

Sandcastles Preschool Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY246058

Inspection date 05 March 2008

Inspector Jan Healy

Setting Address Connor Downs Sunday School, Turnpike Road, Connor Downs, Hayle,
Cornwall, TR27 5DT

Telephone number 07976 315692

E-mail

Registered person Sandcastles Preschool 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.

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?

Sandcastles Pre-School opened in 2002. It operates from the church hall in the village of Connor Downs, near Hayle, Cornwall. They have use of a large hall, kitchen and toilet facilities. The pre-school serves the local and surrounding areas.

There are currently 20 children aged from two to five years on roll. This includes 13 children who receive funding for nursery education. The children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 to 11:30.

There are four members of staff who work directly with the children, three of whom hold an early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The staff help the children to remain healthy and free from illness, as they teach them the importance of washing their hands when appropriate and to keep their teeth clean through regular brushing. The children learn to make use of paper tissues for the blowing of their nose, which they discard after a single use. All accidents are recorded and are shared with the parents, so they are aware of any injury to their child. The staff hold a current first aid certificate and replenish items in the first aid box. Good hygiene arrangements are in place during baking and cooking activities and the staff monitor and review food handling procedures. Suitable nappy changing routines are in place, to help prevent the spread of cross-infection, with the staff wearing protective clothing. Sick children are not permitted into the setting, to protect the good health of the other children in the group. The parents are requested their written permission for the seeking of emergency medical treatment or advice, to prevent the delay in the children from receiving appropriate care. The staff establish a cleaning routine, which does not interrupt the children's play, as such chores take place during their absence.

The children enjoy a healthy and nutritious mid-morning snack. They sit together café style and chat to their friends about the activities they are participating in, making for a sociable occasion. The staff take this opportunity to extend the children's knowledge of table manners and to teach them about healthy living. Baking activities take place and the children help to prepare, for example, sandwiches for snack. The children learn about the importance particular foods have on their bodies, and they learn the effects unhealthy foods have on their teeth. Fresh drinking water is readily available, which the children help themselves to, contributing in furthering their independence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children and parents are warmly greeted upon arrival, with the children leaving their carer with confidence. The children have access to a bright and airy playroom, where the children's artwork is mounted on the walls, making for a child friendly environment. The room is prepared for the children's arrival, with the staff setting up of a home corner, mark making area and floor games. The premises are clean and reasonably well maintained, with the pre-school sharing the setting with other groups. The staff ensure the temperature remains comfortable, so the children play and learn in contentment. The staff make the best use of space, dividing the room into areas, so all the children are safely supervised at all times. The outdoor area, however, requires attention, as currently it does not attract the children's attention.

The children have the advantage of accessing child sized tables and chairs, so they are able to reach the resources with ease and comfort. The furniture and equipment are checked for any safety hazards before the children's use, to prevent accidents. Resources create a stimulating environment, as thought is given to the appropriateness of such items, for instance, giving consideration to the age and to the stage of development the children have reached. There are a wide range of toys, which are stored at the children's level, contributing to their independence, as they self-select items of their choice.

The staff take positive steps to ensure the children remain safe at all times. They conduct a risk assessment to minimise potential hazards, for example, when stacking chairs and tables

and when storing objects that are dangerous or hazardous. The premises are secure with the locking of doors and there is an effective system in place for the arrival and departure of children. Close supervision is given to the children when they are taking part in water activities, with the water tray being drained swiftly after use.

The staff have strong knowledge and understanding with regards to child protection. They attend training courses, to keep themselves up to date about changing legislation and about the procedure to follow in the event of noticing a concern. They are fully aware of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and build positive relationships with the parents, so they feel confident to approach the staff, when they are experiencing difficulty. This may lead to a problem being resolved before escalating.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff are knowledgeable about the stage of development the children have reached, therefore, they are able to provide suitable and challenging play opportunities. The children take part in a broad range of activities, including first hand experiences which enable the children to develop their skills and understanding. They are encouraged to build positive relationships with each other and to assist their friends when necessary. The children play in a warm and secure environment, where they learn right from wrong and to become aware of the feelings of others.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good, as it meets the needs of all the children in the group. The staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage of learning. The person in charge plans a wide range of interesting activities, which builds on what the children already know and captures their imagination. Teaching has a positive effect on the way the children respond and behave, as the staff are extremely respectful of each other and speak to each other with kindness, which the children emulate. The children are encouraged to think about, to discuss and to demonstrate what they know and understand. The learning environment reflects the community the children are from and from the wider world, which helps to promote racial harmony.

The children are making good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. The children enter the setting happily, leaving their parents with confidence. They chat easily to their friends and to the staff and seek support when required. They independently choose activities of their choice and request the staff to join in with their play, as they enjoy their company. The children speak out during small group time, giving their opinion and discuss events that are important to them.

