

St Ambrose Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205482
Inspection date	22 November 2007
Inspector	Rachel Wyatt
Setting Address	School House, Leswell Street, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY10 1RP
Telephone number	07980 182741 or 07773521786
E-mail	Sharon Kennedy30@hotmail.com
Registered person	The Trustees of St Ambrose Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Ambrose Pre-School opened in 1982. The group is committee run and operates from a self-contained building in the grounds of St Ambrose's Primary School; a Roman Catholic school close to the town centre of Kidderminster. The setting serves both the local and surrounding areas. A maximum of 40 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open from 08.55 until 15.00 each week day during term time only. Children may attend for a variety of sessions between these times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area, and older pre-school age children attend physical education sessions in the school hall.

There are currently 55 children from two to under five-years-old on roll. This includes 32 children in receipt of early education funding. Support is available for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The pre-school also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

One full-time member of staff and eight part-time members of staff work with the children, all of whom have early years qualifications to degree level or National Vocational Qualifications

Level 2 or 3. Two members of staff are currently working towards a higher level of early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and is involved in local early years partnership group and providers' forums. The group recently achieved a Bronze award in the 'Growing Together' Quality Assurance Scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are looked after in clean, most comfortable and homely surroundings. Staff make sure areas and equipment are cleaned throughout the day. The setting is proactive about following local and national good practice advice, for example, relating to food safety to ensure appropriate storage and preparation of food during cooking activities, snacks and meals.

Children competently manage personal care routines with staff discreetly supervising hand washing, for example, before children eat or after they go to the toilet to ensure this is done properly. Children know all about stopping germs by putting their hands in front of their mouths if they cough, and using a tissue after they sneeze. Younger children's comfort is assured through regular nappy changes and calmly managed toilet training routines.

Children really enjoy all aspects of physical play, taking part in physical education sessions and plenty of outside activities where they confidently use a range of equipment. During physical activity children take part in and discuss the importance of warming up exercises at the start of a session and of relaxation at the end. They talk about the positive effects of exercise on their heart and for their overall well-being. Older children are becoming increasingly adept at getting changed before and after physical education sessions. Children also benefit from the well planned quiet times and the fact that sessions are unhurried. This includes meal times when children are able to eat at their pace. Comfortable, cosy areas are available for children needing a rest or sleep.

Children's health and well-being are promoted very well. The group is well informed about their allergies or dietary needs and fully prepared for managing individual care requirements. Children have prompt appropriate treatment in the event of an accident from staff who have relevant first aid qualifications and expertise. Suitable records are kept, and well-organised first aid box contents are available. As part of the group's risk assessment procedures, accidents are regularly monitored. The group is also well prepared for looking after children in the event of any illness or infections. There is an identified comfortable area where anyone who is unwell can be looked after until they can be taken home. Parents are effectively kept up to date regarding illness exclusion procedures and of any outbreaks in order to minimise the risks of cross infection

Children are very well nourished. They have an excellent range of snacks which they help to prepare such as porridge, vegetable couscous and rice, and they cut up pieces of fruit, vegetables and salad. Parents provide children's lunches which reflect the setting's ethos on healthy eating as the group gives guidance to parents on suitable contents. Children have a sound understanding of healthy eating as a result of cooking and food preparation activities. They also take part in discussions whilst they are eating, or during an activity such as making a heart shaped collage depicting foods that are good for them. Children have regular drinks of water or milk.

Children enjoy meal times which are well organised, relaxed, social occasions when everyone sits together. Children's good manners and independent eating are promoted. Portion sizes are appropriate and staff encourage children to try different tastes and textures, for example, when they taste the rice and couscous they have made. All meals and food preparation activities take account of children's individual dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are looked after in a setting that is most inviting, comfortable and safe. Since the group moved to its current premises the staff, committee and parents have worked tirelessly to transform the building so it is child-friendly and welcoming. Frequent safety checks, effective use of risk assessments and planned maintenance ensure the building is consistently safe, secure and free from hazards. Prompt action is taken to address any concerns so that, for example, recent adaptations to the outside play area, including covering the garden surface with matting have improved children's health and safety.

Children use safe, age-appropriate, rewarding toys and equipment. Staff make sure any hazardous materials are inaccessible to children. Furniture is comfortable and child-size. Children are able to safely help themselves to many toys, resources and books which promotes their choice and independence. Their safety and welfare are supported by the staff's effective supervision. However, adults also make sure that children learn to take some responsibility for their own safety. As a result children are encouraged to use apparatus such as the climbing frame and wheeled toys correctly. They learn to respect each other's space and to follow instructions, for example, during physical education sessions. They safely handle tools such as cutlery and scissors.

As they move around the premises and outside, children are introduced to aspects of road safety. They walk together and are aware of potential hazards. Staff are careful to ensure all children understand the importance of stopping and listening to adults when they need them to follow specific instructions. This helps children to be prepared for responding promptly to staff's requests in an emergency. Practise fire drills are held frequently to ensure everyone knows what to do in such situations.

