



St Pauls Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	323098
Inspection date	08 November 2005
Inspector	Sheila Iwaskow
Setting Address	St. Pauls Church, 75 Chain Lane, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA11 9QF
Telephone number	01744 453181
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Registered person	St Paul's 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?

St. Paul's Playgroup has been registered for approximately 30 years and is run by a management committee. It operates from the community rooms rear of St Paul's Church, Blackbrook, in St Helens. The playgroup serves families in the local and wider community. The children have sole use of three large rooms during the hours of operation, the outdoor play space and the associated facilities.

The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 during term time only.

There are currently 38 children on roll; of these 25 receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children who have special educational needs.

The management committee employ eight staff. Three staff hold appropriate qualifications to NVQ level three. The manager is due to complete the same qualification early next year. The remaining four staff are working towards NVQ level two. The playgroup staff are in receipt of support from the Early Years Advisory teacher. The setting has been awarded the "Flying High" accreditation through the Early Years and completes self evaluations on an annual basis as part of this accreditation.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's self help skills are well developed. Dressing skills are practiced in play situations with dressing up clothes and painting aprons. Children are encouraged to become independent as they spread butter on their toast and access their own drinks.

Children stay healthy because practitioners follow current and appropriate health and hygiene guidelines. Policies and procedures are in place and a significant number of staff hold relevant first aid certificates to meet children's needs in the event of an accident or emergency. Staff raise children's awareness of personal hygiene by encouraging them to wash their hands after going to the toilet. However, children do not always wash their hands after coming in from the outdoor play area to have their snacks. Children also develop their understanding of exercise and healthy eating through topics explored.

Children learn the importance of healthy eating through a range of snacks provided which are well balanced, healthy and nutritious. Children's health and dietary needs are met as staff work with parents to gather and record relevant information. Menus are clearly displayed on notice boards.

All children enjoy different opportunities to be active and develop their physical skills in free play outdoors and indoors. They have lots of fun as they ride on bikes, climb on the climbing frame and run around in the fresh air. Children learn about positioning their bodies in open spaces as they use dance to demonstrate the movement of wild animals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children have a good sense of belonging as they are warmly greeted by staff when they arrive at the playgroup. Parents are made to feel very welcome and encouraged to stay until their child is settled. Playrooms are maintained at an adequate temperature and children move around their immediate environment with confidence

and ease. Colourful wall displays of educational posters, children's art work and tactile materials create a purposeful learning environment. A quiet area with cushions is available for those children who want to read or simply relax. Toys and equipment are clean, safe and meet the needs of the children attending the play groups. All play materials are accessible to the children, allowing them to make choices and develop their independence.

Children are protected from potential dangers through daily risk assessments. Staff are vigilant and ensure that children are safe as they play both indoors and outside. Children are encouraged to be aware of their own safety and the possible impact and consequences of their behaviour. They consider others as they play on the cars and pretend to drive outside, commenting that they must not go through the red traffic light. Celebrations such as Bonfire Night are also used to promote safety awareness. Children take part in regular emergency evacuation procedures to protect everyone involved. People working in the local community such as the policeman and fireman come in to teach children about keeping themselves safe.

Children are protected by the staff's good knowledge of child protection issues and procedures. A child protection policy is available, but it does not detail what actions the play group would take if an allegation was made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, confident and busy. Staff and children enjoy each other's company. Children come into the playgroup happily and after registration eagerly choose from a wide selection of activities on offer. Through observations and good relationships with parents, staff have a sound knowledge of children's needs. They are particularly skilled in meeting their emotional needs such as settling new children in to the setting and developing their confidence and self esteem. Children are taken to places of interest such as the local shops and on public transport where they can experience life skills and have an understanding of the differing roles people have within their society. Children are beginning to learn right from wrong as staff explain to children why they must not swing on chairs and of the importance of sharing toys.

Nursery education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has a significant effect on children's learning. Children make good progress because some staff have a clear understanding of how children learn and the early learning goals. This is reflected in the wide range of inviting learning opportunities available in a stimulating environment. Play opportunities are well planned and incorporate all six areas of learning. There is a good balance of child initiated and adult led activities. Staff observe and assess three and four year old learning in relation to the early learning goals. However, the links between assessments, observations and planning are not fully complete. Activities are not consistently adapted or evaluated to meet the needs of more or less able children and the next steps in children's learning are not always identified.

