

St Helens College Nursery and Creche

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	323089
Inspection date	21 September 2007
Inspector	Chris Scully
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Registered person	The Governing Body of St Helens College
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 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?

St. Helens College Nursery and Crèche opened in 1986. It operates from six rooms in a secure, self contained unit within the Brook Street Campus, in the centre of St. Helens. Children attend the crèche on a sessional basis in accordance with parents' attendance on college courses. The nursery is available to staff within the college and the general public. The crèche opens five days a week during college term times. Sessions are from 9.00 until 17.00. The nursery is open five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 8.00 until 18.00.

There are currently 78 children from birth to five years on roll. There are eight children in receipt of funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

There are 17 staff working directly with the children. All the staff have early years qualifications and two staff also have relevant additional qualifications. Three staff are undertaking additional qualifications in NVQ level 3 and 4. The setting receives support from St Helen's Sure Start.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for within a clean environment. Children learn about good hygiene practices through daily routines and planned activities with staff. They are aware to wash their hands after going to the bathroom and before meals. Older children happily wipe their face with a flannel after meals and tell staff that they are 'all clean now'. Appropriate nappy changing procedures effectively meet the needs of the children and minimise the risk of cross infection. Younger children are able to sleep or rest according to their individual needs, each has their own bed and bedding, which is laundered each day.

The majority of staff are trained in first aid. This means children's accidents or incidents are handled well. A sick child policy is in place and effectively enables staff to minimise the risk of cross infection. However, staff have not always obtained written consent for each time medication is administered. They have not accurately recorded medication given to children, such as inhalers and have not made a record of when teething gel has been applied. These are a breach of the National Standards. Children's physical needs are progressing appropriately, although currently there is no outdoor play provision, which hinders their ability to test and explore their larger physical skills. The children's small skills are progressing well as they use a range of small resources with increasing control, such as scissors or tools when playing with dough. Babies have sufficient space and resources to support their all round physical development.

Children enjoy a mainly healthy and nutritious diet. Staff are aware of the children's individual needs and meet these well in practice, for example, by changing the menu on specific days. Children are provided with a selection of fruit and vegetables on a daily basis and enjoy some home cooked meals. Babies' needs are met well, as their meals are appropriately blended and younger babies are held whilst having a bottle. However, some food preparation areas do not effectively minimise the risk of cross contamination due to other items being stored within these areas. This has a negative effect upon the children's well-being. All children have independent access to fresh drinking water in order to keep themselves refreshed. Older children are becoming skilled at pouring their own drinks at snack time, which fosters their self esteem.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are able to play and explore in a warm, welcoming environment. Rooms are appropriately organised to meet the needs of the children attending as they are divided into different play areas. There is a wealth of children's art work displayed around the setting, which successfully fosters the children's sense of belonging and achievement. All children have independent access to a wide range of resources and other play materials. Children are confident to select their own resources from low-level storage systems within the rooms. There is an extensive range of posters, resources and books in all areas depicting positive images of diversity. This enables children to develop an understanding of the wider world.

Most risks have been identified and minimised. However, there is no formal risk assessment of all of the areas used by the children in place; which means some risks, such as the citing of free standing fans and trailing wires have not been addressed. This hinders children's safety. Having said that, general risk assessments regarding tripping hazards are in place and contribute to

children's safety in some areas. Fire evacuation procedures are in place and are practised on a regular basis with the children. This enables the children to understand what to do in an emergency. Staff have undertaken health and safety training as part of their induction, which enables them to support children's safety and well-being. Children are developing an awareness of their own safety as they understand the need to walk along the corridor.

Staff have an appropriate understanding of child protection issues. Most staff have undertaken child protection training and refresher courses in order to keep up to date with current legislation. Staff are aware of the action to take should they have concerns about a child, which include reporting this to the child protection coordinator. This is supported by the child protection policy. However, the policy regarding allegations against staff is not readily available and hinders the staff's ability to take appropriate action to protect children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are generally happy and settled at the setting. Good support is provided to new children; this includes words of reassurance and cuddles. This means they are able to feel safe and secure and become engaged in play activities. All children receive good levels of positive interaction from staff. This means they are able to form positive relationships with them. Staff have a secure understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and plan a wide range of interesting activities for younger children. This means children are engaged in a range of purposeful, fun, play and learning opportunities. Younger children enjoy the opportunities to explore their creativity through planned and spontaneous activities. They are eager to paint at the easels and spend time creating their 'masterpieces', which they are keen to share with the staff. Staff spend considerable amounts of time talking and interacting with the children. They are skilled at asking open-ended questions, which enable children to think and communicate their ideas.

