

# Holy Apostles Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	510068
<b>Inspection date</b>	05 March 2008
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Holy Apostles' Pavillion Groups
<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 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?

Holy Apostles Playgroup operates from the Pavilion sited at the rear of Holy Apostles Primary School on Battledown Approach, Cheltenham. The Pavilion stands close to the school playing field and is used by the group for outdoor play. The playgroup is run by a management committee made up from elected parents and representatives from the Holy Apostles School and the Holy Apostles Church both of which it has close links with. The playgroup serves the local communities of Battledown, Whaddon and Charlton Kings.

The playgroup is open from 08.50 to 12.00 Monday to Friday and from 12.30 to 15.00 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays during term time. A maximum of 24 children aged from two to under five years may attend the playgroup at any one time and it is their policy to accept children in the term in which they become three. There are currently 46 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 41 children receive funding for nursery education.

The playgroup currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and welcomes children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six staff, four of whom including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment where their good health is well protected through the range of policies and procedures that the playgroup has adopted. The premises are very clean and staff ensure that they remain so throughout the session, for instance by mopping the floor in the toilet area. Many of the children are aware of when they need to wash their hands and do so as a matter of routine, visual prompts remind them. The playgroup holds all the necessary documentation for the administration of medication. This includes comprehensive care plans designed to ensure that children who require specific treatment for things such as an allergic reaction promptly receive it. Children are well protected in the event of an accident because all staff hold first aid certificates. Although there are signed parental consents to seek emergency medical advice or treatment for the majority of children this has not been obtained for all. This means that for those few there may not receive prompt treatment if it is needed.

All staff are fully aware of children's individual dietary and cultural needs, which are well respected. Snacks are planned so that all children can be included, they are offered either a variety of fresh fruit or a plain biscuit. Staff ask children to suggest fruits they would like to try and then buy accordingly. At snack time children are provided with milk to drink and they know that at any time they can ask a member of staff for water. This ensures that they can quench their thirst and remain hydrated. Children enjoy outdoor play each day and benefit from being able to access a large outside area within the school grounds. They play with equipment such as balls, hoops and a parachute, climbing frame and a slide. They ride on bikes and cars, moving with control and negotiating clear pathways. Activities such as these enable children to develop their levels of physical fitness as well as helping them to improve co-ordination and develop their large muscles.

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

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given a high priority at all times. This is supported by a range of policies in place which identify and address potential risks, including data on the cleaning substances they use. Staff are especially vigilant when children are arriving and leaving the premises so that there is no possibility that they can leave them unsupervised. There are also good systems in place to ensure that children are only handed over to the correct person at collection time. Children are learning about keeping themselves safe. For instance, they participate in a termly emergency evacuation practice and talk with staff about road safety issues when walking through the school car park.

Children are cared for in premises that are suitable for their purpose and of which the playgroup and associated after school club have sole use of. The rooms are warm and welcoming. Walls are decorated brightly with children's work and a wide selection of attractive, informative posters. Staff greet all the children who quickly settle. They make choices about what to play with from a good variety of equipment that is well maintained and appealing to them. Resources are organised so that they can access them independently. Children are protected in areas of concern because all staff have a good awareness of child protection issues and regularly attend

training to update their knowledge in this area. There is a detailed policy in place and this is displayed on the notice board for parents and carers to refer to.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy and very much at ease at the playgroup where they enjoy a wealth of different learning opportunities. They are enthusiastic and are actively involved in their learning and play throughout the session. Children develop positive relationships with the staff and with each other. They are confident to make choices about what they want to play with and happily approach staff for help knowing that it will be given.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are very familiar with the stepping stones and they know the children well. They understand how children make progress in their learning and are all involved in the planning of a good range of exciting activities for the children to participate in. Throughout the session staff effectively self deploy themselves, assisting and supporting children appropriately. Although staff are confident in their assessments of where children are on the stepping stones the supervisor oversees their observations to ensure that all children's achievements are accurately tracked and recorded. Individual records clearly show that children are making good progress. However, parents and carers are not provided with any formal opportunities to see these until their child leaves to go to school. Through a combination of themes and the daily routine children gain experience of all the areas of learning. Children are motivated to learn because the well planned and resourced themes are linked to their interests or to things that are familiar to them.

Children concentrate well and become highly involved in activities. They confidently make choices about what they want to do and often invite friends to join them. They use the computer unaided, selecting what programme they are going to use and negotiate turns between themselves. Children take pride in their work and label it themselves many of them writing their names by forming recognisable letters. They confidently use the digital camera to make a pictorial record of what they have achieved. Children have very good personal independence. They take themselves off to the toilets and wash their hands. They help themselves to tissues to wipe their noses and dispose of them in the bin. Many put on and take off their own coats and children who are struggling with this are supported and encouraged by staff. Children delight when they do manage it and staff celebrate their achievement with them.

