

# Christchurch Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique Reference Number** 131677  
**Inspection date** 12 March 2008  
**Inspector** Carol Patricia Willett

**Setting Address** Christ Church, 155 Highbury Grove, London, N5 1SA

**Telephone number** 020 7354-3117

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**Registered person** Christchurch Playgroup

**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](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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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?

Christchurch Playgroup has been open for over 20 years. It operates from the first floor hall of a church in Highbury Grove situated in the London Borough of Islington N5 and serves the local catchment area. The children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

The preschool is registered to care for 26 children from two to under five years. There are currently 23 children aged from two years six months to five years on roll. This includes 18 funded three and four-year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting can support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during term time. Sessions are from 9.15 to 13:10 and children stay for lunch. Children can opt to stay for shorter sessions until 11:15.

There are five staff who work with the children, of these four hold level 3 early years qualifications and one has a level 2 qualification. All staff have current first aid certificates. The preschool is a member of the Preschool Learning Alliance.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is satisfactorily promoted as they have access to sufficiently clean, spacious premises. Staff follow sound hygiene routines, such as using antibacterial spray to wipe the tablecloths used when children have food and they sweep up spilt food and play materials. Children are protected from the risk of infection as they learn the importance of good hygiene practices, such as washing their hands before they eat. However, the use of a communal washing bowl increases the risk of cross infection. Children develop independence in their personal care skills as staff encourage them to wash their hands when using the toilet and wipe their noses, with readily accessible tissues. Children learn about healthy eating. They enjoy healthy snacks of fruit which they help to prepare. Staff provide a good variety of cold lunches on a weekly based menu rota which the children enjoy and takes account of parents' wishes and children's likes and dietary needs. For example, lunch includes chopped vegetables with hummus and cream cheese, and pitta bread and ham or cheese sandwiches with tomatoes and cucumber followed by yoghurts and fruit. Documentation adequately details children's dietary requirements which staff follow when providing food for lunch and for cooking activities, for example, as they make Easter egg nests. However, the organisation of the lunchtime is rushed and chaotic, and does not encourage good social skills and hygiene practices. For example, when children put food onto another plate which other children eat.

Children have good opportunities to enjoy a range of physical play. They play outside daily in the enclosed area next to the church hall and visit the adjacent park, enjoying the fresh air. They enthusiastically develop physical skills as they use the large indoor climbing frame and manoeuvre pushchairs in the hall with skill to avoid other children and obstacles. They join in action songs, such as 'heads and shoulders, knees and toes' with enthusiasm, where they match words and actions to further develop their skills. They use a range of appropriate resources including rolling and cutting tools with the play-dough, scissors, paint brushes, pens and crayons, and manipulate jigsaw pieces and construction toys to develop their manipulative skills.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as all staff have appropriate first aid training. They complete suitable records for medication and when children have accidents, which parents sign to keep them informed. Some accident records do not always contain sufficient detail or maintain confidentiality.

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

The provision is good.

Children play in a large church hall that is situated on the first floor of the church premises. Staff organise the premises effectively so they provide a safe, spacious environment, which supports the children's development. Displays of children's work and educational posters make the room child friendly and welcoming. Children stay safe in the preschool as all staff are qualified, experienced and complete suitable vetting procedures. They supervise children closely at all times. They have a good understanding of the policies and procedures in place to protect children, including child protection and if a child is uncollected or lost. Security is good and staff ensure children stay safe as the door is kept locked and parents and visitors have access using a bell. Staff ensure children complete regular fire drills to develop their confidence and awareness in an emergency and regular checks take place of the fire safety equipment including

extinguishers and smoke alarms. Children are secure and safe as staff complete an annual risk assessment and check the premises daily both inside and out. They take positive measures to ensure all hazards are removed and resources are safe for use.