Younger children are developing an understanding of computing and are eager to explore their favourite programmes based around a television character. Care of babies is good. Babies receive effective support and encouragement from staff, which enables them to make progress. Staff are in the process of creating plans of activities, which meet the children's diverse needs. Staff use observations and assessment systems well to chart the children's progress and to identify the next steps in their learning. Children's imagination is progressing well, they are keen to re-enact familiar routines, such as dressing their baby, as they don't want them to get cold. Children play well with their peers and are keen to engage them in activities, such as constructing train tracks and playing with the trains.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have attended training on the Foundation Stage and have a secure understanding of how to effectively implement this and how children learn. Plans are in place and encompass a range of topics. However, they do not show any differentiation for more or less able children. Staff make effective records of spontaneous play experiences and the learning outcomes for children, such as building tunnels out of voile. Regular observations and assessments enable staff to effectively chart children's progress and to identify the next steps in their learning, however, this information is not used to inform future planning. Plans encompass all six areas of learning with the exception of children's large physical development. This means children have limited opportunities to test and explore their larger physical skills. This is compounded by the current lack of outdoor play facilities. Staff

are skilled at asking open-ended questions, which enable children to think, communicate their ideas and to solve simple problems. Staff regularly introduce new words to extend the children's vocabulary and understanding, for example, when building with bricks the staff talk about the need for a solid foundation. They go on to explain why this is important when building houses.

Children enter the room happily and are quickly absorbed in purposeful play and learning experiences. Children are developing independence skills, as they attempt to put on their own painting aprons. They are confident in their surroundings and are able to choose where to play and self select their own resources. They see to their own personal needs, such as independently accessing the bathroom and washing their hands after messy activities. They are developing an understanding of their own beliefs and those of others, for example, by celebrating birthdays. Some children are able to recognise the letter sounds of their name, such as 'S for ...' and are keen to self register on their arrival. Some more able children are beginning to write recognisable letters. Children have good opportunities to practise writing for a purpose around the setting, such as making lists for shopping and recording messages. They are independently accessing books with some children enjoying the opportunities to read the story to their friends. Children are becoming confident speakers and are keen to tell visitors about what they are making.

Children use mathematical language in everyday conversations, such as big and biggest when describing their towers. This is supported by the staff who use discussion to prompt the children's understanding of mathematical concepts, such as in the middle. Children are developing an understanding of shape and are keen to make a variety of shapes with their flannel after lunch. This was successfully initiated by staff who demonstrate how to make a variety of shapes, such as a triangle using a flannel. Children are able to distinguish between sizes and notice similarities in objects; for example, one child sorts the water bottles by shape and colour and informs visitors that these are pink like mine. Children have some opportunities during the day to count for a purpose and to solve simple problems. Children are confident to use a range of everyday technology, such as computers and eagerly tell visitors where the music is coming from and what the buttons are for on the compact disc player. They build well with a wide range of construction kits. They are able to explain to staff that they need to be careful when using the pretend chain saw as they may get hurt. This is effectively followed up by the staff who discuss the various safety implications and the need for people using real tools to use appropriate protective clothing to keep them safe.

Children's creative development is progressing well. They enjoy painting and are keen to share their creations with others and bask in their appreciation for their efforts. Children are imaginative and use real experiences well to enhance their role play scenarios, such as making pizza and grapes for their friend's dinner. They enjoy listening to music and will often spontaneously dance to a favourite song. Their musical talents are fostered as they independently access musical instruments and create various sounds with their friends, such as beating out a rhythm on a drum. Children are able to access a wide range of art and craft experiences, such as junk modelling, using dough, painting and collage. This means children are able to explore a wide range of creative opportunities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The individual needs and circumstances of the children attending are known and met well by staff. This is supported by the written records and information sourced from the parents. Most consents are in place, which means children are cared for inline with their parent's wishes. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children have good

opportunities to learn about the wider world through a wide range of planned activities, such as looking at children from around the world. They have many opportunities to explore different cultures and beliefs, as they acknowledge a range of festivals throughout the year, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. The children learn about their own community through discussions with staff and visitors in line with thematic work, such as people who help us. This means children are developing positive attitudes to others.

