

Southdown Methodist Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123615
Inspection date	17 September 2007
Inspector	Suman Willis
Setting Address	130a Southdown Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 1PU
Telephone number	07950614504
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Registered person	Southdown Methodist Church 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 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?

Southdown Methodist Pre-School is run by a committee. It opened in 1983 and operates from a first floor church hall. Children have access to an extra hall for physical play. The setting serves the local area. The group opens four days a week during school term times. Sessions are Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 09:15 until 12:00.

A maximum of 28 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 31 children from two years six months to five years on roll. Of these, 15 receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine part-time staff to work with the children. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher and mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are engaged in a wide range of physical activities which help to promote physical fitness. They routinely use a climbing frame with slide, which is situated in the middle of the hall alongside all other activities. Children demonstrate successfully their climbing skills as they climb up and go down the slide. They move around with control as they push buggies with dolls around the hall, pretending to take their babies for walks. Children enjoy moving to music, and they learn to hop to 'Hop little bunnies'. Children are delighted as they practice their Scottish dancing skills. They develop a very good understanding of the changes that occur to their bodies as staff explain the importance of warming up and cooling down before and after exercise. Consequently, children stay healthy and understand the importance of exercise. Children use the cosy book corner to relax in when they get tired.

Procedures to monitor children's health are appropriately implemented and shared with parents. For example, parents permission is sought to administer emergency aid and medication. Parents are also well informed of the setting's policy on illnesses. However, staff do not keep a record of pre-existing injuries, which compromises children's health and safety. All staff are trained in first aid and therefore are able to ensure that children stay healthy should the need arise. Children demonstrate a very good understanding of managing their own hygiene as they wash their hands independently after playing with sand. They use wet wipes prior to sitting down for snacks.

Children are very well nourished. Their independence is fully promoted as they make their own decisions as to when they are hungry and to eat. For example, a snack table is set up for an hour during the session and children enjoy asking their friends if they would like to go and eat with them. They are very sociable as they tuck into healthy snacks, such as pitta bread with humous and taramsalata. Children pour their own drinks and learn about where milk comes from as staff use this valuable social occasion to extend children's learning.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. The organisation of activities ensures that children can move around safely while exploring their environment. A good range of displays enable children to feel positive about themselves. The building is secured once all the children have arrived and staff use their observational skills effectively to ensure that children stay safe. Due to the organisation of the building and to maintain children's safety, they have to be escorted to and from the toilets. Regular risk assessments ensure that children's safety is monitored. Children have independent access to a broad range of age-appropriate and interesting resources which are well maintained and enable children to extend on their learning.

Children learn to stay safe as staff remind them how to safely use the climbing frame. For example, staff ask children to put down hand held toys before they climb as they need both hands to hold on to the rails. Children develop their knowledge of road safety as staff invite visitors from the local road safety team to visit regularly. Children are also taken out to the local shops; safety is well maintained and permission from parents is sought. Therefore, children understand how to stay safe because staff use every opportunity to promote safety.

Staff have a very good understanding of maintaining children's safety. Clear procedures in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board are implemented.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive and settle with ease. They enthusiastically sing the 'Good morning song'. Children listen carefully to staff explaining all the activities on offer. They move onto their chosen activity and engage purposefully in their play and learning. Children use their imagination as they play in the home corner, ironing and making meals for their friends and visitors. They show their caring personalities as they care for their babies, feeding them and putting them to bed. Children are excited as they discover plastic mini-beasts in the sand tray. Children enjoy free painting to create their pictures. They learn to count as they paint pictures of three oranges. They learn about size as they share the playdough. Children develop good communication skills as staff use every opportunity to use sign language alongside verbal communication. Laminated signs are displayed at children's level around the hall, this encourages children's understanding of other means of communication. All children participate in story time effectively as they join in excitedly to 'We're going on a bear hunt'. However, children are not effectively grouped to ensure that they are fully challenged. They use their own initiative and their interest is fully sustained as they extend on their imaginative play. Consequently, children are keen to learn through play and have a good understanding of right and wrong.

Nursery Education

The quality of nursery education is good. The staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They plan a wide range of interesting activities to ensure that children make good progress towards the early learning goals and that all children are able to participate at their own level. Although the plans are drawn up to show that all six areas of learning are being covered, opportunities to extend children's mathematical knowledge are often missed. Staff use the stepping stones to monitor children's progress and use their knowledge of the children in their key groups to build on what the children know. However, children's assessment is not linked to planning. Therefore, the plan does not reflect how the curriculum promotes children's progress towards the early learning goals and how they are fully challenged.

Children are given ample opportunities to practice their physical skills as they participate in a broad range of activities, such as music and movements, and regular use of the climbing frame. They are very aware of space as they move around the premises, manoeuvring buggies and using the climbing frame to go under and over. Children's small manipulative skills are extended as they mould play dough and use a variety of shape cutters. They learn to use pencils as they practice their mark-making skills. Children's good behaviour enables them all to take part in a variety of activities which extend their relationship skills. For example, children enjoy playing together in the home corner making meals for each other. Their confidence is growing as they take turns to show items brought from home during circle time. They feel valued as staff develop their self-esteem by praising their achievements.

