

The Nursery at St Pauls

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119622
Inspection date	12 February 2008
Inspector	Leoarna Mathias
Setting Address	St. Pauls Church, Dock Street, London, E1 8JN
Telephone number	020 7265 0098
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Registered person	Selective Learning (Maidstone) Ltd
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 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?

The Nursery at St Paul's opened in 2001. It operates from four classrooms on the ground and first floor of St Paul's Church. It serves the local area. There are currently 78 children on roll, of whom 16 children are in receipt of nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting has experience of supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children with English as an additional language. The group opens five days a week, 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are, from 07:00 until 19:00. 25 staff work directly with the children, of whom 17 hold a appropriate early years qualification, and a further two are working towards a qualification. In addition to this, many of the staff are working towards a higher level award. The setting receives support from the Local Authority, and is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association, whose quality assurance programme they are currently undertaking.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are developing a good sense of what it means to be healthy as a result of the variety of measures employed by the staff to promote children's health and hygiene. Children access a nutritious range of items for snacks and meals, which are all prepared on site, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Drinking water is also readily available, and staff have developed strong systems for ensuring that children with specific dietary requirements have their needs well met. All areas used for children's play and meal times are maintained hygienically, and good systems are in place in order to ensure the maintenance of these standards. Furthermore, children are asked to help maintain these standards, for example, by wearing disposable gloves when sharing out snack items. Children enjoy access to particularly pleasing sleeping areas, with each of the younger children allocated their own cot and linen; their individual sleep routines are adhered to, and the rest routines of all children are respected. Documentation systems that support the promotion of children's medical health, such as accident records, medicine administration processes, and children's registration forms, are in good order, and enable practitioners to be quickly acquainted with the particular care needs of each child.

Children's physical skills are well promoted at the setting, as they enjoy access to a strong range of activities that promote them, such as regular music and movement sessions, daily outdoor play and the opportunity to use large scale equipment, such as ball pools. Children are also learning to care for themselves, through developing an understanding of, for example, foods that are good for us. Only minor improvements to the procedures for ensuring all children wash their hands before meals are required to ensure that children have the fullest opportunities to learn how to promote their own hygiene independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's security is particularly well promoted at the nursery; access to the provision is very closely monitored, and visitors to the setting are asked to sign in promptly. Systems that ensure children are collected by appropriate adults work very well in practice. Children are cared for in a bright, pleasing spacious environment, which is maintained to a high standard in all areas. Risk assessment systems are thorough, accessible to all staff at all times, and are systematically reviewed. Similarly, procedures for ensuring children are safe on outings are suitably robust. Areas used for caring for children of all age groups benefit from being well resourced with appropriate items, including a good range of home-style toys and resources, that stimulate and support children's development. Fire equipment is regularly checked, and fire procedures are very thorough, including as they do monthly evaluated practice drills. The child protection officer for the nursery has recently completed update training, and many staff have undergone training in this area. The child protection policy is thorough, detailed and readily accessible to staff and parents, and is well implemented by the child protection officer who has a very thorough understanding of her role. As a result of these measures, children's welfare while they attend the setting is effectively promoted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive a very warm welcome on their arrival, and there is much obvious, genuine warmth and affection between children and staff. The high ratio of adults to younger children means that their individual needs are particularly well met; children have the opportunity to develop strong relationships with consistent adults who know the care needs of each of their charges in detail. Practitioners working with children under three make good use of the Birth to three matters guidance to plan and provide an interesting and stimulating range of activities for children. Children also enjoy the close support of staff throughout the day, and as such, are able to explore their surroundings and the resources on offer with confidence. Children throughout the setting are settled, self-assured and secure as a result of all these measures, as well as benefiting from the excellent settling in procedures the nursery employs for new children and their families.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children demonstrate good levels of independence in their learning; they self-select activities with confidence, supported by staff who present the choices on offer to children well. Children show enthusiasm for their learning, being, as they are, keen to join in, to talk about the activities they are participating in, and to help with group tasks, such as tidy up time, and handing out snack items. Children are proud of their achievements, and use good manners with little prompting. They are developing a genuine appreciation of friendship, demonstrating real warmth and concern for their friends, and endeavouring to help new children to settle. They take part in charitable activities, and are able to understand that they are part of a diverse community, through the celebration of a variety of cultural festivals throughout the year.

Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. Children readily use language during their play, asking questions, and negotiating with their peers. During large group times they are willing to answer questions and speak in front of the whole group. Children enjoy activities that encourage their knowledge of sounds and letters, such as finding rubber letters in the water tray and using them to spell their names, or finding words that start with the letter of the week. Children make good use of books, which they can easily access, and are well supported in this by staff. Writing and mark making materials are freely available throughout the session, and literacy and handwriting skills are further supported during other kinds of play, for example, by writing imaginary letters during a music and movement session. On occasion, particularly able children are not fully extended in this area, but when taken overall, children's communication, language and literacy skills are well supported. Children are secure in their recognition of written numerals, and are developing their counting skills. Activities that promote problem solving and understanding of shape, measure and so forth are planned and delivered, but incidental opportunities to extend children further are, at times, not used by staff. Children are growing in their understanding of the world around them through regular activities that encourage them to explore, and the children enjoy regular outings to support this area of their development. Similarly, children access regular opportunities to design and make, and staff are skilled in allowing children to express their own ideas. They also access information technology regularly. Children's understanding of place and time is supported through daily calendar, weather and season discussions and other planned activities. Children enjoy a varied range of activities designed to promote their creative skills, such as play dough, rice crispy 'sand', water and paint, and staff use good strategies at these times to encourage children to respond to these experiences. Children enjoy music making, and are familiar with a strong range of songs and action songs. Free movement between the indoor and outdoor areas at regular times during the day enable children to make good use of their imaginations,

and role play areas are well resourced to support children in this area of their development. Finally, children are encouraged through discussion to share their experiences and recollect previous activities, thus becoming active participants in reflecting on their own learning.

Staff working with three and four year old children are secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and use it to plan a purposeful and interesting range of activities. They ensure that children access a broad range of toys and resources, and organise their own deployment wisely to ensure children encounter a good level of support for their learning. While there are occasional instances of children not being challenged to their fullest extent, staff do, overall, use sensible strategies to promote children's learning. Staff also demonstrate a good understanding of how to observe and assess children's progress towards the early learning goals. They make time to regularly focus their observations on individual children, and collate this information successfully to build a clear picture of each child's achievements. Where particular learning needs for individual children are identified, these are purposefully built into future planning for the group.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from the care of staff who are consistent in promoting a strong ethos of equality of opportunity. Children are greeted in their home language upon arrival, and their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds are properly respected by the staff team. Staff demonstrate a detailed knowledge of each child's needs and preferences, as they have ensured from the earliest opportunity that they have developed a strong relationship with the child's home carers. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support for their development from practitioners who have a good understanding of the issues they face, and who work closely with outside agencies to access a wide range of supporting resources. Children behave well throughout the day, responding positively to the very strong models they encounter within the staff team. This practice is particularly well underpinned by a behaviour management policy which focuses on the individual levels of understanding, achievable by each age group. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents access pleasing and informative notice boards, and are invited to make use of the comments and suggestions box. They also access a very substantial parents handbook at the point of registration, that contains a great level of detail about the work of the nursery and its policies, and conveys the nursery's transparent and professional approach well. The nursery's commitment to parental involvement in all aspects of their child's learning in development works well in practice, and there are good procedures for enabling new children and their parents to settle, as well as to maintain a good, ongoing exchange of information. As a result of all of these measures, the nursery succeeds in supporting parents to continue their child's education in the home environment, as well as creating high levels of continuity of care between home and the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery maintains a high ratio of staff to children at all times, giving children substantial support for their care and learning. Thorough staff appointment, vetting and induction procedures are carried out in full, and appraisal systems ensure that staff performance and development is continuously monitored. Documentation is in good order, with only minor

amendments required to bring the complaints policy fully in line with the expectations of the National Standards. Policies are regularly reviewed, and all staff are involved, through team meetings, in the process of bringing policies to life within the nursery. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. Senior staff adopt a proactive attitude to change and improvement, welcoming the inspection process as part of their ongoing evaluation of practice. A strong team ethos is very much in evidence throughout the nursery, with all staff recognising how they are valued by the senior team, who observe programme delivery regularly for quality assurance. Staff are enabled to access training readily, and as a result, the team is particularly well qualified. The leadership team acknowledge that more can be done in the area of evaluating adult practice with the Foundation Stage children, in order to minimise any minor weaknesses in programme delivery, but the systems and knowledge-base that would support this task are already in place.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to display children's work at eye level, offer more effective support for the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills, and to improve the quality of space used for creative, imaginative and physical play. While there are occasional opportunities to further children's numeracy skills that are not fully taken up by staff, when taken overall, the nursery has worked hard to bring improvements to all of these areas, so that children now enjoy ample space and support for their learning and play.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints received by Ofsted that have required the provider or Ofsted to take any action 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):

- ensure support for children's hand washing prior to snack and meal times is consistent
- ensure that the role of Ofsted is accurately reflected within the complaints policy

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):

- continue to increase staff's ability to reflect upon and evaluate their own teaching practice in order to minimise minor weaknesses in the delivery of the programme

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