

# Pre School at St Albans

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY289249
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Cheryl Langley
<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Albans RC Primary School, First Avenue, Harlow, Essex, CM20 2NP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 425383 or 07981 759945
<b>E-mail</b>	admin@st-albans.essex.sch.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Pre School at St Albans
<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 satisfactory. 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?

Pre-school at St Albans is run by and attached to the St Albans Roman Catholic Primary School. It opened in 2004 and operates from two rooms in a purpose-built nursery building. It is situated in the centre of Harlow at the front of the Primary School. The pre-school is registered for a maximum of 15 children at any one time. There are currently 30 children aged from three to under five years on roll. All of these children receive funding for nursery education. The school welcomes children with learning and/or physical disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open each weekday from 09.00 until 11.30 and 12.40 until 15.10 during term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Children come from the local catchment area.

The nursery employs three members of staff. These include the manager who works full time and two part-time members of staff. They all have relevant early years qualifications and one is currently working towards a Degree in supporting children's learning in early years. The

pre-school works closely with, and receives a high level of support from, the Head teacher and the Foundation Stage Manager at St. Albans Roman Catholic Primary School.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy activities which develop and enhance their physical skills. They handle tools, equipment and malleable materials with increasing control. For example, children make marks with chalk and paint brushes. They shape play-dough and sand using cutters, scoops and rakes. Children mix and blend cooking ingredients and operate programmable toys. They use their hand and eye co-ordination to thread or to throw and catch balls. Regular 'physical education' is part of their planned activities and routine. Children have an awareness of space and others. They balance their bodies to move around the assault course or follow the actions to simple songs. Children manoeuvre push- along and sit-on rides confidently.

Children understand simple health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands at appropriate times and protect others from sneezes and coughs. Children are learning how to maintain their health. They know it is important to care for our teeth. Children are aware to clean their teeth and visit the dentist regularly to have them checked. They pretend to be doctors and nurses to care for others when they are ill. Children are aware which foods are good for us and what is meant by a healthy diet. They eat fresh fruit for snack and drink water whenever they wish. Staff are aware of the children's particular health and dietary requirements. They work closely with parents to make sure they have food which appeals to them as well as meeting their needs.

There are suitable routines in place to keep the pre-school, equipment and toys clean and hygienic for the children's use. The Health and Safety policy promotes health and hygiene and guidelines are followed to help prevent the spread of infection. For example, there is an appropriate sick children policy in place and records of accidents and medication are kept and shared with parents. However, consent to seek emergency medical treatment and advice at the time of placement is not requested. There is therefore the potential to compromise a child's health in an emergency situation. Staff hold current first aid qualifications but these are not sufficient to meet The National Standards. This is to ensure the required level of expertise is available to apply the correct first aid for children in this age group.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe environment. Various displays of the children's creations cover the pre-school walls. They move around safely to select their play and activities from a range of high quality stimulating resources. There are suitable systems to monitor visitors and keep the premises secure to protect the children and prevent them leaving unsupervised. Risk assessments are carried regularly and action taken to prevent the children coming to harm. The fire drill is practised at suitable intervals so that all of the staff and children know what to do to stay safe in the event of a fire. All of the required policies and procedures are in place to support the children's safety.

Children are learning to protect themselves and others. They follow the pre-school rules to avoid accidents and talk about ways to keep safe during activities. For example, children are aware of the dangers of fireworks. They practise crossing the road safely in the outside play

area. Children know that they must stay close to an adult on outings. Staff are deployed so that the children are supervised closely both inside and outside of the pre-school.

The children's welfare is safeguarded. There is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection. All of the required documents and procedures are known by staff. They have attended training in this area. Staff are therefore aware of the signs to look for and steps to follow should they have a concern about a child in their care.

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

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence. They are able to separate from their parents and carers and feel relaxed about taking part in the pre-school. Children begin to speak out and sing in a group, such as, talking about their experiences on holiday, or volunteering to be one of the ducks as they sing a rhyme. Children make positive relationship with the other children and the staff. They initiate play with their peers and share and take turns. For example, children pretend to make cakes together with the sand. They negotiate who is doing what and take turns with the different vessels and tools to help each other.

Children respond to challenges and new experiences. They complete puzzles and jigsaws using trial and error and try to write clear letters of their name. Children are supported by staff who listen and talk to them. This extends their thinking and play and reinforces their learning. Children are keen to answer questions about what they can see or to solve problems. For example, they work out how many more cups or plates they need at snack time. Children use their initiative, they label their own work with their names and experiment with connecting bricks to make movable models.

Children express their feelings and experiences through imaginary play. They have fun at the 'vets' in the role-play corner, caring for animals and taking money for the fees. Through various art and craft activities they develop creatively. For example, they paint or draw pictures of their favourite animals or make their own 'super-ted' bear out of paper. Children learn about the natural environment, they watch their plants grow and observe the changes to trees through the seasons.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. They are supported by staff that have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage. Plans cover all the six areas of learning in a balanced way. There is an effective observation system in place which informs planning for the next step required for each child to make progress. The children's assessments have some link to the stepping stones but they do not always reflect a clear picture of a child's development, particularly for the more able children. The level of challenge is sufficient to interest all of the children and more able children's learning is extended. There are effective systems in place to support children with learning and/or physical disabilities.

There are excellent activities which promote the children's language and communication skills. For example, they create books to write about and illustrate their experiences on outings. Children use workbooks regularly to record events and pre-school. They know that we read and write from left to right. More able children write clearly formed letters and simple sentences, linking sounds to letters to aid their spelling. Children use books to explore a range of words

and texts. They know that they are there for enjoyment and to locate information. For example, the children created a picture dictionary. They listen to stories and rhymes about animals and look at books about how they live and where they come from. Children speak confidently about their experiences. They are very enthusiastic about the outing to see animals at the wildlife park. Children are keen to create a book about what they saw and what they did. They use good pencil control to write and illustrate their books. Children extend their vocabulary. They name unusual animals and their off-spring.

