

St. Michaels Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127613
Inspection date	17 March 2008
Inspector	Stephanie Graves
Setting Address	St. Michaels Church Hall, 2 High Road, DARTFORD, DA2 7EG
Telephone number	07765 024181
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Registered person	St Michaels 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Michael's Pre School opened in 1977 and operates from a church hall in Wilmington, Kent. A maximum of 30 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open for four mornings each week on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, during school term times only. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 33 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from local and surroundings areas. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

The pre-school employs seven members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are actively involved in learning about good health and hygiene routines. For example, they have a good understanding of the importance of hand washing and know this helps to prevent the spread of germs. They help to wash some of the toys and resources and staff follow clear procedures, which help to prevent cross infection. This includes the use of antibacterial spray to ensure surfaces are hygienically clean. Children are well cared for if they accidentally hurt themselves or become unwell. This is because staff follow clear procedures and record and monitor any accidents. Children who have contagious illnesses remain at home, which helps to prevent the spread of infection. They enjoy being active but can also rest, for example, on soft cushions in the book area, which enables them to relax quietly.

Children develop a good understanding of healthy eating through the nutritious foods provided at snack time and also through the activities provided. Snacks include options, such as, bread sticks or dried biscuits with choices of dried or fresh fruit and raw vegetable pieces. Children help to prepare and serve the options available. Staff make snack time a social event and talk with them about healthy eating. Children have opportunities to explore the concept of healthy foods, for instance, as they make vegetable pizzas or fresh fruit salad. Clear agreements are in place with parents along with information about allergies to ensure children's individual dietary needs are addressed.

Children's physical development is well promoted through the nursery education curriculum. For example, they have ongoing access to an outdoor play area containing wheeled toys, balancing equipment and other resources to help them to develop their physical skills and co-ordination. They use large climbing apparatus, which helps them learn about physical exercise and the effect this has on their bodies. Children can access a good variety of fine manipulative experiences to help them develop smaller muscle movements. These include mark making, using one handed tools and construction activities. This means children's physical skills are promoted well.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children have plenty of unobstructed space to move around and play. They are well cared for and supervised closely inside the building and when playing outside. Staff monitor the security of the premises to ensure children's safety at all times. Toys and resources are frequently checked to make sure they remain safe and suitable for children to use. A written risk assessment along with daily visual checks helps to identify and reduce any risk of accidental injury to children. The necessary facilities are in place to promote their safe development and any hazardous items are inaccessible. Children learn about keeping themselves and others safe, for example, by accessing and using equipment safely. This includes the use of scissors, which children access and use carefully. They practise the emergency evacuation procedure regularly and move around the setting safely. They follow simple adult instruction well, which helps them develop a good awareness of personal safety.

Children's welfare is promoted through staff having an up to date knowledge and understanding of the procedures necessary to safeguard them. Staff understand the signs and symptoms of abuse and have clear procedures to follow in the event of a concern. Training has been attended

recently and all staff know where important information is kept. The procedures in place are in line with current requirements and help to ensure that children's welfare and safety remain the group's priority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive confidently and settle quickly. They choose their favourite activities and resources before settling onto the carpet to say good morning to one another. They receive good support from staff, which helps them to feel secure and comfortable. Children listen attentively during whole group activities, although some can become quickly distracted, which means they lose interest in the activity provided. Staff provide good opportunities for extending children's learning, for instance, by discussing past activities, which includes going on a recent nature walk. This helps to reinforce their understanding of the learning experiences provided. The younger children benefit from good staff interaction, which helps to promote their communication skills. They enjoy exploring through role play resources, natural materials and art and craft activities. They delight in jumping on bubble wrap in the outdoor area as it makes 'bobbly' noises. They have many different opportunities to make marks and follow the lead of older children as they play and learn together. All children can access a good range of exciting toys, resources and activities which cover all areas of learning and development. These are available both inside the hall and outside. Their creations and achievements are beautifully displayed and observations, assessments and scrap book entries contain good evidence of their progress. Children can access well labelled resources, which help them discover items independently. The opportunities provided and effective staff input help to develop children's play and learning opportunities well.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are moving well through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Their achievements are good in relation to their initial starting points and capabilities. This is influenced by good staff knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the necessary steps needed to help move them forward in their learning. Children have eager attitudes to learning and are mostly interested in the teaching methods used. For example, they listen attentively during table activities as staff explain concepts to them and have regular opportunities to join in and share their ideas and interests. Staff are creative in the delivery of activities, including stories, which makes learning fun for the children. However, raised noise levels during some whole group activities mean children are unable to concentrate effectively on the activity provided.

