

St Nicolas Pre-School and Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	153062
Inspection date	18 January 2008
Inspector	Sheila Collins
Setting Address	St. Nicolas C of E Primary School, Boxhill Walk, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1HB
Telephone number	01235 536061
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Registered person	The Trustees of St Nicolas 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Nicolas Pre-School and Playgroup opened in 1982. It operates from a purpose built building within the grounds of St Nicolas School and has its own secure enclosed outdoor play area. The group is registered to provide sessional care, with sessions running from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.20 to 14.50. It is open Monday to Friday during school terms only.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the group at any one time. There are currently 48 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 45 children receive funding for early education. The group currently supports children with learning difficulties and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The group is run by a parent committee who employ eight members of staff. Of these staff seven hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are becoming independent in their self-care skills. They learn good hygiene practices and clearly understand why they have to wash their hands after using the toilet, after messy play and before eating. They know the importance of being healthy and are aware that germs can make them unwell. Older children go to the toilet unaided and confidently wash their hands. Staff are aware of and provide support and assistance to younger children who are building on these skills. The children have visual reminders in the bathroom area and respond well to verbal reminders from the staff. Children know where tissues are kept and access these, making sure that they take one at a time and disposing of these when they finish appropriately in the bin.

The staff know children's individual dietary and medical needs. Staff hold first aid qualifications which means that any minor accidents are dealt with appropriately. There are good procedures in place for recording accidents, which parents countersign and have copy of. This ensures they are fully aware of accidents that have happened to their child. The accident records are comprehensive. However, the format used refers to childminders not staff. Accidents, such as biting are recorded but there is no record kept in the incident book of the child who has carried out the deed. Medication records are used appropriately and there is a clear procedure to follow if a child becomes unwell.

Snack times are sociable occasions with staff encouraging the children's independence skills as they pour their own drinks and select what they would like to eat. The children sit in small groups at a table with an adult. However, the length of time some children have to wait before an adult is able to sit with them leads to problems with children balancing their plates on their heads, swapping bowls for plates and knocking plates on the floor. The children are aware of the importance of healthy eating and enjoy healthy snacks. These include fruit, vegetables, crackers and cheese which the children select for themselves. The children have access to drinks of water throughout the sessions which they pour themselves.

The children enjoy a good range of activities to develop their physical skills and contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They have daily opportunities to go outside and use a range of equipment. They are developing their confidence and competency when using items, such as cars and balls, climbing in the castle and digging in the sand. The staff also provide children with physical challenges indoors, for example, exercising to the Sticky Kids tape.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The children play in a safe and secure environment because staff are vigilant and ensure that access doors are locked at all times. Staff carry out visual risk assessments daily. Written risk assessments are completed and annual checks, such as the testing of electrical equipment are carried out. There is an excellent procedure for ensuring that the children are logged in. Each child self registers and an adult also marks them in in the register. Regular head counts are conducted and children who leave early and any visitors are recorded. Written procedures are in place to inform staff of their responsibilities in the event of a fire. Evacuation drills are practised on a regular basis, which ensures the children are aware of what to do in an emergency. The children are able to describe what happens when the staff blow the whistle for the practise.

Children are developing an awareness of how to keep themselves safe as they are aware of the rules in place, for example, to push chairs under the table so they don't fall over them and to walk indoors. Outside they know the boundaries and systems in place for their safety, for example maintaining a one way system when using the cars.

The environment is welcoming for the children with posters and displays of children's work brightening up the walls. The layout of the room has been extremely well thought out to give the children maximum access to different areas, such as the book corner, home corner and art areas. The book corner is particularly attractive and attracts the children not only to read books but to have fun play. The children have access to a very good range of age appropriate resources. Staff prepare the room prior to the arrival of the children and the children choose initially from the resources laid out. Familiar items are out daily, for example, sand, water, a craft activity, the home and book corners which give the children a sense of security. The children have opportunities to select resources for themselves, for example, from the low level shelving in the main play area.

All staff have a basic knowledge of child protection issues and procedures. They are clear on their role in protecting the children including recording of concerns and sharing with the supervisor. The supervisor knows the routes of referral which further safeguards the children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children are happy and settled within pre-school. They come in confidently and exchange greetings with staff. The children are very comfortable within their environment and receive a very good level of support from the staff. They make friends with their peers and have excellent relationships with the staff, involving them in their play. Staff provide children with a comprehensive curriculum with both planned and free play activities.

