

St Catherine's Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY241016
Inspection date	11 October 2007
Inspector	Mary Daniel
Setting Address	St Catherine's School, Pymore Road, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 3TR
Telephone number	01308 425870 or 07790 972280
E-mail	
Registered person	St Catherine's 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 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 Catherine's Pre-school has been registered since September 2002. It operates from a pavilion within the school grounds of St Catherine's Primary School, which is situated in the town of Bridport. Children have use of a main play room and toilet facilities. There is an enclosed garden area at the back of the pavilion, and the group is also able to use the school hall and outdoor facilities for physical play activities.

This parent committee run pre-school is registered to care for a maximum of 12 children aged two to under eight years, and there are currently 25 on roll. The group are in receipt of Government funding to provide nursery education and there are currently 22 funded children on register. The opening hours are Monday to Friday, 08:45 - 11:45, with a lunch club session from 11:45 - 12:30, and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays an afternoon session is offered from 12:30 - 15:00, term time only.

The committee employ a pre-school leader, who has a foundation degree in early years education, and three staff, of whom the majority have completed relevant child care training. The group

also employ an administrator. They maintain close links with St Catherine's Primary School, and receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are very well encouraged in developing an awareness of healthy living. For example, they learn about foods that are nutritious and healthy as they taste fruits, such as mangoes, bananas, tomato, kiwi, apple and orange for their snacks. Children enjoy making sandwiches, and grate cheese, peel boiled eggs and chop some cucumber to put in their wraps. They grow their own raspberries, potatoes, pumpkins and carrots in the garden area and help to harvest these. They are eager to try the different foods and consequently start to develop a clear understanding of healthy eating. A tray with a water jug and cups are available during the session for children to help themselves to a drink. This helps to encourage children in having regular fluids and they know to ask for a drink when they get hot and thirsty from playing outside.

Children get great pleasure from exploring the pre-school garden. They climb up the ladder to play in the Wendy house or have lots of fun pouring water down some gutter pipes and then splashing in the resulting puddles. They willingly water the plants they help to grow and are happy to sit quietly under the willow shelter listening to the tinkling wind mobiles hung inside. This provides children with good opportunities to frequently play outside and benefit from fresh air activities. Children are well supported in developing their large muscle skills as they climb, scramble, swing and slide across the school climbing equipment. They stretch and balance on the pre-school climbing wall and excitedly run around the playground waving their ribbon sticks. They take large and tiny steps to walk around in a circle and then jump across the school hall. They talk about how they feel and say they have a 'bumpy heart' after exercising. This effectively helps children to use up their energy while having fun and to start learning about how their bodies feel after exercise.

Children are very well supported in learning suitable hygiene routines. For example, they know to wash their 'painty' hands after messy play, and also before eating their meals. They learn about keeping their hands clean as they put them into the 'Ultra violet' box and see the 'pretend germs' and then look again after washing to see if they have all disappeared. They use liquid soap and paper towels, which help to prevent the spread of infection. Tables are wiped after activities and toys used each day are wiped clean, which minimises the risk of cross contamination. Clear written procedures are in place, which help maintain continuity in care for children's health. For instance, accidents are clearly detailed and parents sign to acknowledge any entries. Relevant health policies are in place and updated and overall, effectively support the provision offered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a bright, attractive room, which is well laid out to create an inviting play environment. Children's paintings and colourful posters are displayed around the room and they find their named coat hook in the entrance hall. Toilets are easily accessible, which encourages children's independence in their personal care. The garden area has been carefully designed to provide children with a variety of play and learning experiences. For example, a

small covered pond provides a home for frogs and insects, which children observe with interest. Raised beds enable them to easily dig and sow their flower and vegetable seeds. This encourage their curiosity in finding out about their natural world. Suitable equipment is provided to meet children's physical needs. For instance, they 'cook' their meals on a small wooden cooker in the home corner, and sit on a colourful child sized sofa to look through a book. Children use small jugs to pour out their milk or water, and have china cups and plates, from which they drink and eat. They use easy to handle watering cans and spades in the garden. This supports them in developing independence in their daily routines and play. Toys and resources show as clean and are well maintained through regular checks.