Children have a sense of time. They find out about past and present events. For example, children dress-up in clothes from the 1950s to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the school. Children are aware of the routine of the pre-school. They book appointments to attend the imaginary vets. Children know about everyday technology. They use the computer to create pictures. Children make patterns or pictures of animals using the keyboard and mouse. They match and co-ordinate colour to create patterns or match pieces of a puzzle. They learn about the natural environment and changes in lifecycles, such as, observing tadpoles as they grow and change into frogs. They use language to describe and compare shape and size. For example, they discuss how much room a whale would take up in the outside area. Children are aware of the meaning of words to denote position. They travel, 'under' 'over' and 'through' the large play equipment. Children move with increasing control and co-ordination. More able children pedal the sit-on rides confidently with their feet, negotiating space as they ride around. They balance their bodies on beams and catch floating bubbles to look closely at the colours made by the sunlight.

Children count in sequence. More able children count beyond ten. They are aware of simple addition and subtraction through songs, their routine or enjoyable activities and games. Children recognise numbers and know they have value. For example, they pick out the numbers on coins correctly and know which number represents their age. Children are aware of fractions, they know that two equal pieces make two halves and that four equal pieces make four quarters. Children use their senses to explore and investigate. They observe mini-beasts with magnifying glasses. Regular cooking activities enables them to mix different ingredients and learn how mixing and heating causes change. For example, they make fudge to celebrate Diwali. Children begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people. They learn songs to celebrate Christian festivals and read stories about Chinese New Year. Children have fun making Chinese lanterns to put on display.

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

The provision is good.

Staff work closely with parents to meet the children's individual needs. They share information to ensure there is consistency in the children's care and learning. Parents receive regular newsletters and are invited to take part in meetings and social events. They are encouraged to give feedback about the pre-school and staff have received positive and complimentary comments. Parents are aware of the routine and activities available to the children at each session and the policies and procedures devised for the effective running of the pre-school. However, the complaints procedure does not give up-to-date information about the steps followed and the information available to parents should they raise any concerns. This is to ensure parents are able to monitor the care of the children.

Children work harmoniously with others and understand responsible behaviour. This is due to the appropriate strategies and examples used by staff to manage behaviour. The children are polite, share and take turns. Their self-esteem and confidence is promoted from the praise and

encouragement given by the staff. They compliment the children on their achievements and award stickers. Children are given responsibilities and encouraged to be independent. They feel a sense of belonging. Children rise to challenges because they feel relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings. They develop respect for others. An array of resources and activities promote positive images of difference. They learn about people from other countries, cultures and of differing abilities. Children are aware of their own needs and the needs of others. For example, they take part in fund-raising activities for children's charities. As a result, the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given clear and informative communication about the activities for nursery education. They are invited to attend open evenings, receive a report at the end of term and are welcome to discuss their children's progress at any time with the friendly staff. There are various opportunities available to see samples of their children's work, either on display or in their workbooks, which they take home every weekend. Encouraging parents to be involved in their child's learning is a high priority for the pre-school. Staff have responded positively to parents' suggestions about the different ways in which they can do this. Children benefit from this strong partnership. Parents and staff work together so that the children make progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals in preparation for school.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Thorough recruitment, vetting and induction procedures make sure the children are cared for by staff who are suitable to work with them. Children benefit from the staff's knowledge and experience. They have relevant early years qualifications and continue to update their training. Most of the required policies and procedures are in place to allow the generally effective running of the pre-school and to keep children safe, healthy and safeguard their welfare. Children enjoy sessions which provide whole group times, various types of physical and quiet play, and one-to-one support when it is needed. They have the opportunity to choose their own play as well as engaging in planned activities to ensure they enjoy a range of experiences which promotes their independence and learning. Children are stimulated and sufficiently challenged. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The Head Teacher and Pre-school Manager work closely together to promote the professional development of all staff. There is a formal appraisal system to highlight strengths and training needs and they meet on regular occasions as a team. The pre-school is very much part of St. Alban's Roman Catholic Primary School. Children have a sense of belonging. They are included in important events and celebrations with the whole school. Children socialise with the reception class and have settling-in visits. This helps them to feel secure and relaxed about the change in their routine. Plans and sessions are monitored and evaluated regularly to make sure the nursery education meets the children's needs. The Pre-school Manager has support from the Head Teacher and Foundation Stage Manager to plan the nursery education.

There are good systems in place to communicate with parents and encourage them to be involved in their children's learning. Staff have a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. They work well together as a team to meet their aim of 'providing high quality foundation stage education' prior to the children starting in reception. Staff have a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. They have developed positive working relationships and strive to promote an inclusive environment for all children.

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

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children. This is to ensure parents authorise the required dosage to be given and that they are aware of the medication their children have received so that there is consistency in their healthcare and they are not put at risk.

### **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 satisfactory. 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):

- make sure written parental permission is requested, at the time of the placement, to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future
- update the current first aid qualification to ensure there is at least one member of staff on the premises or on outings at any one time with a qualification which includes training in first aid for infants and young children which is consistent with any guidance issued by the Local Authority by the Secretary of State
- update the complaints procedure so that parents are aware that they should receive a response within 28 days if they have any complaints, and that a record of all complaints is maintained and appropriate information from that record may be seen on request.

#### **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):

- develop the assessment records so that they relate more closely to the stepping stones, giving a clear picture of each child's progress, particularly for more able children.

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)