Effective progress is being made in the children's mathematical development. There are numbers as labels on the playroom walls and the children sing counting songs and rhymes. They use number in familiar context and count reliably up to ten and over. The children are learning to solve practical mathematical problems, for example, in finding out how many cups are required for snack. The children look at patterns including stripes and zigzags and are learning the names of shapes. They construct two and three dimensional shapes using recyclable material. The children use rulers to measure and learn the use of calculators. They have the opportunity to play with pretend money in the café and to experiment with dice and with abacus.

The children are making successful progress in their communication, language and literacy. They speak to their friends and to the staff with confidence, learning to take turns in conversation. They are learning the sounds of letters and of new words. They listen to instructions of the staff when making pizza and relay messages from one member of staff to another. They learn new vocabulary during play, for instance, when discussing their feelings and learning the names of their body parts. The children have ample opportunities to write for a purpose, including menus for the café and their name on their artwork. There are plenty of books for the children to look through, which they do so, turning the pages one at a time. They join in with nursery rhymes and songs and with repetitive refrains when listening to stories.

Extensive progress is being made in the children's creative development. They participate in messy play with eagerness, for instance, when printing using a variety of vegetables. They make bubble pictures, choosing the colour of paint independently. They enjoy dressing up in a variety of costumes and pretending to be characters of their choice, for example, a police officer. There are a wide range of musical instruments, which the children play happily, listening to the changing sounds.

The children are making efficient progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. The children investigate objects in the sensory area, including textures and look at how patterns work. They look closely at different vegetables using magnifying glasses, identifying features, such as seeds, skin and roots. The children ask questions about how things work and are learning about modern technology when playing games on the computer. The children explore the properties of flour, sand and water and select appropriate tools to shape play dough. The children find out and talk about their likes and dislikes, including the food they enjoy and about the foods that are good for their growth and development.

Good progress is being made in the children's physical development. The staff organise the space in the playroom to enable the children to move with ease and confidence. The children interlock jigsaw pieces with increasing control and couple trains. In the outdoor play area, the children climb, thread ribbons onto netting and ride wheeled toys, learning to avoid bumping into each other.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a secure and happy environment, where they are free from discrimination and stereotyping. They are learning about their local community when taken for walks and learn that roads are for vehicles and pavements are provided as a safe route for pedestrians. The staff help the children to understand that there are other languages spoken other than English and that people around the world live differently to themselves. They have the advantage of accessing a wide range of resources, which reflect positive images of diversity, including dressing up clothes, crockery in the home corner and pictures in books.

The staff are aware that there are some children who have a learning difficulty or disability and so are proactive in its identification. This then enables the staff to work in partnership with the parents, in planning a suitable range of play opportunities, which contributes in the children's progression. Careful thought is given to the available space necessary, with items of furniture being moved if required. The staff are kind towards the children and help them to feel good about themselves, celebrating achievement with praise and encouragement.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The children clearly enjoy their time in the pre-school, playing with their friends and learning new skills. Therefore, they display desirable behaviour, as they feel a valued and important member of the group. The staff speak kindly to the children and treat them with respect, which the children emulate. The children learn that their behaviour has an effect on the other children in the group and are taught to give consideration to the feelings of others.

The staff ease the transition from home to the group, as there is an effective settling in procedure in place. The parents are welcome to stay with their child until they are happy to leave them in the care of the staff. Good information is readily available about all the groups policies and statements. Parents views are valued and they are encouraged to become active members of the committee.

Partnership with parents is good. The staff establish both formal and informal channels of communication with the parents, to keep them up to date about the progression the children are making. They help them in their understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning and about why the children participate in particular activities. The staff seek information about the families faith, racial and cultural heritage, so that familiar experiences are used as a starting point for teaching and learning. Parents have the opportunity to share their expertise and knowledge with the children and they are made to feel welcome to act as a volunteer within the group.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management are good. The person in charge is dedicated and is committed to providing the children with the best care that she is able. She holds a relevant qualification and attends a broad range of training courses, so she keeps herself up to date about current thinking and about any changing of legislation. She has a clear vision of the quality of education she wishes the children to receive. She acts in their best interest when planning a wide range of play opportunities, which are challenging and interesting. However, she struggles to delegate responsibilities to her staff, resulting in her taking on the role of designated person in too many areas. An appraisal system is not currently in place, therefore, the leader is not aided in her identifying the staff's strengths and weaknesses.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The children are safe and secure in the presence of the staff who supervise them appropriately. The children's records remain confidential, to protect their personal details. Records are readily available for inspection and are kept up to date. An attendance record details the children's times of arrival and departure, so they are accounted for in an emergency.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the staff were requested to formulate an induction programme for new members of the committee and for new staff. This is now in place, with the person in charge taking responsibility, enabling a more successful period of new employment. The staff were requested to ensure the group's policies and statements, related directly to the setting, which is now in place, therefore, they are clear and succinct. The staff were requested to provide the children with suitable hand washing facilities, which they now do, enabling the children to further their independence and improve the children's good health.

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

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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):

- continue to develop the outdoor play area, so it is enticing to children and provides challenge

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):

- consider putting an appraisal system in place, to identify staff strengths and weaknesses, using the information collated to delegate responsibility

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