

St Michaels Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	256826
Inspection date	26 September 2007
Inspector	Denise May Smith
Setting Address	The Church Hall, Mace Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE2 8RQ
Telephone number	07835360101
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Registered person	St Michaels 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Michael's Pre-school opened in privately 1975 and has been committee-run since 2000. It operates from St. Michael's Church hall in Stanground, Peterborough and serves the local area and surrounding villages.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30. Afternoon sessions are 12.30 to 15.00 except for Tuesday. The group is open term-time only and all children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 43 children aged from two to under five years on roll, all of whom receive funding for early education.

The nursery employs seven members of staff who all hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to learn about personal health and hygiene through consistent daily routines. Children are encouraged to wash their hands before snacks, after messy play activities and after using the toilet. The water in the hand washing bowls is constantly changed promoting children's good health. Paper hand towels are used to help prevent the spread of infection. All necessary paperwork is in place to record any accidents that may occur and a revised medication recording system ensures that any medication is now recorded appropriately. The majority of staff hold current first aid certificates and an up-to-date first aid box is easily accessible so that staff can attend to children if necessary.

The room, associated facilities and the resources used by the children are kept clean because staff ensure the toilets are cleaned and the floor swept. Tables are disinfected prior to use and a systematic cleaning rota ensures the toys remain in a suitable condition.

Children benefit greatly from being able to free-flow indoors and outside as they choose. They put on their coats and their Wellington boots and go and play in the sand, use the many wheeled vehicles and enjoy the role play facilities available. Children make shakers and march around the outside area following each other in a line and play hopscotch which they have chalked onto the floor. These activities promote exercise and help to keep children healthy.

Children learn about healthy eating. They choose when to have their snack throughout the morning, a good range of fruit and vegetables are placed in a basket so that children can choose what they would like to eat. They peel their bananas and oranges, chop carrots and apples and select grapes and raisins. Children choose which drink they would like to have with their snack and confidently access a water dispenser at other times when they become thirsty.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children's safety is not effectively promoted due to a lack of rigorous risk assessments being carried out. The radiators are exceptionally hot, but have no protective guards around them to prevent children from touching them. The kitchen contains some accessible dangers for children. For example, cleaners and a store of carrier bags. Although children do not routinely access this room, there is no physical barrier to prevent this and children were observed to enter unnoticed by staff.

Children are cared for in premises which are clean, bright and appropriately maintained. The group operates in a hall which gives the children plenty of space to move around and enjoy their play. Children are kept safe because staff intervene appropriately, for example, telling children not to wave a knife around, to sit down when eating and not to walk around with a pencil in their mouth. However, they miss opportunities to develop children's understanding of why this is important as they do not go on to explain why.

Children are offered a very good range of toys and resources to play with. These are of good quality and they are well maintained. Staff work extremely hard to ensure that children may choose what they wish to play with, they respond to children's requests to change toys and so develop their play.

Staff have all attended basic child protection training and a designated person is place to oversee any concerns. However, staff are sometimes unaware of how quite significant injuries have occurred as children arrive at the setting. They have no system in place to record this information. This does not help staff develop a global picture of the children in their care. There are clear procedures in place for staff to follow if they have any concerns about a child in their care and relevant guidelines are available to refer to if necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, relaxed and enjoy the time they spend at the pre-school. All children are involved in a broad range of fun, exciting activities that engage children and entice them to join in and develop their interests. The children have access to good quality toys that provide balance and challenge. Staff have all attended training on the 'Birth to three matters' framework which supports them as they choose activities and play opportunities for the children.

The relaxed atmosphere created by the staff helps children to thrive in the stimulating environment on offer. Staff set out the activities and toys daily for the children, but ensure that they encourage children to make choices in what they wish to play with and support their play as it develops. For example, a child wanted to play with the cars so a member of staff sets out the garages and car box for him. Children are becoming familiar with the routines, even though many children are new to the group, they choose when to have their snack, join together for short, well paced circle times and help to tidy away the toys at the end of the session.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff provide children with many worthwhile experiences and as such the children cannot fail but to make progress towards the early learning goals. Staff listen to the children as they play and take note of their current interests. They use this information to inform the short term planning. For example, children talked about an interest in pirates, this was noted and the next week found children engaged in a whole range of pirate related activities. This ensures that children learn through topics that interest them.