Children are fully safeguarded as the setting has robust child protection procedures which reflect national and local guidance, and which staff and the committee understand. Any concerns about children's welfare are promptly addressed, and their continued safety carefully monitored, staff work with parents, carers and other agencies. The group's policies and procedures ensure that children's welfare is paramount so there are robust arrangements regarding children's collection, and effective guidance on what to do in the event of a child being lost or not collected. Through sensitive discussions, for example, about feelings, and by building up children's confidence and ability to make decisions, staff help to prepare them for dealing with situations where they might be at risk of harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children have a great time at the pre-school. They take part in an exciting range of activities planned and organised by the enthusiastic staff team. As a result of staff's thorough assessments, including discussions with parents, children's skills are clearly identified, their progress regularly

reviewed and their individual needs reflected in planning. Assessment and planning for younger or less able children fully reflects the ethos of the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Children become competent learners because staff provide a reassuring and stimulating environment. They are actively involved in children's play, ensuring new and less confident children are comfortable and fully involved. All children have good relationships with their peers, encouraged by the staff's example as they endorse good manners, sharing, listening to each other and responding to requests. Support for any children who find it difficult to relate to others and for those who speak English as an additional language is exemplary. Children's speech, language, interactions and understanding are facilitated because of the adults' use of different forms of communication such as signing, or of visual prompts such as pictorial time-tables and puppets. Several children attending the group are really benefiting because of the adults' expertise in other European languages.

Children are always purposeful and busy. They have great opportunities for choice, they are encouraged to try things out for themselves, and from an early age they are involved in helping, for example, with tidying up or food preparation. Children thrive on plenty of energetic play and opportunities to explore and be creative. They confidently climb, balance and use different apparatus. Staff help them to manage different tools during food preparation, painting and craft activities. Children relish the many opportunities to paint, glue and build and to experiment with different textures. They manipulate dough, making different shapes, discussing colour and texture. During art and craft work they love using a range of painting techniques or trying different craft resources. Cooking and food preparation are much enjoyed by all children. They readily talk about ingredients, compare quantities, observe changes during cooking, discuss related safety and health matters, and taste the end product.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children thrive because staff encourage their interest, motivation and involvement. The atmosphere is fun and relaxed but purposeful. Staff ensure children benefit from rewarding planned activities that cover all aspects of the Foundation Stage six areas of learning and which reflect individual learning needs identified through the group's robust assessment procedures. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who speak English as an additional language, receive excellent support. Their individual needs are clearly understood and their progress carefully monitored. Children's home languages are valued and encouraged by the staff.

Children are all enthusiastic learners. Their interests, ideas and self-motivation are enhanced because staff promote child-centred learning, building on children's confidence and self-esteem, and fostering their choice and independence. Children concentrate well and complete tasks, often playing and learning together. Children who are more easily distracted are supported by staff who help them to join in activities and to persevere.

Children receive appropriate activities to support their learning because staff have assessed their starting points through continuous assessment. Parents are encouraged to contribute their views on their child's skills and staff consistently review children's progress. Children's individual needs are met because plans reflect their differing abilities, and staff are adept at adapting their teaching to ensure children have effective support and appropriate challenges. Children also make very good progress because staff reflect on and evaluate activities and children's responses in order to identify what needs to be planned next to further promote their understanding and skills. For example, staff identified that children needed more

opportunities to practise counting and number recognition. As a result of the meaningful activities planned and organised by the staff, children now confidently count and recognise numbers up to five, and in some cases beyond. They really enjoy the chance to demonstrate these skills, for example, during a whole group exercise. Children competently think about and solve simple problems such as how many chairs or items of cutlery are needed for each group of children during snack time. This helps more able children's growing awareness of the concept of 'one more' or 'one less', which is endorsed by a variety of number rhymes. Children also create simple sequences, ordering items according to size and number, and through food preparation, cooking and growing plants they learn about quantity and size in practical ways.

All children thrive because staff are interested and involved in their activities, whilst ensuring they do not inhibit children's self-expression and ideas. There is a consistent buzz of conversation as children and staff interact. Adults competently extend children's understanding through effective questioning and explanations. Children confidently speak in both large and small group situations. Their turn taking in speaking and attentive listening is promoted so everyone has an opportunity to express their point of view or to enjoy a story.

Children's enthusiasm is also reflected in their responses to opportunities to be energetic, to investigate and to be creative. They are physically active, relishing outside play and skilfully managing various wheeled toys and climbing apparatus. Well-organised physical education sessions encourage their coordination and movement in different ways. Children are interested in how things work and fit together, and confidently make models and structures from recycled materials and construction toys. Children are creative using different resources and materials to make colourful collages. They represent their ideas through delightful drawings and paintings, for example, of their families. During music sessions they make instruments and write their own music. Children love songs, music and dance. Everyone joins in, following the actions and learning different movements.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are enriched because the setting is welcoming to all faiths. They are introduced to different beliefs and customs through rewarding activities, for example, when they celebrate aspects of Diwali, Eid and Christmas. The pre-school also promotes its underpinning Christian ethos so that children are polite, kind and helpful, and show respect for each other and living things. Children behave well as they understand what is expected of them, in line with the group's rules and behaviour management policy. Staff's calm, positive attitudes, their effective use of praise and rewards and positive endorsement of good behaviour help children to do well. Effective use is made of visual prompts to support children's understanding about sitting quietly, listening attentively and taking turns. Should children misbehave the consequences of their actions and words are fully understood, as a result of the staff's age-appropriate explanations. Clear strategies and achievable goals are agreed with parents and carers for children who find it more difficult to relate to others, to concentrate or to follow staff's requests.