Effective methods of observation and assessment demonstrate a clear picture of children's progress from when they join the setting to when they leave. At this time a transfer document is completed to aid transitions into school. The next steps needed in children's learning are used to inform future planning on a very regular basis. All children have a 'my work in pre-school' scrap book which contains further evidence of children's achievements and creations. Planning is well recorded and used as a working tool to promote children's own ideas and interests. All areas of the curriculum are included and this with good use of differentiation means the activities provided are flexible and based on children's needs and interests. All plans and activities help to build on what children already know and can do. This means they enjoy new and exciting challenges and progress well.

Children are motivated and interested in the activities provided. For example, they have ongoing access to a routines board, which helps them work out what will be happening next. They politely say good morning to one another and to staff, parents and visitors. Children move around and confidently self select the toys and resources available and because staff are deployed well, they are supported effectively where necessary. Children are extremely well behaved and learn right from wrong. They clap to celebrate one another's achievements and consider the consequences of actions on others. Older children include the younger ones as they share and take turns, for example, during role play. They have many opportunities to explore their own cultures and those of others. They complete many tasks by themselves, which means they are becoming independent learners.

Children enjoy choosing from exciting mark making opportunities, including painting with water in the outdoor area and using a range of other resources in a range of situations. These help to develop their pre-writing skills. Staff ask many effective questions to help children think and respond during the activities and experiences provided. Many children recognise their own names as they arrive at pre-school and some children are able to write their name using correctly formed letters. They have opportunities to learn initial sounds, for instance, as they talk about their own names or the days of the week. Children communicate well with staff and one another and are not afraid to ask for what they need. They show an appreciation of books and stories and the book area is very appealing and attractively set out. This creates interest as children snuggle down to look at books with staff, parent helpers or one another. They take part in interactive stories, where they use props, including puppets to contribute to the main themes. These experiences promote children's communication language and literacy skills well.

Children are gaining confidence with numbers. For example, they count children in the room to 22 with staff and identify the numbers that make 22. They use magnetic numbers on boards and access many mathematical resources. These help children learn about shape, size, weight and measure. They learn new shape names, including 'oval' as they make Easter egg cards and have opportunities to incorporate shape into other activities. They use simple addition and subtraction in every day activities, for example, as they set out snack time bowls and cups, and during action songs where they count back from five. These experiences help to develop children's understanding and represent numbers and counting.

Children demonstrate curiosity, for example, as they investigate and explore natural resources. These include sand, cones, shells and bark. They can be heard to say 'I can hear the sea' as they hold sea shells to their ears and look at books, which carry related information and extend learning. Children investigate using their senses, for instance, as they feel the texture of paint and malleable materials or play with musical instruments in the outdoor area. They enjoy playing with small world activities and construction sets and can access resources that help them learn about information and communication technology. They play with interactive toys that encourage them to discover how things work. They explore the concept of living things and carefully water plants to 'make them grow.' Children show an interest and involvement regarding a sense of time. They follow routines well and know when it is time to tidy away or get ready to go home.

Children demonstrate good hand-eye co-ordination, for example, as they competently cut with scissors or drag and click the mouse when using the computer during educational activities. They are creative and confidently enjoy singing activities and playing with musical instruments. They explore a range of colour, texture, shape, form and space in different dimensions through the many activities provided. They enjoy making things, including letters to put in the 'post box', Easter cards and making their own creations through sticking, cutting and gluing activities. They creatively use role play resources, which currently includes a hospital theme. Children can

be heard to call out 'lets be a doctor', as they use mark making tools and pretend medical resources. This helps children represent real life experiences through their play.

Overall, the provision plans and provides a good range of experiences to ensure children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities are well promoted.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are welcomed equally and treated according to their individual needs. Staff are dedicated, warm and caring and can be continually heard acknowledging and affirming the children they care for. This enables children to develop a strong sense of belonging and self assurance. Children new to the setting are extremely well supported by staff and parents who work very closely together to ensure they settle well and feel comfortable and relaxed. Children learn about the differences between themselves and others through an extensive range of activities, involving many different festivals and beliefs. This enables children to develop a broad awareness of various customs and traditions. They can access a wide range of toys and resources promoting positive images of race, culture, gender and disability. Children enjoy outings to local places of interest and these activities collectively help them develop an excellent understanding of the local community and the wider world. Children with learning difficulties receive very effective support from staff who confidently provide appropriate experiences and strategies and work closely with parents and outside agencies to meet their specific needs.

