

St. Helens Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	254281
Inspection date	11 September 2007
Inspector	Tessa Margaret Betts
Setting Address	Gurney Road, New Costessey, Norwich, Norfolk, NR5 0HH
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Registered person	St. Helens Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

St. Helens Pre-School opened in 1966 and serves the local community. It operates from the church hall on Gurney Road in Costessey, Norwich.

There are currently 52 children from aged two years to five years on roll at the Pre-School. This includes 25 children in receipt of funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is open five days a week during school term-time with the exception of the last Wednesday in the month when they do not operate. Sessions run from 09.00 to 15.00 Monday to Friday. The Pre-School currently supports one child with English as an additional language.

There are seven staff members who work directly with the children. All staff including the Manager hold relevant child care qualifications appropriate to their post. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment which is clean and well maintained. Positive steps taken by staff such as regularly checking the toilet area and cleaning tables with an anti-bacterial spray promote good hygiene standards. A clear health policy ensures all staff are consistent in their practice so that the risk of infection is minimised. Medication is administered following sound procedures in line with the National Standards. Information about children's health is gathered when children start. Written permission is in place to seek emergency medical treatment or advice for each child attending. Staff are able to deal appropriately with illness and minor accidents as one member of staff holds a current first aid certificate. Plans are underway to renew the certificates of other staff members which have recently expired. A well stocked first aid kit is easily accessible in the event of an emergency. Information about any accidents is shared with parents and carers and appropriately documented. Children are encouraged to learn about personal hygiene through the daily routine. Some more able children competently wash their hands in the cloakroom, whilst younger children choose to use the portable handwashing unit in the main hall. Individual paper towels are provided in the hall. However the supply is not sufficient to last throughout the session resulting in some children shaking their hands dry or wiping them on their clothes.

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Currently children bring a daily snack from home. Clear information given to parents when their child starts informs them of the Pre-School's healthy eating policy. As a result children bring a variety of fresh fruit, such as grapes, strawberries, bananas, apples and raisins in individually named containers. Children are able to choose when they have their snacks. This system benefits the children as it does not interrupt their play when they are engrossed in an activity. Children quickly notice as staff prepare the table with a tablecloth making this event special. Children enjoy the free flow of spontaneous conversation, however staff miss opportunities to reinforce the importance of healthy eating within this routine activity. Systems are in place to support their independence. Most children competently pour their own milk or water from small jugs. Throughout the morning children can access fresh drinking water from a water dispenser for themselves.

Children enjoy many activities which support their physical development. Continuous outdoor play provision provides ample time for children to experience a good range of physical challenges. They are quick to show off their running skills. They race each other across the grass, pedal across the tarmac area or climb aboard the wooden cart excitedly as staff pull it along. A new piece of outdoor equipment with pedals provides additional challenge as they work out how they can make it move backwards and forwards. Children are developing confidence as they climb up the steps of the climbing frame and cautiously creep along before zooming down the slide at the other end. Indoors and out children are developing good hand/eye co-ordination as they use a range of tools such as scissors and cutters within their creative play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit greatly from the staff's commitment to providing and maintaining a safe and secure environment. The premises are checked prior to children arriving and monitored closely throughout the session. Children are well supervised on arrival and departure. Staff have robust

systems in place to ensure children cannot leave the premises without an appropriate adult. Barriers are used effectively to prevent children from having access to certain areas and the premises is secure once children have arrived. The premises are welcoming to parents with visual displays and a well stocked noticeboard. These contribute to creating a child centred environment. There is sufficient space for the numbers of children attending with designated areas for different activities and suitable storage facilities. Children have access to a good range of equipment and resources which conform to safety standards. Children are able to sit safely and comfortably at child size tables and chairs or relax on large floor cushions in the book area. Additional safety measures such as the use of two way radios when using the outdoor area with a small group enable staff to summon additional help quickly.