Children's safety is promoted effectively through the clear risk assessment systems in place. For example, daily checks on the heaters, ramp, toilets and fridge temperature are completed and recorded. Checks are made on any venues for outings, which helps to minimise accidents, although some activities, such as those involving use of specific equipment, are not formally assessed. Staff are observant of children's security and stay by the door at arrival and collection time. This supports children's well-being, although the management of some registration requirements impacts on aspects of their safety. Children are well supported in their own understanding of safety issues, for instance, they know they should sit with their bottom on their chair to keep from falling off. They learn to take risks safely as they pull themselves up the climbing wall and a member of staff asks them where it is best to take their next step. This helps children to learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Children's welfare is well monitored through the detailed systems in place for managing any child protection issues. A clear policy is in place and local safeguarding information is available. Staff have attended relevant training and follow appropriate procedures to protect children, such as the noting of any incidents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the pre-school happily and go readily to play. They respond easily to staff, who get to know the children's needs well and provide a caring, reassuring manner. Staff get down to the children's level and involve them in daily decisions, such as for physical play, when they are asked if they want to play a 'Please Mr Fisherman' game, or take the ribbon sticks out to wave on the playground. This approach helps children to feel safe and comfortable within the setting, knowing their ideas are valued. Children have great fun dressing up, for instance, as a builder, princess or dinosaur. Dressing up clothes are easy too use, which encourages children to use them in their play. Children choose from a wide range of stimulating toys and resources, which are effectively stored to allow easy accessibility. For example, additional water and sand toys, such as funnels and sieves, are kept in a small rack near to the activities. Children show great curiosity as they examine a variety of watches, kaleidoscopes, glasses and spinners, which are stored in a series of small drawers at their eye level. Drawers and storage areas are clearly labelled with words and pictures of the toys and games inside. This supports children very well in extending their ideas and making their own choices in play. Overall, a good balance of quiet and active times are offered during each session, which provide children with an interesting variety of play experiences and they enjoy their time at the pre-school.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are experienced and committed to helping children learn through their play. They support children very well in their activities through

careful guidance and suggestion. They make frequent observations on children's development and identify their individual interests. This information is used to plan meaningful play experiences, which children enjoy, and which support their development in all areas of their learning. Consequently, activities are planned, which are led by children's interests and overall, contribute effectively to them taking their next steps in their learning.

Children show great curiosity as they examine the wildlife they find in a tray of compost, and see how the pre-school giant land snails move slowly across the table. They follow the life cycle of a tadpole and watch their frogs in the garden pond. Children notice change as they plant seeds, which grow into flowers they can smell, and vegetables they can eat. They look on with interest as a member of staff picks up a spider in the garden and know this creature lives in a cobweb. As a result, children develop a good understanding of their natural world. Children are keen to look through a favourite book and most handle these with care. They talk about the pictures they see and some can recall parts of a story. For example, as they make a hill out of clay and talk about 'Mr Gumpy's' car getting stuck in the mud. This effectively encourages their imagination, creativity and use of language. Children start to recognise familiar words around the play areas, and as they find their name cards for register time or when going outside. They use a variety of creative mediums to mark make, such as paint, felt pens, crayons and chalks. Some children create recognisable shapes and letters and have fun 'writing' their friends' orders down in the home corner 'café'. This helps children to understand words have meaning and they enjoy recording their 'marks', although this is not always promoted within some everyday routines. Children show an interest in how musical instruments sound as they bang on the drum, shake the tambourine and tap a chime bar. They sing their favourite nursery rhymes together and respond to sounds with body movements as they dance around to music. This supports children's creativity and expression.