Assessments of children's learning are based on observations of children's achievements and are included in the child's record of achievement which they take home when they leave the group. This is a nice record of the activities children have taken part in during their journey through pre-school. However, because the observations are made infrequently and are not tracked against the early learning goals it is not an effective method to identify children's next steps of learning, nor does it help to inform planning or to monitor their progress. Long term plans are organised around general topics and short term plans relate to themed activities such as 'our senses'. One stepping stone a month under the six areas of learning are highlighted, but these do not relate to any early learning goals or the activities that are available. No learning intentions are highlighted to support staff in delivering the activities. Some standing, ongoing activities are recorded on the planning at the beginning of the day, while any other activity is filled in during the day as children play with activities or make choices in their play. This means that the planning becomes a record of what has happened, rather than a tool to help staff support children's learning.

Most staff have attended training in the Foundation Stage and understand how children learn. Children enjoy being able to play indoors and outside as they choose. They are learning to share and to take turns with the toys as they wait for a space at the messy play activity. This

is popular as the children love chopping and squishing the set jelly between their fingers. Children delight and comment that 'it smells like oranges'. They use spoons to fill bowls and cups and listen carefully as staff discuss with the children where they would have to put the jelly in order to make it set. Likewise, as a member of staff prepares to open a giant can of beans, children are invited to guess what may be inside. They stir the beans and talk about eating them at home with their families.

Children play with the dressing-up clothes, helping each other with the fastenings and go off to complete puzzles dressed as snow white. Children concentrate well when completing puzzles, many of which include images of the world around and people who help us such as policemen. Children begin to understand size and shape as they name a variety of different shapes on their peg board saying 'these are little shapes on a big board'. Staff ensure children have a good range of books available which are displayed in a variety of ways. Children handle the books correctly and they look through the books. For example, a three-year-old talks about each farm machine in the book 'this is the tractor, this is a combine harvester'. Other children sit together looking at the books sharing them together. Children freely access mark-making resources as they wish. They use their name cards to support them as they begin to try and write their names for themselves. They cut with scissors and join with glue developing their small muscle skills.

Children benefit from regular visitors into the group such as 'Zoo Lab' where they are encouraged to handle a range of mini beasts and creatures. They go out on trips to farms where they can 'pet' the animals. Activities that develop children's interest are developed in many ways. For example, children paint spiders, weave webs around them and then are encouraged to extend this activity by weaving giant webs on the upturned legs of low tables. This type of first hand experience makes learning fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are actively encouraged to gain an awareness of different cultures, lifestyles and disability. They are many posters displayed around the room which are reflective of the wider community and children play with a range of resources which reflect the multi-cultural society in which we live. Staff take care to develop their knowledge and understanding of the various festivals prior to introducing them to the children in order that they are meaningful to them, such as through art and craft activities. Procedures are in place to help staff identify, and offer appropriate support to children who may have learning difficulties or disabilities. The staff team works with outside agencies as required in order that all children can be fully integrated. Children learn about the local community as they go for walks in the local area and go on trips further afield.

Staff build children's self-esteem and confidence by rewarding positive behaviour. They respond to children's achievements so that they know they have done well. Children also support each other. For example, a young girl runs to show her friend her painting, 'it is beautiful' says her friend as she holds it up. This shows that children are beginning to show an understanding and compassion for each other. Staff have a calm and reassuring manner. Children are naturally drawn to the staff to share some news, or to just have a cuddle when they feel the need to. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff gather an appropriate amount of information from parents in order that they can provide suitable care. For example, their cultural needs, any allergies children may have and general information about their care. The group provides parents with a prospectus containing general

information about the running of the group and a full set of policies are set out for parents to read if they wish. These policies include information about how to complain if they need to. Parents feel that the staff are caring and very approachable and they are confident that their children receive a good level of support whilst at the pre-school.