There is a broad range of stimulating activities available each day for the children to choose from both indoors and in the outdoor environment. The children confidently decide what to do from the range of play opportunities on offer and are busy throughout the sessions. Staff do not pressurise them into taking part in an activity, the only expectation is that they will come together at group times, snack time and the adult lead physical activity. Children happily comply. The children understand the routines of the session, which helps them feel secure because they know what to do and when to do it.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. The children are confident in their surroundings. They select the toys and resources they wish to use from the variety available, which are set out each day. They have opportunities to choose activities for themselves. Staff accommodate the children's requests for items which are not easily reached or are stored in the walk in cupboard. The children take responsibility for their own work and belongings and put their work in their designated labelled trays. They are encouraged to fetch their own coats and to put these on when going outside with staff available to support if needed.

The children understand the rules of the group and remind each other of these, for example, responding appropriately when a staff member puts on the quiet hat. They receive praise and encouragement from the staff for their efforts and achievements, which builds their self-esteem

and confidence. They sit and listen well at group times and respond confidently to their names. They concentrate well and become involved in the well-planned activities.

The children are confident and engage easily in conversations with each other, staff and visitors. They enjoy listening to very well told stories and selecting and joining in with rhymes. They share books with each other, turn the pages carefully and show each other the pictures, as the adults do. The book corner is an inviting area which is well used by the children not only for reading but also for fun play, for example, with the alphabet shapes. The children have daily opportunities to practise their writing skills and can access resources, such as paper and pens for themselves. They are encouraged to write their names on their work and practise their emergent writing and letter formation with adults. They are beginning to learn about phonics and many children are very confident when sounding out letters and recognising letters in their name. They have good opportunities to see their names in print as they self register, find their places at snack time and play the name game.

Children count easily up to 10, and several count beyond this. They have good opportunities to predict, count and compare, for example, how many children are in today and whether there are more boys than girls.

They are confident in their use of simple calculations, for example, when deciding how many finger puppets are remaining at rhyme time. They use mathematical language in their play, such as under, over, front and back, full and empty. They have opportunities for simple recording during craft activities and when they measure themselves each term. They have good knowledge of different shapes and easily identify basic shapes and some children are aware of three dimensional shapes, for example, cubes of cheese when discussing snack.

Children are learning about their own and other cultures through planned activities, such as celebrating Succot, the Chinese New year and Christmas. They are learning about their environment and the world around us through varied topics, such as the life cycle of the frog and caterpillars to butterflies. The children are keen to discuss and investigate and are given excellent opportunities to do this. One child wipes the slide and found ice on the towel which a staff member helps him to put in a container and this initiates an impromptu discussion about ice and taking it inside to watch it thaw out. The child shares his observations with others and the whole group at circle time. The children are becoming competent in their use of technology and have opportunities to use a range of programmable items, such as the computer, telephones, calculators and battery operated toys. The children have very good opportunities to make and build using a variety of mediums and are very proud of the structures they have built in the sand and the dinosaur country they have created.

The children evidently enjoy role-play, for example, dressing up, playing in the home corner and interacting in the garage workshop outside. They bring their own experiences into their play, for example, washing the cars filling up with petrol in the outside play area and cooking and making breakfast in the home corner. They are good at using objects as others things, for example, play food as ice creams. They enjoy playing with the puppets and the puppet theatre, putting on plays for their friends. They are given opportunities for creativity daily and enjoy a wide range of media, such as sand, water and paint. They enjoy using a variety of objects to paint with and listen intently as the staff member describes the feathers they are using as quills and tells them about how they were used as pens in olden days. They create complex models, for example, the model of the dinosaur country which they paint for use later. They enjoy musical sessions outside and learn to follow the conductors instructions to start and stop and after practice, they play familiar tunes rhythmically.

Children enjoy and participate in a very good range of physical activities to assist them in developing their large and small motor skills. They ride in the cars confidently. They enjoy taking part in group activities, such as exercising to the Sticky Kids tapes. They use a range of small equipment, such as scissors, pencils and glue spreaders with dexterity and increasing control.