Activities are well planned to encompass many different areas of learning, for example when using the book 'We're going on a bear hunt'. Children use reference books to find out about different bears and where they live. Children explore the 'mud' in the story, using potting compost. They play with it dry and then add water finding that it changes and feels different and they do some hand printing with it. Staff encourage them to think of words to describe what it feels like such as 'squidgy', 'sqelchy', and 'soft'. In a group the children share these words and then decide if each word describes wet or dry earth. They talk about the differences between snowballs and mud balls. They recall that snowballs are cold and they try to anticipate what will happen if they make and throw dry mud balls and then wet ones. Children are excited to find this out; they delight in mixing in some water and then throwing the mud outside at targets on the wall. Children also discover that when it is dry the compost falls like snow. Children walk in the school grounds and talk about and look at the buds on the trees. They stop and listen for sounds and they hunt for long grass, twigs and branches for the forest like

in their story. Children find the grass which they gather, smelling it they decide that it smells like onions. They stop at the pond and talk about the ducks on it. Then they spot that frog spawn has been laid and so promptly look for frogs.

During the daily routine children are given lots of opportunities to listen and distinguish sounds, they especially enjoy rhyming activities such as 'silly names' that are used when children put their mats away and which make children laugh and sometimes repeat because they have found them so funny. They also thoroughly enjoy listening to stories and join in enthusiastically with familiar words and phrases. Children are given many opportunities for counting. Many children can count to five and some to ten and beyond. Some can recognise numerals from one to nine at random and can add up sets of items. Children regularly practise this when they play 'wake up fingers' and confidently count up and call out the number of fingers the supervisor is holding up on each hand as well as adding up them together to find the total.

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

The provision is good.

Children's behaviour is very good. Staff equip children with appropriate strategies which enable them to resolve most of their own disputes without adult intervention. Staff involve the children in drawing up rules for the playgroup which are on display for both staff and children to refer to. Children learn about the world they live in through the many positive images that are provided including posters, small world figures, puzzles, books, dolls and musical instruments. Children learn that people can say the same words in different languages, as they sing a song saying hello. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support to enable them to make progress. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator liaises very closely with parents the other playgroup staff in order to meet children's needs. Children spiritual, moral social and cultural development is fostered.

All parents and carers enter the playgroup daily to settle their child. They talk to staff in a relaxed and friendly way. All parents and carers are delighted with the care their child receives and how happy and settled they are. Regular newsletters are sent home and information regarding the playgroup is placed on a notice board. However this is located in a corner of the side room and not many parents and carers look at it. Partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funding for nursery education is good. Parents and carers find all the staff very approachable and feel happy talking to any of them and do so on a daily basis. Initially when a child starts parents and carers are given a written sheet which tells them about the early learning goals. Information about an area of learning is displayed in the main room along with long term plans and details about what the children will be doing, but are not easily accessible for parents and carers to see. This means that because they do not always know what their child is doing they are unable to consolidate their learning at home.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides. Children have the benefit of being cared for by a dedicated, long serving staff team most of whom have been at the playgroup for in excess of 10 years and who work together very well. High staff ratios help to ensure that children are well supported. Space is organised so that children can move around freely and safely. They easily access all the activities on offer which helps them to be able to make independent choices about what they want to do. All the required policies and

procedures are in place and are regularly reviewed. Very detailed, accurate records showing children's attendance ensure that all children are accounted for at any given time.

Leadership and management is good. The playgroup supervisor is a strong, enthusiastic leader who motivates her staff team. The committee provides effective management ensuring that the service the playgroup provides is of a positive benefit to all the children and their families who use it. The committee works closely with the supervisor to provide a high quality service and the chair makes regular visits to support staff and to evaluate the provision. Staff are very enthusiastic, their development needs are identified as part of their annual appraisal. They regularly attend training both to advance their qualifications and to keep them updated with practice issues. Most staff work most days which ensures that they provide continuity of care for children and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This helps to ensure that sessions run smoothly and safely for all children.

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

At the last inspection concerning the care of children, the playgroup received recommendations to develop the complaints, sickness and child protection policies to ensure they provide sufficient, clear and accessible information for parents and staff and to request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. The policies have been developed to contain sufficient information and are available on the notice board which helps to safeguard children. The playgroup now has parental permission for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment for most children however this has not been obtained for all of them and so this is the subject of a further recommendation.

Concerning the nursery education the recommendations were to increase children's opportunities to make marks in their free-play using a variety of resources and; to develop the use of the stepping stones to guide and inform planning and assessment, which may then be used to assist in developing parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage and provide ongoing feedback about children's progress. Children now have opportunities for mark making throughout the session and can help themselves to a variety of resources for this purpose. Staff do use the stepping stones to guide and inform planning and assessment but parents are not familiar with the stepping stones or the Foundation Stage and feedback about their child's progress is only given informally, except for a written report which is done when children leave to go to school.

### **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 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):

- ensure that there are signed consents to seek emergency medical advice and or treatment for all children.

### **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):

- ensure that written information about the playgroup and about the foundation stage of learning is more easily accessible to parents and carers and that they are provided with formal opportunities to share their children's records on a regular basis.

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)