Most children use language very well to express their ideas and thoughts. For instance, in show and tell time, when they tell their friends about their toys and objects brought from home. Children mix well with their peers and play happily together. They dress up as builders and set to work with their toy tools, fixing the home corner together. This encourages their early relationships and social skills. Children investigate construction materials as they make their 'three little pigs houses' using straw and wood. They use plastic pots, selotape, scissors, rice and ribbons to make their 'musical' shakers. They make lavender bags using a sewing machine and lavender they cut from the pre-school garden. This helps children in learning how to design and use tools for a purpose. Staff enhance activities by providing 'real life' tools and materials. For example, children make their 'farms' on a piece of real grass. This supports children's imagination in play very well. Children engage confidently in activities that require hand eye co-ordination as they paint, pour their own drinks or use needle and thread to sew their 'hobby horse'. This helps them develop their fine motor skills, which encourages their control in use of early mark making tools. Children learn how to operate simple equipment as they use the battery operated 'drills' and 'chain saw' in the garden to 'fix' the walls or 'cut' a tree. They use calculators, a keyboard, stapler and 'mobile phone' in their office play and take turns to use the laptop. As a result, they start to grasp the early concepts of simple technology.

Children willingly attempt to count, with some clearly managing the correct order. For example, as they count how many friends are present at circle time. Some children are starting to use their fingers to represent numbers, and they find the correct number card showing how many are at pre-school that day. This encourages their recognition of the written number shape, although numbers are not clearly reflected in all play areas, such as in the pre-school garden. Children are encouraged in solving problems through staff use of effective questioning. This helps children to think for themselves, although use of some everyday routines are not maximised

to support them in starting to do this independently. At times, this impacts on the challenges given to children. Children begin to differentiate between colours as they 'tie dye' material using marbles and string and see the resulting patterns. They enjoy exploring different textures, such as cornflour, clay, gingerbread dough, rice and pasta. They experiment with herbs and flavourings as they add these to their play dough mixture. This gives children variety in their play experiences and encourages them in using their senses. Children meet the dentist and policemen when they visit their pre-school. They sometimes go for a walk to the local library or to visit a friend's goats and dogs. This helps them start to develop a sense of their community and become familiar with their surroundings. Children have great fun on their 'camping day'. They snuggle to sleep in sleeping bags and help to put up tents by banging in the tent pegs. They cook some baked beans and toast some marshmallow over the embers of the fire. This gives children the chance to experience different ways of living. Children enjoy the activities provided. These are based on their interests and help to consolidate their existing skills. However, planning does not always fully incorporate or give clear focus to some everyday routine activities, such as snack time. Children are confident at their pre-school. They are keen to join in activities and contribute their ideas. Consequently, they are making good progress across the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are very much valued and welcomed at the pre-school. On arrival, they find their name cards and join their friends in the register circle. This helps them develop a sense of belonging within the group. Their individual needs are clearly recognised and respected. Parents complete a detailed registration form and note their child's requirements. This supports staff in getting to know children well, and helping them settle easily. Suitable procedures are followed to help any child with additional needs and staff maintain regular liaison with relevant professionals involved in each child's care. This helps in providing consistency and effectively supports children's specific needs within the group. Children naturally use good manners, for example, as they ask a friend 'Can you get me a chair please?', or as they say 'Thank you' when they are given a drink. Staff interact calmly and gently with children and provide positive role models. They create a comfortable atmosphere, where each child is included and acknowledged. They carefully reinforce the group 'rules' of 'being safe, kind and friendly, and taking care with toys', with the children. Staff use positive language and clear explanations, which clearly supports children in learning how to resolve conflict themselves. As a result, children start to develop their own sense of discipline and promote sharing and taking turns within their peers.