The staff are well motivated and enthusiastic, which in turn motivates the children. They are aware of how children learn and progress. They have excellent knowledge of each individual child's needs and deploy themselves around the room to support the children, encouraging their play and joining in by invitation. The staff demonstrate a very sound knowledge of the early learning goals and plan an interesting and varied curriculum for the children. They have excellent knowledge of how an activity can be adapted to suit children of different ages who learn at different rates. The planning covers all areas of learning and staff use evaluations to see if the objectives are met. The plans promote the children's progress towards the early learning goals and the inclusion of all children. The staff monitor the children's learning through observations, which they transfer to individual development records. The staff observe the children in both individual and group situations and use these to help with future planning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and value them as individuals. The children have good opportunities to learn about other cultures and have access to a range of resources and activities which reflect the society we live in, for example, small world figures, books, dolls and posters.

The children have a positive attitude towards each other and are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. They share, take turns and co-operate with each other. Children with learning difficulties/disabilities are included by other children in their play and supported well by staff who ensure that support is provided sensitively and discreetly.

Staff working with the children use praise and encouragement of their efforts and achievements which builds on their self confidence and self esteem. Children generally behave well. Most staff are consistent in their management of children's behaviour. However, not all give explanations to children as to why they should not do something. Staff are not always aware of any possible minor problems as they are all busy with the children throughout the session and are unaware of what is happening in adjacent areas of the room, for example, at snack time and in the home corner. Children join in, take responsibility and play a productive part in the pre-school. They help to tidy up and have the opportunity to set out the snack places for the other children.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. The staff know the children well and have very good relationships with the children and their parents. They exchange information daily about the children and their achievements and work together to resolve any problems. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their child's learning and to discuss with staff their child's day when they collect them. At the end of the session, staff put a board outside the door with a résumé of activities which have taken place and suggestions for parents to ask their children about. Parents receive an informative prospectus about the pre-school and information of the curriculum offered, the early learning goals and the Foundation Stage. Information is available

within the area where parents wait with the children and they have access to the plans on the notice board and can discuss aspects of the curriculum with the staff.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide. The recruitment procedure is effective and all staff are cleared to work with the children, so safeguarding their welfare. The staff make very effective use of the available space within the playroom to provide children with an excellent range of play opportunities.

All the required documentation is in place to promote the health and welfare of the children. An effective operational plan is in place and there are comprehensive policies and procedures covering all aspects of the provision. These are regularly reviewed when new notifications and advice are received. The registration certificate is clearly displayed so parents are aware of the conditions of operation.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The staff work well as a team and have good knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. The supervisor and the staff are committed to providing good quality care and education for all children and work together to ensure that their practice enables each child to get the most out of their time at the pre-school. The supervisor is aware of a slightly weaker area of practice in the pre-school and is working with the staff to improve this. Action plans, which were drawn up after the previous inspections have been successfully acted upon. In addition the pre-school has set its own action plan with realistic targets.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last education inspection there were no significant weaknesses to report but consideration should be given to the collection arrangements, to enable parents and carers to share in children's learning on a daily basis and read the notice board at leisure. The pre-school have put this suggestion into place by opening the outer doors before time so that parents can come into the cloakroom to read the planning and other notices displayed. Parents are encouraged to discuss with staff their child's day when they collect them and are given comprehensive information when they attend for an induction meeting. At the end of the session, staff put a board outside the door with a résumé of activities which have taken place and suggestions for parents to ask their children about.

At the last care inspection, there were two recommendations made. One was to ensure policies and procedures contain sufficient detail, records are accurate and inaccuracies are removed regarding reference to outdated terminology and practice. The second recommendation was to promote good health more effectively by ensuring the contents of the first aid box are checked regularly and kept up to date, and the hand washing routine at snack time is reviewed to enable children to wash hands immediately prior to eating.

The pre-school have put these recommendations into place and have reviewed policies and procedures and documentation to ensure that everything is up to date and accurate. The exception being the accident record forms which are comprehensive but refer to childminders rather than staff. The first aid box/cabinet is checked regularly and there are good arrangements in place to ensure that the children wash their hands prior to having their snack.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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):

- review the arrangements in place for snack time.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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