Children's self-esteem and individuality are really well supported. Their needs, interests and characteristics are clearly understood and they appreciate the adults' recognition of their efforts and achievements, including having their work displayed around the setting. Children feel a sense of belonging. Their home languages are used and aspects of their lives are celebrated,

for example, when staff, parents and students help children to celebrate a Polish harvest, Diwali and Eid.

The pre-school is very proactive about ensuring children's individual play and learning needs are reflected in the range of activities and toys provided. Any concerns about a child's development are promptly identified and appropriate support accessed. The setting's Special Educational Needs Coordinator is experienced and knowledgeable. She is ably supported by staff and volunteers who are all dedicated to ensuring children receive any additional help they need, for example, to help them to concentrate or communicate or to get on well with others. Children who speak English as an additional language feel reassured and involved due to the dedication of staff and volunteers who speak their home languages. Information about the pre-school is translated for their parents and carers.

Children are well cared for because their parents and carers are well informed about the pre-school. They receive an informative prospectus with clear explanations about how the setting is managed and organised, and the range of experiences provided. Parents have ready access to the group's policies and procedures, including the operational plan which they are encouraged to read. They are aware of the intentions of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage as they are encouraged to borrow information packs to read at home. A wealth of displays of plans, photographs of activities, and examples of children's work, help parents to see what their children have been doing.

Children settle and progress well because parents and staff regularly exchange information about their care, play and learning. Should parents have any concerns about the provision their children are safeguarded because a clear complaints procedure is in place which includes Ofsted's contact details and provision for a complaints log to be maintained. Children really benefit from their parents' and carers' valuable contributions to the life of the pre-school. They serve on the committee, help in sessions, assist with fundraising, contribute to the ongoing maintenance of the building, and produce information for other parents via a regular newsletter.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Through the prospectus and other information made available to them, parents and carers are well informed about the Foundation Stage, including the types of activities their children are involved in. They are given information on ways they can follow up activities at home if they wish.

Children make excellent progress because their parents and staff work together to ensure their interests and abilities are understood and promoted within the setting. Parents regularly exchange information with staff about their child's activities and achievements. This includes discussing their child's characteristics and skills which helps staff to assess children's starting points when they commence nursery education. Thereafter, parents and staff regularly review children's progress and agree strategies to aid their further development. Parents are actively involved in other aspects of their children's learning, including assisting in the management and smooth running of the setting to ensure children play and learn in a stimulating, safe environment.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children thrive because they are looked after by a wonderful team of adults. The manager, staff, students and volunteers, including a dedicated committee, all work together to ensure

children have high quality care and education. They are kind and caring, actively involving themselves in children's activities.

Children experience rewarding sessions due to the adults' excellent team work and effective communication. They are well qualified and experienced and clearly understand their roles, sensitively guiding volunteers and students, so that children are consistently well supported. An effective training and development programme ensures adults keep up to date with training and good practice issues. They also refer to comprehensive information such as the operational plan, the group's policies and associated guidance to help them do their jobs well, and to promote children's safety, well-being and development.

The committee fully supports the staff in the smooth running of the pre-school, for example, reviewing policies, producing a newsletter, helping in sessions, and worked alongside the staff to promote the further development of the group. For example, children have benefited from improvements to the outside area and the setting's confidence in self-evaluation has been endorsed by the recent successful completion of a quality assurance award.

Children are safeguarded as the pre-school has robust vetting arrangements, including procedures for monitoring new and established staff's suitability. The group's record keeping fully supports children's health, safety and welfare. All required information is obtained, including relevant parental consents, and details are securely stored and retained in line with the pre-school's confidentiality procedures.

The leadership and management of funded children is outstanding. Children make very good progress because the manager, staff and committee share a clear vision to ensure their nursery education is of high quality. The manager and staff clearly understand the intentions of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Through excellent team work, careful planning and robust monitoring and evaluation procedures, they ensure children access a stimulating learning environment, that activities effectively support individual learning needs and provide suitable challenges so that all children steadily progress. Staff are confident in their roles, they are effective key workers for a group of children and all contribute to planning. Children's play and learning is enriched, for example, because staff keep up to date with good practice issues through attendance at courses and early years providers' meetings. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to a recommendation to review and up date the operational plan. Children's care, health, welfare and play is supported by the group's very practical, user-friendly operational plan which is readily available for staff's and parents' reference.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to develop the system for sharing information with parents about their children's progress. Children's learning and progress is enhanced by regular opportunities for parents and staff to discuss their activities and achievements. This includes parents and their child's key worker meeting each term to formally review each child's progress in order to agree targets to support his or her future development.

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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