Children are busily occupied as they play well with a broad range of toys and resources that are in a suitable condition and age appropriate. Low level shelving enables children to have some choice as they can select other play materials and resources. The furniture, equipment and toys provided by the staff are appropriate for their purpose. The staff, committee and parents work closely together to fundraise to provide new resources and replace old and broken items to maintain children's safety and continuing interest in the resources. This ensures children have fun, play well and make good progress as staff organise the resources to create an accessible and stimulating environment.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally happy and play well in the preschool as staff are kind, caring and interested. Staff have a good knowledge of the children and their parents, and they are warmly greeted each session. This enables children to be confident and secure, and they settle quickly into the group. Children are busily occupied throughout the session as staff provide an interesting range of activities and resources to enable them to make progress in all areas of development. Staff listen well to the children and are responsive to children when they ask questions and talk about their experiences and families at group times, which encourages and develops children's communication skills. Staff provide a variety of activities covering all areas of development on a daily basis using the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework. This ensures children make suitable progress in their development.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make suitable progress in all areas of learning because staff plan and prepare activities and resources to ensure all six areas of learning are covered on a daily basis. Staff are kind and caring and form good relationships with the children. Experienced staff have a good understanding of how children learn effectively and use a good balance of self-chosen play and adult initiated activities to extend their learning. Daily plans show learning intentions of activities, which enable staff to be clear about what children are expected to achieve. Activity plans do not show how children should be grouped or how activities can be adapted for children learning at different rates in order to maximise children's learning. For example, the cooking activity is very popular so all children come at once which limits the time the member of staff can give to support children and leaves children waiting for a long time for their turn at mixing. Long term plans clearly show the links to the aspects of each area of learning, ensuring these are included sufficiently. Staff undertake observations of children's achievements. These are recorded and used to show how children are progressing through the stepping stones. However, children's achievement records are not up-to-date and staff do not use details of observation effectively to fully complete profiles so they do not have a clear picture of children's progress. Less experienced staff do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the stepping stones to maximise learning opportunities. All staff do not use effective open ended questions to further develop children's knowledge, understanding and thinking. Children are encouraged to be independent in some ways as they attend to personal hygiene and put on their coats for outside play. Staff do not make effective use of daily routines to maximise all learning opportunities for children, as staff serve their fruit and drinks for them at snack time and

children do not have the opportunity to pour their own drinks at lunch time. Some resources and activities are not prepared sufficiently well. For example, crayons are not sharpened and this leads to frustration as children can not choose the colour they want as sharpeners are not readily accessible for the children. Children enjoy imaginative play with others in the home corner and use a good range of resources, such as dressing-up clothes, dolls and other props. They do not have independent access to a wide range of recycled and joining materials and tools to further develop their creativity and develop props for role play for example.

Children are keen to learn and busily occupy themselves as staff provide a wide range of activities daily. They are happy and gain in confidence as they share toys and resources. Staff ensure children make progress in the communication and literacy skills as children have daily opportunities to make marks. Older children confidently use pencils and felt pens to draw pictures, and brushes for painting. Most children recognise their own names as they find their name labels to self register as they arrive. Some more able children like to write their names recognising familiar letters in different words. The children like to look at the books and enjoy listening and participating in story time and sitting with staff on an individual basis in the book corner. Staff provide activities to develop children's confidence in numbers and counting as they play. For example, the children count the number of giraffes and other zoo animals, identifying the different sizes. Children are enthusiastic and participate well in the cooking activity as they investigate changes as they melt chocolate to make Easter egg nests. They count out the spoonfuls of Rice Crispies and raisins as they put them into the bowl and the eggs on the nests. They take turns to mix, talking about the smell and feel of the mixture. Staff use singing opportunities to further develop children's awareness of addition and subtraction as they sing about 'five little men in a flying saucer'. Children's creativity is developed by staff as they enthusiastically join in with the music sessions, ringing, shaking and banging the instruments. They develop a sense of rhythm as they clap in time to the music. They enjoy singing, matching words and actions. The children join in with enthusiasm as they sing quietly and they giggle as they sing loud or fast. Some are confident enough to sing nursery rhymes on their own in front of the group. Staff provide plenty of opportunities for children to count, compare and look at different shapes throughout the session. The children enjoy card games where they match objects, and learn rules and taking turns. Children use their imagination while playing together in the home corner role-play area, having conversations on the phone with their friends and family and the doctor. They play well in small friendship groups sharing the resources as they play with the pirate ships and castle, and the dolls and buggies. Children display good levels of self-esteem and respond well to praise given by the staff. Staff enable children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world as the children confidently recall past events, such as their holidays, and learn about their community through visitors to the nursery and celebrating festivals, such as Diwali and Easter. The staff and children send postcards from their holidays and pin them onto a world map. Children enjoy playing outside and developing their physical skills. They independently put on their coats and line up sensibly to go out. They have good opportunities to reinforce and develop their skills using a range of equipment. They use the large climbing frame indoors with skill and agility as they hang upside down from the bar and carefully climb the steps and use the slide to come down. They climb through the frame to make dens for their imaginative play. Children's fine motor skills are also developing well as they competently use a range of tools which require hand-eye coordination, such as stencils, glue spreaders and musical instruments.