The partnership with the parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents receive some information about the six areas of learning which provides a basic insight into the Foundation Stage. Planning is displayed for parents to see and any special events, such as when 'Zoo lab' was visited, are displayed so that parents know the kind of activities their children are taking part in at the pre-school. However, parents state that they do not really understand about the early learning goals and prefer to leave this area up to the staff. Parents enjoy viewing their children's record of achievements. However, as staff do not use assessments effectively to identify next steps of learning it is difficult to share this information with parents in a meaningful way. Staff are very good at using children's ideas and interests to inform the short term planning but do not have a formal procedure in place for parents to contribute to these ideas about what their children like to do or to inform them of the assessments of their children's achievements. Children benefit from seeing good relationships between staff and their parents and enjoy taking a book home each day in their folder to share at home together.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The group is overseen by a small committee of parents who are responsible for the running of the group and the appointment of suitable staff to provide the care and education for the children who attend. However, when the committee changed in 2006, they did not inform Ofsted of the new members. These members remain unknown to Ofsted and have not submitted to the required vetting procedures which ensure all adults who are responsible for the children are suitable to do so. This is a breach of regulation as it fails to protect children. The vetting procedure is not sufficiently robust to ensure that it offers equality of opportunity to all applicants and does not enable the committee to gather sufficient information to determine that the staff who are appointed are mentally and physically fit to do so. Again, this does not ensure children's safety. The documentation in place to support staff in ensuring the play space is safe for children is not effective in identifying potential risks. For example, the daily risk assessments have not highlighted the identified dangers, and more in-depth risk assessments although now in place, have yet to be completed. Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Despite the weaknesses within the organisation relating to the vetting of adults and recruitment procedures the general leadership and management within the day-to-day running of the setting is effective. The leader's main focus is to ensure that the children, parents and staff are happy. She successfully supports staff in nurturing the children. The free-flow system in place empowers the children with the ability to make choices not only regarding their chosen activities, but where and when they wish to join in. For example, in the gardens or indoors, to join in the messy play or sit and enjoy a story. This ensures the learning environment is rich. There are systems in place to monitor the standards of the care and learning, but these are not always effective in highlighting weaknesses such as the assessment and planning for children's learning.

Staff obviously enjoy the company of children and attend relevant training to ensure they are able to support the children effectively. Staff appraisals are in place and relate to the personal

development of staff as well as the overall needs of the group. The group has been in a period of transition. The supervisor is appropriately qualified, enthusiastic and keen to move the group forward. She is supported by an established staff team and a voluntary committee of parents.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the committee agreed to develop strategies which enable children to take more part in preparing resources. For example, cutting collage materials and in tidying away activities. The staff have developed many strategies which enable the children to become involved in this way. Children busy themselves with a wide range of activities where they are actively involved.

At the last nursery education inspection the committee agreed to give consideration to improving the methods of recording assessment of children's learning so that this is used effectively to plan the next steps for individual children. An action plan was put in place to address this issue but was later disregarded. The methods of planning and assessment were changed and remain a recommendation from this inspection.

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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that adults providing day care are suitable to do so. This relates to notifying Ofsted when the registered provider changes so that they can submit to a vetting procedure
- ensure that there are robust recruitment procedures in place for checking that staff are suitable to work with children and develop systems to record this information
- minimise risks to children. This relates to; ensuring that children do not have access to dangerous substances in the kitchen and the children's access to the hot radiators
- ensure that all staff are aware of the possible signs and symptoms of children at risk. This relates to the procedures for recording any existing injuries children may have.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- establish ongoing systems to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the care and education provided for the children
- ensure that assessments of children's progress are made regularly across the early learning goals, are used effectively to identify children's next steps of learning and use these to directly inform the short-term planning
- ensure that planning is effective in helping staff support activities and children's differing abilities, is clearly linked to the early learning goals and the stepping stones children take in order to achieve them and make it clear as to what the learning intentions of activities are. Use the planning to inform practice rather than as a record of what occurred in the session.

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