

# St Michaels Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	256826
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 June 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Sykes
<b>Setting Address</b>	The Church Hall, Mace Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE2 8RQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	07757 030929
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St Michaels Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are 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 1975 and has been committee-run since 2000. It operates from St. Michael's Church hall in Stanground, Peterborough and serves the local area and surrounding villages.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30. Afternoon sessions are 12.30 to 15.00 except for Tuesday. The group is open term-time only and all children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 57 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of whom 51 receive funding for early education.

The nursery employs six members of staff and the vast majority hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there are systems in place to support children with English as an additional language.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is protected due to the good practice followed by members of staff. They teach children the importance of personal hygiene through daily routines, such as washing hands after using the toilet and using anti-bacterial gel before eating, and provide all the equipment they need to clean their hands independently. Adults remain alert to reinforce good practice as necessary to give children a thorough understanding of good hygiene through constant supervision and children demonstrate a clear understanding of these routines as they talk about the need to wash their hands to remove germs. A firm ethos of encouraging sick children to stay at home reflects the written policy, ensures their well-being and protects the other children from cross-infection. The majority of staff hold appropriate first aid certificates and a well-stocked first aid box ensures staff can respond to minor injuries.

Children increase their understanding about a healthy lifestyle. They grow vegetables, such as potatoes and beans, in the pre-school garden which they later take home or enjoy at snack time. They enjoy nutritious snacks daily such as a variety of fresh fruit which they prepare themselves. Adults are vigilant to ensure they take account of the parents' wishes and the children's choices and dietary needs, ensuring appropriate nutritional needs are met. Children develop their social skills through eating their snacks together at the table and a flexible snack time means children can eat when they wish to and children can access fresh drinking water at any time. This helps them recognise and respond to their bodies' needs. They use disposable cups which they then put in the bin ensuring they stay protected from cross-contamination.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health, both indoors and out. They enjoy, for example, music and dance activities as well as physical exercises with a range of equipment indoors. Children move around the premises safely avoiding hazards. Children have good opportunities to use small scale equipment safely to develop their finer manipulative skills, for example, jigsaw puzzles and using scissors, pens and pencils. The outdoor areas are well equipped for children to participate in many outdoor activities. Large scale equipment develops their large physical skills as they use equipment such as the 'caterpillar tunnel' to climb on and crawl through. They use garden equipment to dig up the vegetables that they have grown. Children are keen to try and gain new skills and adults have a good understanding of appropriate activities and the level of support individuals require, such as helping children to jump down from the climbing cubes and children are enthusiastic to share their success as their self-confidence grows. They ride bikes and learn to negotiate a path between other equipment and children. These types of activities help children to develop their physical skills and develop a positive attitude towards exercise.

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

The provision is good.

Children and parents receive a very warm welcome from staff who ensure the environment is ready for them when they arrive. The activities and resources provided are clean, safe and appropriate for the children's age and ability and children can safely access them. Children are beginning to develop their understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves safe. Visits from outside agencies, for example, the police heighten children's awareness of dangers in everyday life. There are clear boundaries within the setting to promote their safety,

such as not running inside, and these are always followed by clear explanations by staff so that children can fully understand the importance of safety practices.

Children are secure. Indoor and outdoor space is organised to enable children to explore and take risks while being appropriately supervised. A good adult to child ratio is met ensuring children experience consistent high levels of support and their risk of injury is minimised due to staff's vigilance. A visual daily risk assessment is undertaken before children attend the setting although this is not always effective in identifying potential hazards, for example, aerosol air freshener is stored in a cupboard which children have access to. Other in-depth written risk assessments are undertaken periodically to recognise and address hazards. Access to the premises is monitored by staff who man the entrance door at the beginning and end of each session and ensure that it is locked at all other times. Staff take extra care to protect children's safety by ensuring that all persons collecting children are authorised to do so. A visitors book is used to establish a record of other adults who are on the premises at any one time ensuring they are there for a legitimate reason, safeguarding the children's welfare.

Children are protected from harm. All staff have a thorough understanding of child protection issues and their responsibilities in this area. There are clear procedures based on the national guidelines for safeguarding children and these are fully implemented in the setting. Children's safety and well-being is fully promoted as staff remain vigilant to existing injuries that children have from outside of the setting and record and use this information appropriately and confidentially. Clear procedures if an allegation is made against a member of staff are in place, thus children are always cared for by suitable staff.