Children are given ample opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills. They have access to a varied range of fiction and non fiction books. Children enjoy listening to stories and participate with enthusiasm to the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar'. They are learning the letters of the alphabet and some children confidently link letters to make their names as they sit down for snacks. Good display of basic sign language which is used effectively by staff at all times promotes children's communication skills. Children are given opportunities

to practise their counting skills and learn numbers through familiar nursery rhymes. For example, they count to five in preparation for singing 'Five little ducks'. Their knowledge of shapes is extended through daily activities, such as puzzles and art and craft activities. Children learn about volume as they play with sand and water. However, insufficient attention is given to mathematical language used in everyday activities, such as bigger, smaller, more or less, to extend children's understanding of mathematical concepts.

Children are delighted as they search for bugs in the compost tray. They are excited as they explore the bugs under a magnifying glass and are supported by staff to see whether the bugs have legs or not. An excellent display of laminated pictures of the local streets around the car mat and garage promotes children's understanding of their local environment. They learn about other countries, cultures and beliefs through planned activities and through imaginative play. Ample attention is given to promote children's use of their imagination. They are excited as they use good resources representing household equipment. For example, children watch the tray going round as they place items in the microwave. They know how to use the iron and ironing board and pretend to iron a basket of washing which they have taken out of the washing machine. Children participate in a variety of activities and use different materials to create pictures, such as tissue paper, foot printing and finger painting, to develop their creative skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are greeted warmly by staff upon arrival which makes them feel very welcome. They settle with ease because parents and carers are invited to stay with their children for as long as they need; this enables children to separate from their main carer and participate in all activities happily. Parents provide valuable information to the group to ensure that all staff are familiar with children's individual needs, therefore, staff are prepared in advance to meet them effectively. Children confidently approach adults for support and ask for their comforters, knowing that their needs will be met. Consequently, children feel a strong sense of belonging.

Children learn about their community as they visit local shops and the post office, which is linked into their topic work. They become aware of the wider world through a variety of activities. For example, children have made footprints and each child's name is written in a different language. Consequently, children learn very well about cultural diversity and the wider world. Children with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities are fully supported. Staff are knowledgeable and work with other agencies and parents to ensure that all children are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Children are familiar with the daily routine and clear procedures, such as using a bell to get children's attention, ensure that they behave positively and know what is expected of them. They play very well together and negotiate turn taking with ease. Children respond well to the constant praise and encouragement offered by staff. Children are very polite as they say 'please' and 'thank you' and staff ensure that this has been acknowledged. Staff are also quick to acknowledge when children are polite by saying 'that's a nice word to use', thus promoting their self-esteem and good behaviour.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit by the good relationship developed between the parents and the staff. A table is set up with lots of information about the Foundation Stage, the nurseries policy and procedures and all other relevant information, to ensure that parents are fully aware of the nursery's practice. Parents are invited to coffee mornings, this enables them to talk informally to staff about the progress their children are

making. Therefore, parents are provided with good quality information about the setting and its provision which helps them to support and extend their children's learning. Parents are fully informed of the nursery's complaints procedure and a comments or complaints book is available in the reception area. This allows parents to provide positive feedback to help develop their children's care, learning and play.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the effective procedures in place to ensure that all staff working with the children are suitably qualified and appropriately vetted. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child development and of protecting children, which ensures that children are safe and well protected. Children are highly regarded by staff who evaluate their practise and update their training. They are positively supported by staff because the setting maintains a high ratio of adults to children and staff are very well deployed to monitor children's movement. Children are generally effectively grouped, which contributes to their well-being. All policies and procedures are regularly reviewed at staff meetings to ensure that they are up to date and understood by all staff, and these are effectively shared with parents. Consequently, documents work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution.

Leadership and management, is good. All staff work very well together as a team and are strongly supported by the group leader. The leader is committed to improving care and education for all the children. For example, all staff have been involved in drawing up clear, detailed evaluation plans of all previous recommendations and demonstrate clearly how these have been implemented into the setting. The 'Self Evaluation Form' is used effectively to evaluate the general day to day running of the setting and implement changes as required. Staff clearly value children's needs because they also involve children in evaluating the setting. For example, small group time is planned into activities where staff ask children what they enjoy doing at the nursery and what they would like to do more of.

Overall, the needs of children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery agreed to: devise a procedure to follow in the event of a child being lost; extend the child protection policy for staff information to include signs which may indicate abuse; provide an induction programme for new staff; review procedures regarding security, and review the frequency of recording children's development.

Children stay safe because staff have developed their lost child procedure and reviewed security. They are safeguarded because staff have procedures in place which are in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Children's progress is now effectively monitored because staff frequently record children's progress. New staff are appropriately supervised by experienced staff as part of their induction programme; this enables them to promote children's care.

Nursery Education

The nursery agreed to: extend the availability of tools and different mark-making resources to encourage children to initiate their own learning and independence; review the organisation

of snack time to make the most of the learning opportunities, and develop strategies to enable children with English as an additional language to be involved in all activities.

Nursery education for children is improved because staff have provided children with a mark-making table which the children access independently. Children enjoy the revised snack time where their learning is extended as staff sit with them and provide opportunities to extend children's learning. Children with English as an additional language are fully involved in all activities as staff use sign language to help children to communicate.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the registration 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):

- develop procedures to record details of any existing injuries when a child arrives
- organise groups effectively to extend children's learning

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 children's assessment and link it effectively to planning to show how all children are challenged
- develop children's knowledge of mathematical concepts through daily routines.

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