk. Staff support children extremely well by providing resources, time and space for them to explore and investigate the properties of the materials they are using. Children demonstrate very good imaginative play skills as they enact various roles, for example some children pretend to be characters from favourite television shows while playing with small world people. Children also enjoy singing and join in enthusiastically with known nursery rhymes.

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

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are met effectively. Staff use information provided by parents in the 'all about me' booklet to help children to settle in and to offer suitable activities. All children are allocated a key worker who helps them to settle into the nursery environment and to become a confident member of a small group. Parents are invited to bring their children to the setting for several short visits to enable them to feel comfortable with the environment and the adults who will care for them. This process helps children to settle quickly. All children learn about diversity through a range of activities and by accessing resources that promote positive images in all areas of play. Respect for each other is promoted well within the setting, children and staff are polite towards each other and good manners are used well. All children and staff benefit from playing and working in an environment where equality of opportunity is promoted very well.

Some children know and understand the rules of the setting and are quick to point out when others are not following the rules. Some children are beginning to negotiate with others regarding the use and sharing of toys and equipment. This shows increasing confidence in the children and a basic understanding of the needs of others. The approach to behaviour management focuses on the positives with appropriate strategies used, such as talking to children and distraction. The attention of children is mainly focused on the activities which means they are too busy to become disruptive or behave in an unacceptable manner. Children are generally kind towards each other and show concern when someone is upset or hurt. Children are encouraged to express their feelings in a safe and appropriate manner. The staff take time

to interact with children and to listen to what children have to say. Staff value the children's contributions and as a result children behave well.

Effective systems are in place for sharing information with parents, for example daily discussions, newsletters and a notice board. Parents are provided with a written information pack which explains how the setting operates and contains some of the policies and procedures. Additional policies and procedures are made available to parents within the setting. Parents have access to all of their children's records and communicate with their child's key worker verbally everyday. A system is in place for recording any comments or complaints that parents may have.

Children are learning about the wider world through purposeful and well thought out activities. Staff have taken time to review and update how the setting promotes equality and diversity within the setting. As a result more resources are being made available in all areas of the setting and not just through books, puzzles and the home corner. Staff incorporate the skills, knowledge and personal experiences of staff to help children to learn about the wider world and how others live. For example, the children are currently learning about Africa and comparing types of homes, food and dress. Children investigate construction materials and join them together to make models or things they can use, for example, during one session children made a chair from large construction blocks. Some children use Information, Communication and Technology equipment with confidence, such as 'my first computer' toys. Children are curious and spend time exploring a range of materials including wood, sand, paint and water as well as the natural world in the garden. Some children remember and talk about past experiences and events in their own lives, showing that they are beginning to understand about time. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of children receiving funded education is good. Information about the provision of the Foundation Stage curriculum and what this means to their children, is presented to parents in an information pack. Parents receive a formal written report at the end of the school year detailing their child's progress. Parents are also provided with information through newsletters, discussion, leaflets and the notice board. Play plans are displayed around the rooms which parents may look at if they wish. Parents are invited to share their views about the provision through putting comments in the comments box, however, this is not used very well and therefore the setting does not have an effective system in place for seeking parent's views of the setting and the provision of nursery education.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by suitably qualified staff that are committed to providing quality services to children and parents. The manager and staff work very well together as a team; they support each other and are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the setting. Staff are keen to develop their own skills and knowledge through training and in-house support. Managers follow required procedures to make sure effective recruitment and vetting of staff ensures children are cared for appropriately and are safe and secure on the premises.

Children receive appropriate levels of support because the adult to child ratios are maintained at all times. Contingency plans are in place to ensure additional staff can be brought in at short notice if required. Space is organised well to ensure children are kept safe, have sufficient space to move around freely and are able to select toys and activities of interest to them. The organisation of the space also allows for children to spend some time each day in smaller groups with their key workers.

Staff adhere to the setting's policies and procedures to ensure children's needs are met well. Required records and documentation is in place, although the incidents records lack sufficient information. Confidentiality is maintained in relation to children's records because they are organised for individual children. Parents have access to the policies and procedures which helps to keep them informed of the care, learning and play opportunities provided for their children.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The manager has a clear vision of how the setting should operate and supports staff well in achieving the aims. The manager strives to improve the provision constantly through some self assessment and discussion with staff. The manager is committed to ensuring all staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to do their jobs and offer training opportunities to all staff as part of a rolling programme and links with Sure Start. All staff participate in the setting's induction programme, which has recently been updated to ensure staff actually read and understand the policies and procedures for the setting and the expectations of the manager. The staff are also supported well through appraisals, team meetings and supervision. The manager has a good awareness of staff strengths and weaknesses and deploys them effectively; ensuring children's needs are met well. The manager is also aware of strengths and weaknesses within the setting and has got action plans in place for improvement, for example, reviewing how the setting offers activities and routines.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection the provider has put in place procedures to make sure all children clean their hands before having snacks and has produced a written exclusion policy for sick children. The child protection policy includes procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being brought against a member of staff. The procedure to be followed in all child protection cases is based on the Safeguarding Children Board procedures. The behaviour management policy includes procedures to address any situation of bullying and the induction programme for staff has been reviewed and updated. These actions improve the overall health and well-being of children being cared for.

### **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):

- ensure recorded incidents contain sufficient information about the concern and what action is taken.

### **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):

- improve systems to actively seek the views of parents regarding the provision of nursery education.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)