Children are developing an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe through routine activities, clear explanations from staff and challenging role play situations. Following on from a recent visit from the Police, children explore how they might respond to a major accident. Through the use of open ended questions staff challenge children to think about immediate dangers. Children are quick to say we 'must get the people away to keep them safe' as they decide to put cones around the upturned lorry and re-direct the traffic. At circle time children take turns at being the 'special helper' of the day. This role includes explaining to the children the safety rules such as 'having kind hands, we walk in Pre-School' which are displayed in simple words and pictures. Children are keen to demonstrate their understanding in their own way. Those less confident are well supported by staff. As children celebrate a child's birthday staff use matches to light the candles on the cake. Staff take time to check children's understanding of the dangers of matches. The member of staff asks the children why they need to sit well back and why does she need to be careful. They confidently tell her that matches can burn your fingers.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have a working knowledge of child protection procedures. They are familiar with the signs and symptoms of child abuse and have effective systems in place to ensure that the interests and the safety of children come first. Their written child protection policy also includes what action they would take if a child was not collected or an allegation was made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to be confident, independent and develop their self-esteem. Most children arrive happily and are eager to participate. They are warmly welcomed into an environment which is set up to meet their needs. Children respond well to the daily routines. On arrival they find their name on the table and settle themselves at an activity which interests them. Younger children are well supported in their play as staff make effective use of the 'Birth to three Matters' framework to plan and provide suitable activities in line with their development. These activities include a range of sensory resources where children can experience the sounds and texture of different materials.

They explore the contents of small baskets and enjoy modelling with malleable materials. Children's ideas are valued as staff get down to the children's level. They take an active interest in what the children are saying and respond with real enthusiasm.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a solid understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. As a result, children take part in a range of stimulating and relevant activities that help them make good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children's starting points are known as staff gather information about what children like, dislike and what they can do when they start. This provides a vital link in ensuring all children move on in their development. Good use of open ended questions such as 'what do you think is in there? and why do you think that is?' encourage children to think and work things out for themselves. All areas of the curriculum are carefully woven into planned topics. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities ensures children have enough time to consolidate their learning in their own way and at their own pace. Planning is flexible to accommodate spontaneous opportunities which capture children's imagination and interest. Staff make some useful assessments of children's progress through observations. These are then recorded in each child's book of achievements. However these are not sufficiently frequent in some cases to effectively identify the next steps in their learning or give an up-to-date picture of children's attainments.

Children are developing positive relationships with each other and with the adults around them. Most children show their sense of security as they warmly engage in conversation with staff, hang up their coats and bags, find their name and settle at their chosen activity. Their independence is growing as they attend to many of their personal needs for themselves. Children are motivated and interested in the activities on offer as they excitedly engage in a role play telephone conversation using old mobile phones with a friend. They rise to the responsibility of being a 'special helper' which contributes to boosting their self-confidence. Children have regular opportunities within routine activities to make connections between sounds and letters. They listen intently to the sound each letter makes when identifying the day of the week in circle time. They confidently initiate conversation in role play situations and informally around the snack table. Good systems in place support children's interest in written print. An effective daily library service which stimulates and encourages children to choose both familiar and more challenging books to take home motivate children's interest. This interest extends to a well used book area within Pre-School where children regularly relax looking at books and enjoying the pictures.

Children use numeracy skills and problem solving in all aspects of their play. Staff prompt children to think about how many animals are in their basket, how many children are present and the number of candles on the birthday cake. When some children cut out a line of trains from play dough they are able to demonstrate their understanding of simple addition and subtraction. When asked by staff how many they would have if some were taken away and then put back, they proudly shout out the appropriate answers with confidence. They name and notice different shapes and are able to recognise similar ones portrayed on the floor mats. Children are comfortably around new technology. They show good control when using a computer mouse, skilfully moving items into different positions. They are fascinated at their ability to make small wicker baskets spin around at speed. They are keen to find out for themselves how a new piece of outdoor play equipment can move both forwards and backwards. They make connections with nature as they learn about where conkers come from, grow cress and watch the development of snails and worms as part of a planned topic.