Children are secure in the routines of the nursery. They are able to maintain attention and concentrate during focused group activities. Children are happy to engage in new experiences and speak confidently in a familiar group about Bonfire Night and a recent trip to the zoo. They play happily on their own as they read a book or with other children in the sand and water. Children enjoy listening to stories and staff point to the words as they read, conveying to the children that print carries meaning. They have the opportunity to link sound to letters and show the ability to communicate meaning through mark making as they address envelopes and write out tickets for a train journey. Children confidently count to 10. They have opportunities to develop mathematical concepts during adult led activities. However, the everyday routines of the playgroup are not always effectively used to promote number and counting skills. Children happily identify the shape of their toast at snack times and take part in problem solving activities as they sing a counting rhyme about five currant buns in the baker's shop.

Children investigate as they explore the natural materials of soil, wood, straw and pebbles. Planned activities allow children to discover objects that float and sink. Children gaze in wonder and laugh excitedly as they discover that they can make bubbles by blowing through a straw into the water tray. Staff skilfully instigate role play situations by encouraging children to make a train from cardboard boxes and describe their journey. Such experiences enable children to develop their own ideas. Creative opportunities such as experimenting with sounds during a music activity, making fire work pictures and rockets allow children to develop their fine motor skills and express themselves imaginatively. Physical skills are well developed in regular indoor and outdoor play opportunities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about the world around them as they celebrate religious festivals, taste food from other cultures and access a broad range of resources that reflect equality of opportunities. Notices displayed in other languages ensures that children who do not have a secure understanding of English feel valued and welcome. Children are encouraged to be kind and respectful to each other, share and take turns as they play. Visitors to the setting bring in owls and guinea pigs which helps develop children's all round respect for living things within their environment. All children are included in activities and their individual needs are responded to in an appropriate manner. Children with special needs are welcomed into a sharing and inclusive environment. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that they offer the best possible care and individual needs are met. This positive approach helps to foster children's spiritual, moral and social development.

Children are very well behaved. Staff adopt consistent approaches which are relative to the age and development of the child. Minor altercations are dealt with by staff in a calm and sensitive manner. Children's contributions are valued and their efforts and achievements celebrated. This positive approach to behaviour management helps to promote children's confidence and self esteem.

Children benefit from the positive relationships between parents and staff. All the required details on individual children are recorded by staff during the registration process. Parents receive an booklet about the playgroup which contains information about the setting and the early learning goals. Notice boards keep parents up to date with the provision and any other relevant information. Discussions at the end of the day, formal meetings with key workers and written reports keep parents informed of their children's progress. Parents express their overall satisfaction with the quality of care provided throughout the playgroup. One parent commented "since my child started coming here he has come on in leaps and bounds".

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager has an awareness of her role within the play group. She leads by example and provides a good role model for staff and children. Staff work well together as a team and communicate appropriately with each other. The manager ensures that new staff are made aware of all policies and procedures at their induction. However, systems are not currently in place to assess their level of understanding at the end of the induction period. The setting operates an appraisal system, but this is not fully developed. Consequently, strength and weakness within the staff are not always identified. The manager evaluates the quality of care provided by the playgroup and recognises areas of strength and those for further development.

Staffing levels are organised to ensure that children have good levels of support at all times. Children enjoy the consideration and high levels of attention they receive from staff. Space, time and resources are organised well to promote children's safety, care and learning. Most policies and relevant documentation which promote the outcomes for children are in place. However, there are some omissions; the behaviour policy does not contain a statement on bullying and a written sick child policy is not in place. Overall the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting agreed to address a number of issues relating to staff qualifications, hygiene practices, policies and documentation. Significant progress has been made in all these areas. Procedures are now in place to obtain written permission from parents to administer medication to the children. Staff qualifications are now being met and children now use paper towels instead to a fabric flannel when drying their hands after going to the toilet. Parents are now made aware of the complaints procedure which includes Ofsted's telephone number. A comprehensive equal opportunities policy is now in place. However, two issues relating to documentation remain outstanding and have been raised as recommendations at this inspection.

These improvements made to date ensure that children are cared for in a healthier environment by staff who are appropriately qualified to meet their needs and that most aspects of policies and documentation are in place and up to date.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there are no complaints to report. 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.

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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):

- ensure that all children wash their hands before eating their snacks to prevent the risk of infection
- devise a written sick child policy; include within the child protection policy, procedures that are pertinent to the playgroup, to be followed if an allegation is made against a member of staff and incorporate a statement on bullying into the behaviour policy
- further develop the appraisal system to ensure that the needs of all staff are fully met; review the induction process to make sure that new staff fully understand policies and procedures at the end of the induction period.

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):

- complete the links between planning, observation and assessment and ensure that focused activities are planned to meet the needs of more and less able children
- ensure that children's number and counting skills are promoted within the daily routines of the nursery.

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concerns about inspectors' judgements which is available from Ofsted's website:
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