

St Michael's Christian Pre- School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	253939
Inspection date	13 December 2007
Inspector	Elaine Margaret Hayward
Setting Address	Maynard Avenue, Norton, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 3EE
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Registered person	St Michael's Christian Pre-school
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 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 Michael's Christian Pre-school Playgroup was registered in 1993 and is run by a committee. It operates from two rooms in a church hall in an area near Stourbridge. A maximum of 30 children may attend at any one time. Except for the first Wednesday of each month, the pre-school is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12:00 during term-time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 38 children from two to four years on roll. Of these, 20 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from a wide catchment area for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Eight staff work with the children. Of these, seven hold appropriate qualifications. The setting receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is exceptionally well promoted because staff recognise and very effectively reduce possible risks by, for example, adhering to clear cleaning routines. Children very clearly learn about the importance of good personal hygiene through ongoing daily routines. They automatically use tissues which are to hand to wipe runny noses, and wash their hands at appropriate times during the day, benefiting from steps, sinks and hand dryers at their height. They obviously learn to understand about germs. Children's understanding of health is further enhanced through topics and by making 'it fun'. They take great delight in learning about the importance of dental hygiene when a dental nurse visits, and the importance of cleaning their teeth as they examine a variety of toothbrushes and equipment, cleaning the teeth of toy animals as well as their own.

Children's individual care needs are exceptionally well met because in-depth information is obtained from parents before children start. Regular exchanges of information with parents ensure that details are kept up to date. Children's welfare is extremely well protected from cross-infection due to very full sickness policies which are shared with parents and are strictly adhered to. Should children have an accident, need medication or become unwell, they receive excellent, prompt attention from staff, with parents kept fully informed. All staff are very clearly aware of any allergies or special requirements that children may have.

Children love to learn about healthy eating and nutrition as they attend their café, where their pleasure and understanding, along with their independence, are continually extended. Children self-register, placing their name card at a table to reserve their place. They then choose a coloured plate and beaker of their choice, helping themselves from a range of clearly labelled, tempting snacks, including a wide variety of fruits. They choose and carefully pour their own drinks before sitting down and chatting with each other and staff, talking about what they are eating or any topic which interests them. Children learn about foods as they take pleasure in growing, preparing and serving foods to their parents at various days through the year, such as at the harvest lunch.

Children enjoy excellent opportunities to experience physical activity and develop their skills. They enjoy the fresh air each day as they have free access to the newly refurbished outdoor area where they have plenty of room to run around, play games and climb. They love the frequent opportunities to plant bulbs and tend their plants.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy a warm and extremely welcoming environment where they and their achievements are well and truly acknowledged, where children's achievements and photographs are displayed. Parents, children and visitors are met, greeted and welcomed into the setting by smiling, happy, friendly staff. Staff spend time talking to children and parents as they arrive and depart.

Safety is given the utmost priority at all times. Children are kept safe due to staff's excellent awareness of health and safety, supported by an excellent range of policies and procedures which identify and minimise risks. Robust attention is given to all aspects of safety within the setting, such as at arrival and departure times, with a member of staff at the door. The door

being kept locked during sessions, with a bell and clear visibility. Staff are extremely vigilant in their supervision of children, which is carried out in a discreet manner to allow children independence whilst still being safe. Excellent organisation of space ensures that children can choose independently from an excellent range of activities and resources whilst they learn, explore and develop safely. Children learn the importance of safety through planned and unplanned activities such as through frequent fire practises, and through gentle reminders and the display and understanding of 'group rules' such as 'walking feet, sharing and caring'.

Children are very well protected from harm because all staff have in-depth understanding of their role in child protection. There are clear and thorough policies and procedures in place which are shared with parents. All staff recognise this is their first priority and are fully aware of the procedures to follow should they have concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely well settled, happy and confident, thoroughly relishing their time in the setting. They benefit from staff who are highly dedicated and enthusiastic. Staff develop warm, close and caring relationships with the children in their care. Staff know the children extremely well, making very effective use of the key-worker system. Warmth and affection is clearly evident between children and staff, especially during small group times. Staff build on this knowledge to ensure that children feel totally secure and nurtured and are keen to develop and learn. Children obviously want to be involved as they make confident choices from an impressive range of age-appropriate resources which they can easily access.