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

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and interested in their play and learning at the pre-school. They are able to make choices about the activities they choose to participate in and move independently around the room and outdoors. The pre-school room is set up to promote all areas of learning and children have independent access to a good range of toys, resources and materials. Children enjoy exciting learning opportunities as they play in and outdoors. They have close relationships with staff, giving children a sense of security and well-being. Children are supported very well during settling-in times and are secure in the pre-school staff's care. Staff's good nurturing skills help children feel secure and valued, which enables children to settle quickly into the pre-school environment and move confidently onto the activities.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of how children learn through play. All children are offered the same learning opportunities whether or not they are in receipt of funding for early years education. They are offered sensitive support from staff to help them with their tasks which in turn builds the child's self-confidence as their achievements are valued.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals and engage in a wide range of experiences and activities which cover all areas of learning. Planning includes a long term, medium term and weekly plans although the weekly plans do lack some detail, for example, which areas of learning are being targeted so that all staff can effectively implement learning requirements. Furthermore, planning for the outdoor area is at times limited which makes it difficult to focus on learning opportunities and learning experiences in all the areas of learning. Children benefit from a new system which has

been implemented in which each child receives an individual learning plan. This takes into account the current level of attainment and how to move the child forward in their education ensuring all learning experiences are appropriate and provide suitable challenge. Children benefit from being supported well in activities as staff sensitively offer appropriate support and guidance. For example, as children collect leaves off the tree staff suggest they take them and do rubbings or as staff help them to load a new game onto the laptop.

Children demonstrate a good attitude towards learning and are keen to try new activities. They remain at activities for extended periods of time as staff support children to achieve their goal, for example, as they complete simple computer games. Children instigate imaginative play in the home corner and confidently include others as they prepare meals and care for their 'babies'. They realise a sense of routine as they are given tasks such as tidying up or join together for registration or story-time.

Children enjoy listening to stories and handling books. Staff engage children well when reading and sharing books on a one to one basis where they sit on the floor together developing their interest in books and reading. However, large group story-time does not engage children where they become distracted and play with their peers who may wish to listen which does not make best use of the learning opportunity. Children participate in re-enacting traditional fairy tales such as 'Goldilocks and the three bears' which helps to develop their memory and recall skills. They are beginning to make marks for meaning as they write the initial letter of their name and talk about the phonic sound or scribe their name confidently in the mark-making area. All these activities support the four aspects of communication, language and literacy development; reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Children use numbers confidently. They demonstrate they are able to count to 10 and recognise the relevant digits, for example as they look at the inspector's laptop and correctly name each number. Children begin to use calculation skills as they sing action songs, using their fingers to represent the numbers or set the table for snack time, ascertaining how many cups or chairs are needed. They build elaborate shapes with different sized duplo pieces, manipulating them into spaces demonstrating their problem solving skills are developing. Water and sand activities develop children's understanding of size, capacity and weight.

Children are beginning to understand the world in which they live. They are inquisitive about the natural world as they plant and care for vegetables, or watch the tadpoles grow in the pond. As a consequence children learn to respect and care for the natural things around them. There are opportunities for children to learn about new technology through imagined or real experiences with open access to a computer and imaginary props such as telephones and cookers in their home corner.

Children's creativity is encouraged through a variety of mediums and they enjoy many opportunities to be creative which extend their thought processes and language development. They enjoy investigating the collections of bits and bobs which are available for creating pictures such as a range of tactile materials to create collage pictures. In these activities, they learn about pattern, texture and colour. They are developing good manipulative skills as they cut and stick. Children participate in role play in many guises. They become 'hairdressers' or 'mum and dad' looking after their 'babies' and making 'dinner' which helps children to make sense of the world around them. Music and movement sessions offer children opportunities to freely express themselves.

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

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and included in the setting. They have a real sense of belonging and a busy, happy atmosphere prevails. Children have close relationships with staff and approach them confidently. Children's needs are met appropriately by staff, for example, if a child is upset they benefit from individual attention. Children are encouraged to be independent, for example, they use the toilet, wash their own hands and put the paper towels in the bin without adult support. They learn to make decisions through being given choices such as what activity they wish to participate in.