Children sample different breads from around the world, such as pitta, tortilla and matzo bread. They play with toys and resources, reflecting different cultures. This helps their understanding of other ways of living, although images of some aspects of diversity within the group, are less prominent. Children are very well encouraged in being caring and kind. They talk about being friends and join in celebrating birthdays and festivals, such as Easter. They visit the adjoining primary school to see their nativity play and learn about other cultures as they hear the story of the Jewish Passover. Children learn about re-cycling as they take their pictures and artwork home in re-usable bags. They help to look after 'Larry the Lemur', and take him home to share in their family activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parental involvement is promoted exceptionally well. For example, parents receive a comprehensive welcome pack as their child registers with the pre-school. This contains clear details on how the pre-school operates, group policies and procedures, including management of any complaints, and further child care

information, such as related websites. Very clear information on the Foundation Stage curriculum and records that are kept on children's development are included. Parents are invited to 'workshops' where information on topics, such as children's 'early writing skills' or 'observation and assessments', is given. This supports parents in finding out what is offered to their child at pre-school. Opportunities are provided every half term for parents to meet with staff and discuss their child's development and daily liaison is maintained on children's arrival and collection. Consequently, parents are very effectively supported in sharing in their child's developmental progress. Children benefit from the excellent relationships staff form with their parents. Frequent newsletters are sent to parents, keeping them well informed of ongoing events and changes within the group. Staff liaise with parents about activities they plan, for example, in providing suitable clothing so children can go outside in all weathers. Registration certificates, minutes of meetings, child care information notices and booklets are available in the entrance area. Parents are provided with questionnaires to gain their views on the provision offered to their child and staff are always willing to discuss any issues arising. As a result, open and honest communication is very effectively encouraged. Children bring home their 'Rhyme time' bags, which contain familiar nursery rhymes and songs to share with their families. They also provide their parents with their own personal scrapbook containing lots of exciting paintings, drawings, photos and special objects they have found or made. This helps to provide parents with extremely good opportunities to become involved in their child's care and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Clear staff recruitment procedures are in place, with relevant checks and references completed. Detailed job descriptions for the different staff roles are formed and appropriate induction systems followed. A clearly laid out operational plan is in place with suitable policies and procedures formed and these are regularly reviewed. This supports the well organised provision that is offered. However, the group have not kept Ofsted clearly informed of recent changes in their opening hours to provide a lunch club and afternoon sessions, which is a breach of their registration regulations. This impacts on aspects of children's safety. Children's records and necessary paperwork are well organised. For example, their attendance is recorded and accidents are clearly detailed on separate forms. Children have individual assessment folders. Their records are stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet and access is monitored. This gives clear regard to confidentiality in use of personal documentation.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are committed and experienced. They work very well together as a team and provide a consistently positive approach to helping children learn through their play. The pre-school have a strong parent committee, who meet regularly and give clear support to staff in their roles. Staff appraisals are completed to help identify developmental training needs, and staff are encouraged to continue to attend a variety of child care related courses. For instance, they complete training to find out how they can work towards implementing the new Early Years Foundation Stage. This has led to a change in the planning of activities, which is currently being established. This demonstrates how willing the group is in accepting positive changes to support children's care and learning. Clear action plans are formed to help address issues identified for improvement, and staff use evaluation forms to monitor the overall general practice offered. This helps in the ongoing reviewing of the provision, but has not fully identified the potential for further challenges in some areas of children's play. Good liaison is maintained with the primary school and children make regular visits during the

year. For example, to use the information, communication, technology (ICT) suite helped by some of the school children. This supports them in a smooth transition for their reception year.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was set to ensure confidentiality of children's developmental records was maintained, and a point for consideration was made for the nursery education provision, to increase the challenges for children to use large scale equipment. The pre-school have implemented an alternative system for discussing children's progress with parents and now use individual transitional summary sheets. This means confidentiality in use of children's developmental records is effectively maintained. The pre-school obtained a grant to develop the garden area and have included a climbing wall. They also make use of the school hall, where children can climb on the apparatus and use the benches in physical play activities. Children are also able to use the school outdoor climbing equipment and slide. This means they now have more opportunities to use large scale equipment, which helps to promote their gross motor development.

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 any complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain some 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 good.

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):

- extend the risk assessment systems to cover planned activities, which involve children using specific equipment, such as a sewing machine
- ensure Ofsted is kept fully informed of all significant events and changes within the pre-school

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):

- make more use of everyday routine activities to provide further challenges for children, such as to start to independently solve simple practical problems in their play.

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