Children are exceptionally well behaved, polite and respectful towards staff and one another. This is because staff use strategies that promote positive behaviour, including skilfully pre-empting any possible conflict. Staff are good role models who encourage good manners and consistently praise children enthusiastically for their achievements. These measures greatly promote children's welfare and self esteem. Older children are very caring towards the younger children, for example, as they independently share and take turns with role play resources. This means they are able to demonstrate a mature understanding of positive behaviour. Children benefit from consistency of care through a very committed, working partnership with parents. An excellent range of information is provided and an induction meeting helps to develop trusting, close relationships with staff and new children and their families. Children's developmental progress is shared daily and staff ensure that parents are fully aware of the policies and procedures. Parents feel staff offer an excellent service and provide many meaningful experiences for their children to help them progress. Parents and some grandparents are actively involved in pre-school life and take the opportunity to visit to lead in activities with the children and to help prepare snacks or wash up.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Children's developmental needs are extremely well supported between staff and parents between home and the pre-school environment. Parents have ongoing opportunities to be involved in their children's learning, for example, as they visit to read stories or support children as they take part in educational activities on the computer. They have ongoing opportunities to share their children's progress records and feel their ideas are included in future plans. Planning is displayed clearly as well as written feedback from daily activities. This helps to keep parents informed about the morning's events and promotes opportunities to discuss these further with children at home. This excellent input between staff and parents helps to promote children's' learning and development consistently.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They thrive on exciting activities, and become fascinated by concepts, such as, hand painting as they rub different

colours together and observe the changes. They have ongoing opportunities to discuss their home news and interests and learn about diversity in society. They are sensible, well behaved and sociable. They communicate effectively together and can independently share and take turns. Overall, children are engaged in very meaningful experiences, which enable them to learn, progress and enjoy the pre-school experiences provided.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and settled within a well organised environment. They enjoy good relationships with staff and have free access to a variety of play and learning experiences, both inside and outdoors. Systems are in place to ensure the adults working with children are suitable. Although ongoing suitability checks are informal, the provider works closely with the staff team to ensure they remain suitable for their roles. Despite improvement being necessary in relation to the grouping of children for some activities, staff are otherwise deployed effectively. Training needs are addressed and help to ensure children benefit from effective practice based on current requirements. The registration certificate is displayed clearly and the necessary records are all in place and shared with parents. These include daily attendance records for children, staff and any visitors to the setting. The range of policies and procedures in place underpin the group's professional practice and contribute towards promoting children's welfare, care and learning.

The leadership and management is good. Staff implement the Foundation Stage well and clear aims promote the development of all the children. Although some improvement is required regarding whole group activities, staff are reflective and seek to improve practice wherever possible. Planning includes all areas of the curriculum and this is evaluated daily to ensure activities are continually based on children's learning needs. Staff are dedicated to meeting the children's needs and the integration of care and nursery education are promoted well. This helps to ensure successful outcomes in all areas of learning and development. The provision of toys and resources is very good and encourage children's interest and involvement. The effectiveness of the experiences provided is monitored and evaluated well, along with informal monitoring of the teaching and learning. The setting enjoys good links with local primary schools, which helps to prepare the children for the transition into school.

The provider is committed towards the ongoing improvement of the pre-school. Regular self evaluation exercises, the working partnership with parents and outside agencies and the group's reflective practice, all contribute towards effective outcomes for children. As a result children receive good quality care and a variety of opportunities to play and learn. The pre-school provides a professional service. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider received a recommendation to ensure details of times of arrival and departure are recorded for children. The recommendation has been addressed and children's attendance records include their hours of attendance.

At the last inspection of nursery education, three key issues were raised for improvement. These included developing staff understanding of the early learning goals and continuing to develop systems for observing children's progress and use this to inform future planning. The provider was also asked to extend information technology experiences and develop children's physical skills by improving the outdoor play space.

The key issues have all been addressed. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the early learning goals and effective systems are in place for observing and assessing children's progress. The next steps needed in learning inform future planning effectively. The provision of resources to promote children's awareness of information and communication technology has improved, with a range of resources available. The outdoor play area is freely available to children, providing a variety of learning experiences, including opportunities to develop their physical skills.

The provider has taken positive steps towards improving the service provided and ensuring children can learn and progress in a safe and stimulating environment.

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 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 current systems to ensure the ongoing suitability of adults working with children

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):

- devise ways of reducing noise levels and improving opportunities for children to maintain interest and enjoyment during whole group activities (also applies to care).

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