Children are well behaved and respond well to the staff's requests. This is supported by the creation of the nursery rules, which identifies the contributions the children have made in creating these. This successfully fosters the children's sense of belonging and achievement. Older children are becoming confident to talk about their feelings and why they are feeling happy or sad. Children play well alongside their peers and are developing an understanding of taking turns and sharing. Good systems are in place for supporting children with learning difficulties or disabilities. A Special educational needs coordinator is in post and is able to liaise with appropriate agencies in order to ensure children receive good care and support.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents are provided with a wealth of well written information about the setting and the type of care they can expect their child to receive. Notice boards are regularly updated within the rooms and provide opportunities for parents to examine the plans of activities. All children have a key worker who is known to the parents. Daily verbal and written exchanges enable the parents to know what their child has achieved each day. This is further supported by the regular parents days held during the year. Parents of older children are encouraged to bring in items from home in conjunction with the topic, such as autumn. Parents state they are happy with the care and education their children receive and talk favourably about staff. This is further supported by the wealth of thank you cards displayed around the building.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by experienced and qualified staff, all of whom are suitably checked and inducted. This means they have a sound understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities. This is supported by the use of the staff handbook, which contains all of the setting policies and procedures with the exception of the policy regarding allegations against staff. Staff attend a wide range of training courses, which include food hygiene, Foundation Stage training, music making in early years, gender issues in early years and Birth to three. In attending these courses and sharing information with others the staff have enhanced their own knowledge and understanding and the learning opportunities for children. Regular team meetings and appraisal sessions mean staff are informed about their roles and current good practice.

The leadership and management is good. Staff delivering the Foundation Stage are able to access information and training in order to assist them in delivering a varied educative programme of activities. Time is created to enable them to plan future activities and to meet with other members of the team. Staff make effective use of the support provided by the advisory teacher from Sure Start, which enables them to look at new ways of working and enhance the learning opportunities to children. Good systems are in place for monitoring the planning systems and the delivery of teaching through the weekly evaluations.

Policies and procedures which contribute to the children's health, safety and well-being are in place. Parents and staff are provided with copies of these, which means they are fully informed about the setting. Most records are well maintained with the exception of risk assessments and

medication records. Although, confidentiality is not maintained in some areas as information detailing children's personal information is not held securely. Appropriate registration systems are in place for the recording children and staff's attendance.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last care inspection three recommendations were raised in relation to the deployment of staff, opportunities for children to be active outdoors, opportunities for children to rest or relax in the crèche and safety with regards to worn adult chairs.

Staff are effectively deployed in order to meet the needs of the children. Opportunities for children to be active outdoors were instigated, however, there is no longer any outdoor play facilities available to the children. Children within the crèche are able to rest or relax upon a range of suitable furniture and cushions. Adult chairs no longer pose a risk to children's safety.

In addressing these issues the setting has improved upon the health, safety and well-being of the children.

One point for consideration was raised at the last nursery education inspection. This was to provide more sufficient challenge to children outdoors. The setting provided more opportunities for children to test themselves outdoors. In addressing this issue the setting improved upon the children's health and well-being.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received concerns on 17 August 2005 in relation to National Standards 6: Safety and National Standard 12: Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers. The Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement Team contacted the provision. The provision provided an investigation response regarding the concerns raised. Ofsted are satisfied the provider remains qualified for registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaint 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):

- ensure written consent is sought for each time medication is administered and a written record is kept of all medications administered to children
- revise the organisation of some snack preparation areas to minimise the risk of cross contamination
- conduct a risk assessment of the premises and ensure this is reviewed if there is any significant change and provide an action plan as to how identified risk are to be minimised
- ensure the policy regarding allegations against staff is made available and ensure confidentiality is maintain with regards to children's details.

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 the identified next steps in the children's learning are used to inform future planning and plans show the differentiation of children
- provide more opportunities for children to test and explore their larger physical skills.

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