Children have first-hand experiences to develop curiosity as learners because staff encourage them to take part in new activities. Staff enthusiastically join in with songs and games, hiding like the children. Experiences are fully extended to ensure that children reach their full potential. Children adore the freedom and independence to be able to choose what, where and with whom they want to play, both indoors and out. They love the space to move around, and the mix of active and quiet areas and times.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are animated and inspirational, and use their excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, stepping stones and early learning goals to help children progress extremely well in all areas. Planning, observation and assessment is extensive. Staff understand children's individual needs. They are attentive and supportive. A range of exciting experiences ensure that children are challenged. Staff give clear explanations and ask questions to make them think. They excite children's imaginations. Children love 'Ben the dog', a large toy dog, sharing their experiences with him and showing him their achievements such as the Christmas stocking they have made.

Children are confident, self-assured and show excitement and pleasure as they play and learn. The clear instructions, praise and carefully planned activities allow children to begin to develop self-discipline. Children clearly know the routines. They love to ring the bell to indicate tidy up time when they willingly join in, carrying boxes and putting toys away. They have excellent personal independence skills and show sensitivity. They play harmoniously, share and take turns.

Children show they are developing confidence in speaking, talking freely and expressively about what they have done. They love the very inviting, wide range of excellent quality books. They have numerous opportunities to see a wide range of familiar words displayed and their name in print, learning to link sounds to letters, many children recognising letters and words, confident in the sounds they make. Excellent opportunities are provided for children to make marks. Many children spontaneously write their own names such as on paintings, or on their pots in which they have planted their mint cuttings.

Counting and number recognition is threaded through everyday activities by staff and, as a result, children use mathematical language quite naturally such as when a group of children compare the height of plants they are 'growing' at the water trough. They see who can grow the tallest plant the quickest as they tip in the water to make the plants 'grow'. Children and staff have great fun joining in with action songs, complete with monkey and crocodile hats! As a result of such fun times, children are confident in counting. They know, for example, how many monkeys are left.

Children explore freely through exciting activities, both planned and spontaneous. They have opportunities to observe and question and explore their natural curiosity as they examine a wasps nest, and find toads and bugs in the garden area. They enthusiastically learn to care for living things as they plant seeds and grow winter flowering bulbs, very confident that a plant 'needs water, soil and sun to make it grow strong'. They examine mint, noting its roots and new leaf shoots as the plant grows. They take great delight in growing beans and then preparing, cooking and serving a meal to their parents. Children thoroughly relish the excellent opportunities to use the laptops, telephones and tills, all directly accessible. Young children become very adept at clicking and dragging the mouse, taking great delight in inserting the 'dinosaur bones exposed by the archaeological dig' on the correct part of the body. They learn to insert the disk of their choice with ease.

Children love the freedom to be outdoors. They move confidently with control and coordination in a variety of ways, including sliding and crawling. They show delight in putting together the hopscotch jigsaw before 'beating' a member of staff as they play together. They know it is important then to have a drink when they go back inside, especially if they are hot. They use an excellent range of small equipment, developing their hand and finger skills, handling tools and objects safely with increasing control. They thread sewing cards, use rolling pins and cutters, and use scissors with increasing dexterity.

Children express themselves freely through paint, drawing, role play, music and dance. Whoops of laughter and delight can be seen and heard as children and staff enthusiastically play 'Sleeping Hedgehog' together, closing their eyes and guessing who is hidden. They love the dressing up and role play areas where, for example, they carefully tend to their babies. They love to express themselves through a wide range of musical instruments and songs. They learn to play their bells at the appropriate moment and to keep in time as they perform their nativity play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are welcomed, highly valued and respected as individuals. All children are treated with equal concern, ensuring that their individual needs are extremely well met. Children's self-esteem and confidence is extremely well promoted by exceptional caring and sensitive staff who provide positive support, praise and encouragement. Children's self-esteem, confidence and feelings of self-worth are further enhanced as staff link closely with the schools that

children will go to next. Links continue with the children and the children's new school after they have left the pre-school.

Extremely effective procedures, sensitivity, experience and understanding ensure that any children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are promptly identified and ensure that their needs are most effectively met. There are very close working relationships with other professionals such as speech therapists who visit the setting, and staff ensure that any prescribed programme is closely followed. Parents are helped and given details of where and how to seek help.