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

The provision is good.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit because parents and carers are encouraged to play an active role within the preschool. They can join the committee and thus share in the running of the group. Parents receive good information about the preschool and its curriculum. Newsletters and notice boards keep parents well informed of planning so they have information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the early learning goals. There are both informal and formal systems for ensuring they are well informed about their children's progress and achievements. Staff spend time talking to parents daily and they send children's reports home each term. Parents are encouraged to add their comments to these. This ensures that staff and parents work together to support children's learning.

Children settle well, grow in confidence, and develop a sense of belonging and a clear sense of self as they and their parents develop good relationships with the friendly, caring staff team. The children are warmly greeted on arrival. Most happily leave their parents and carers seeking out their friends and settle quickly into activities that interest them. Staff value the children as individuals and have a good knowledge of their needs through daily discussions with parents and each other, and observations of the children.

Children mostly behave well, are cooperative and respond well to gentle effective reminders from staff. They respond well to the routine of the preschool. They understand and respond to simple rules, such as putting on aprons for water play and help to pack up before snack and lunch. Children learn right from wrong as staff act as good role models, using praise and encouragement and say please and thank you to the children. Children become aware of acceptable behaviour, such as putting up their hands if they want to speak at group times and listening to the other children when they are talking as staff give good support. Children's behaviour at lunch time deteriorates as the staff are busy getting the lunch and packing away the toys so are not there to support the children effectively.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children form friendships and learn to share, respect others, and become aware of cultural events, such as Chinese New year, Easter, Diwali and Christmas. Resources reflect positive images of society and all children irrespective of gender can use the toys and equipment. Boys and girls play together with the dolls and pushchairs. Visitors are invited into the group who share their roles with the children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children settle well, make satisfactory progress to the early learning goals and are happy within the preschool. Staff are caring and attentive, and all hold suitable childcare qualifications. They work well as a team supporting all children in an appropriate manner according to their needs as they maintain ratios. They are supported by a small committee of parents and representatives from the church committee, including the vicar, who have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Children make choices and initiate their own play as they move around freely and safely as staff organise the space and resources well. Staff select a wide range of resources to ensure that children are busily occupied throughout the session. All legally required documentation and a wide range of relevant policies and procedures are in place which contributes to children's health, safety and wellbeing.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and they plan and provide a suitable range of activities to ensure children make progress to the early learning goals. However, there are no formal systems in place to monitor or evaluate aspects of the provision. This results in some records not sufficiently well maintained so children's progress is not effectively planned for. Staff training is encouraged and opportunities are given for all staff to undertake courses and workshops. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

At the last inspection the preschool were required to ensure information on children's registration forms is recorded in a consistent way and there are appropriate arrangements for changing children. The preschool have made good improvement as registration forms have been reviewed and contain suitable and sufficient information which is recorded in a consistent way. There are suitable procedures in place as staff provide a changing mat, wipes and gloves for changing the children. These measures ensure children's welfare is promoted.

The education inspection required the preschool to improve the organisation of the writing area and draw children's attention more to the sounds and shapes of letters and whole words. They were also required to adopt a manageable system of assessment and record keeping, which is clearly linked to the early learning goals and can be shared with parents and carers, and use the information when planning to ensure that more mature children are challenged. The preschool has made good progress as they have provided a writing table and display a poster with the alphabet. They use a phonics scheme to develop children's knowledge of letter sounds. Children recognise the letters in their name and staff display their art work linked to the letter sound and whole word activities for example, d for dog. This enables children to begin to know simple words, letters and sounds. Record keeping systems have been developed and children's progress is linked to the local authority profiles which links to the Foundation Stage stepping stones. Staff use these to plan for children's development. Termly reports are produced for parents showing children's achievements. These measures enable children to make suitable progress to the Early Learning Goals.

### **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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

## 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 hygiene procedures around hand washing to reduce the risk of cross infection
- review and improve the organisation of lunch time to develop children's social and independence skills

### **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):

- develop knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum for all staff and develop staff's teaching skills in order to develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills through effective questioning techniques
- provide a wide range of craft and recycled materials to enable children to freely create from their own imaginations and so they can develop props to support and develop their role play
- review and improve activity planning to ensure it identifies group sizes and how activities can be adapted for children learning at different rates
- ensure observations of children are used effectively to inform children's achievement records so they can be used to plan for children's next steps in learning; develop staff's understanding of the links between planning, observation and children's achievements.

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)