Children have many opportunities to develop their creative skills. Routine activities offered each day allow them to explore colour as they paint, build using large boxes to recreate Police cars as part of a group task, dig and use a variety of tools in the sand and water trays. Children confidently take part in group singing and action rhymes. Children benefit greatly from the well presented story time. Using story sacks, children excitedly explore the contents of the bag as each item is produced. They think together what each item might be used for in the story. They then sit patiently waiting to see if they are right as they listen intently to the story unfolding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are well met as staff gather detailed information from parents when children start. Staff take great care to find out about the children as individuals and their home circumstances. Care practices are adapted to support each child. Staff skilfully respond to a new child who is reluctant to attend. They use a range of different strategies to engage them in activities which interest them. Children learn about the needs of others as they celebrate a range of cultural festivals. Through planned activities children have the opportunity for example to try rice and prawn crackers as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations. Small world play resources and books easily accessible within their routine play activities further raises children's awareness.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who speak English as an additional language are warmly welcomed. Staff work closely with parents and carers to understand and respond appropriately to their needs. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children have time to sit and think, they learn from each other and share their achievements enthusiastically with both each other and staff. Children's behaviour is good. They are beginning to take some responsibility for their managing their behaviour. Through age-appropriate explanations given by staff and daily reminders at circle time, children's understanding of positive behaviour is reinforced. As a result children are grasping a strong sense of right and wrong.

Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their children. They have daily opportunities to exchange information with staff. Parents are aware of who their child's key worker which strengthens the positive and supportive relationships that exist. They comment very favourably on the care provided. They say how much their child enjoys coming and are able to recognise the progress that they have made. Written information is shared through a variety of ways. Some information is presented on the parents table as they arrive whilst some is also displayed on the notice board. Some parents are aware of the Pre-School's complaints policy, however many are not aware of how to contact Ofsted despite this information being displayed on the notice board. Therefore the current system of informing parents of this relevant information is not wholly effective.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. At the onset of a place they are provided with an attractively presented information pack which gives clear details of the curriculum offered. Parents are encouraged to make contributions and share in their child's learning through daily discussion with staff and well presented learning stories, however the current recording system does not consistently give an up-to-date picture of all children's educational progress and current level of attainment.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Clear recruitment and selection procedures ensure that staff working with children are suitably vetted and qualified. Staff are clear of their roles and responsibilities supported by the strong leadership skills of the Manager. They work well together, supporting each other to ensure the smooth running of the session. All of the records that contribute towards the safe running of the Pre-School are in place and readily available. Secure registration systems are maintained so that all adults and children on the premises are accounted for in the event of an emergency.

Effective contingency plans exist if staff are unwell or attending training so that ratios are consistently maintained in line with the National Standards.

The premises are well-organised so that children are able to move freely around the range of activities with designated areas for messy play, physical play and relaxation. Children benefit greatly from staff who are well-organised. This ensures children have appropriate resources to meet the planned activities and high levels of attention to support their play and development. The registration certificate is clearly displayed on the notice board to inform parents.

The leadership and management is good. On a day-to-day basis staff work well together. The leadership of the sessions is shared during the week amongst suitably qualified staff to further their experience and skills. They discuss daily the sessions' activities and more formally through planned staff meetings. A staff appraisal system is in place. Through completed training since the last inspection staff are able to demonstrate a real commitment to improving the quality of care and education for those children attending. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Staff have made sound progress in addressing the recommendations raised at the last inspection. From the last care inspection they were asked to improve their staff appraisal system with committee involvement to support staff in improving and developing their practice. With the support of the Manager there is now a clear system in place which has involved the committee on some level. With the impending Annual General Meeting approaching the Pre-School are hoping to elect members who have time to support the day to day working of this provision and provide the necessary support to the staff group.

At the last nursery education inspection they were asked to use the key worker system more effectively to monitor children's progress, identify the next steps of development and carry these through to the daily planning. They were also asked to make provision for physical play when the weather prevents them from using outdoors. Overall they have made suitable progress in addressing these issues. They now have a sound key worker system in place to support each child. Within planning they have started to identify the next steps in children's development and are beginning to incorporate these into future activities. As yet the system is not fully effective in ensuring all children make more rapid progress in their day-to-day learning. Physical play is offered indoors daily using a variety of equipment, such as a balancing beam and sufficient space is available in the hall for group games, music and movement. Every opportunity is taken to use the outdoor play provision even in wet weather to ensure children's physical development is sufficiently promoted.

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.

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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):

- improve opportunities within routine activities to increase children's awareness of healthy eating and monitor the supply of resources to support children's independence when handwashing
- improve the methods of communication with parents to ensure they are fully aware of the Pre-School's complaints policy and contact details of the regulator

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):

- improve the system for monitoring of children's progress so that the next steps in their learning are clearly identified and acted upon to reflect their current level of attainment.

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