The setting has an extremely comprehensive and positive equal opportunities policy which concentrates on positive strategies to ensure inclusion and ensure diversity is addressed. Every child is helped to achieve their potential as extremely detailed information is obtained about the children before they start, with ongoing communication in place to ensure individual needs are met. These full policies and committed staff demonstrate clear adherence to the inclusion of all. All this, along with a very extensive range of resources and activities ensure children clearly develop excellent understanding of the wider world. Children love to learn about different cultures and religions through foods, dance, music and celebrations.

Children's behaviour is exemplary in proportion to their level of understanding and maturity, as there are clear policies and strategies in place, and staff are good, calm role models, working well as a team. As a result, children understand the environment created by staff which encourages children to respect boundaries and to learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Children play harmoniously together, as, for example they play in the sandpit or tenderly care for their dolls. They listen to each other, are polite and say 'please' and 'thank you'. They share and take turns. They tidy up, helping each other by carrying boxes between them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. An excellent, close, informal relationship with parents helps parents understand the setting's aims and practices, and contributes to children's well-being. Excellent detailed information is gained from parents about their children, both initially and throughout the children's time at the setting. Parents receive excellent initial information including a full prospectus, a 'Welcome booklet' emphasising the pre-school's motto of 'Sowing the Seeds' and 'Your child's first days' leaflet. Parents are kept fully informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. As well as receiving excellent detailed information about the Foundation Stage curriculum, parents are continually encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, including the initial 'profile' and 'progress summary'. They are fully aware of activities and planning through ongoing discussions, monthly newsletters, and regular meetings. There are clear, organised notice boards full of relevant information for parents. Parents are asked to evaluate and comment on all aspects of the provision through questionnaires.

Parents appreciate the setting's emphasis on the importance of the role of parents and of 'working together'. They love to be included in projects such as 'Groundforce day', which resulted in parents, staff and children totally transforming the outdoor area. Parents feel very much involved in their children's play, development and learning. Children, staff, parents and families all show immense pride and emotion at the achievements of the children at the very moving nativity play. Parents are full of praise about the 'extremely high quality' of the setting, and of the 'wonderful care and dedication' of the staff. They feel they can talk to staff at anytime, speaking highly of the 'open door' policy. They also fully appreciate 'The Well', a

coffee area run by volunteers in an adjoining room, where parents can sit and chat and receive reassurances from staff that their 'child has settled in'.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The excellent organisation of the setting ensures that children are extremely happy, safe and settled. Children benefit from continuity of care with stable staff who are highly dedicated and enthusiastic. Children's experiences and care are further enhanced by well-qualified staff who are effectively deployed with a clear key-worker system to ensure they receive a very high level of care and attention.

Comprehensive, detailed documentation, policies, procedures and records are in place. They are regularly reviewed to ensure that requirements are met. There is an effective and detailed operational plan which includes an extensive range of additional policies to ensure that children's health, safety and well-being are a priority at all times. There are clear, robust recruitment and induction procedures in place to ensure that children are well-protected. Thorough registration systems for staff, children and visitors to the setting further enhance the safety and well-being of all. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is outstanding. There is total commitment to ongoing improvement, with highly effective steps taken to plan ahead, evaluate and improve the service offered. There is a strong commitment to the development and training of staff. New ways of working are welcomed in order to enhance provision and ensure children are supported by staff with up-to-date knowledge to support children's individual development and learning. Effective steps are taken to evaluate and improve the practice with on-going observations, regular meetings and evaluation, actively looking for ways to move the setting forward so that children are developing positive attitudes and are making outstanding progress towards the early learning goals. Management and staff are enthusiastic and dedicated, working extremely well as a team. They are totally committed to providing a high level of care and education for the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting was asked to develop more formal procedures to keep parents informed about their children's achievements and progress. Procedures have been fully reviewed and amended. Daily discussions, a clear key-worker system, notices, frequent newsletters and the 'open door' policy ensure that parents are clearly kept fully informed and are fully involved in their children's achievements and progress. Parents are also involved in their children's profiles and receive progress reports ensuring high quality provision for children's care, development and learning.

At the last nursery education inspection, no significant weaknesses were found, but the setting was asked to give consideration to increase resources to extend children's development in knowledge and understanding of the world, particularly in relation to culture and religion, and to extend opportunities for children to freely access writing materials. An extensive range of good quality resources and an exciting range of activities are clearly in place to promote children's understanding of the world. Children also freely access exciting and inviting, good quality writing materials.

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