Children learn about a wider society through using various resources which reflect diversity, such as books and dolls. They take part in activities based on cultural and religious themes, such as Chinese New Year where they take part in food tasting. Furthermore, staff ensure that children's home culture is taken into account as they celebrate, for example, the Italian way of life. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. Staff liaise closely with parents and other professionals and monitor their individual plans to help children progress in their learning. Staff are sensitive to the needs of children and adapt activities to ensure all children are included.

Children behave well and learn to share and take turns. They are well aware of their boundaries and how to behave responsibly. They respond well to the praise and consistent guidelines set by staff. Staff treat the children with respect and listen to them which encourages them to value others. The setting has a policy which outlines strategies of managing behaviour and the setting encourages good behaviour through age-appropriate strategies.

Children are encouraged to share, play together and respect each other. They are given opportunities to appreciate other cultures and express themselves through a variety of mediums. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is being fostered.

The pre-school works closely with parents and carers. Staff provide clear information in the prospectus on procedures and help with settling children in. Parents are asked to provide information about their children in order that staff can provide the appropriate care to each child. Information is also clearly displayed on the notice board or easily accessible for parents to ascertain the organisation of the pre-school, for example, the policy and procedures file are always at hand. At present parents speak highly of the care their children receive. There is a clear complaints procedure for parents to use if the need arises. However, the complaints log which parents have access to contains personal information which breaches the confidentiality of entrants.

The partnership with parents and carers of nursery funded children is good. Regular correspondence includes details of the planned topics and planning is displayed for parents to read. Parents are aware that they can approach staff at any time to discuss their child's progress and this is consolidated by formal termly meetings and informal feedback daily. However, staff do not initially work with parents to ascertain their child's starting points to begin their education in the pre-school therefore this does not take into account children's achievements from their home environment. Parents do become involved in their children's education by other means on an ongoing basis, for example, a daily written diary for each child gives parents the opportunity to record any events or achievements that can influence their child's education in the setting. A library book system makes firm links between the home and setting, supports children's reading skills and involves parents in their child's learning. Parents feedback is sought

through the use of questionnaires and any concerns raised are addressed appropriately to improve the quality of care for children. Staff build good relationships with parents which enables them to resolve most concerns quickly and informally.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Staff have a clear vision of how they would like to move the group forward and embrace changes for the improvement of their practice to enhance children's overall enjoyment and development. Staff work well as a team and continuous professional development further enhances children's experiences in the pre-school. Staff share in the responsibility of the effective updating of records and documents which are kept secure in filing cabinets. Staff evaluate and improve their own practice and work together to plan activities to develop the well-being and learning of the children. Staff are well deployed throughout each session although whole group times such as registration or story-time do not effectively engage children. The systems and procedures for the recruitment of new staff and the vetting of new committee members are now robust. There are clear procedures to recruit new staff members which means suitable persons are employed to care for children.

The door to the outside area is open so children can flow freely between indoor and outdoor play. Staff use the time spent with the children in a meaningful way to ensure they have opportunity to interact and give appropriate adult attention to each child. This effective level of support helps children relate to the adults, respond well to others and aids their learning.

Leadership and management is good. The manager and staff are committed in their approach to providing children with good early years play and learning experiences. They work closely together to ensure the day to day running of the pre-school goes smoothly and provide an environment for children to be happy and flourish. Good staffing ratios are maintained throughout the session ensuring children are well supervised and supported during play activities. The manager has worked with the local authority in the past to develop the quality of nursery education and has a positive attitude in implementing strategies to enhance their practice which benefits children's care and learning.

Overall, children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the setting was judged as inadequate. They were required to ensure that adults providing day care are suitable to do so and ensure that there are robust recruitment procedures in place. They were also asked to put systems in place to record existing injuries a child may have and minimise risks to children. This related to ensuring that children do not have access to dangerous substances in the kitchen and review children's access to the hot radiators.

The provider was also asked to establish ongoing systems to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the care and education provided for the children, ensure that assessments of children's progress are made regularly across the early learning goals, that these are used effectively to identify children's next steps of learning and use these to directly inform the short-term planning. They were also asked to ensure that planning is effective in helping staff support activities and children's differing abilities, that it is clearly linked to the early learning goals and the stepping stones and make it clear as to what the learning intentions of activities

are. They were also asked to use the planning to inform practice rather than as a record of what occurred in the session.

The provider now has systems in place to ensure all staff and committee members submit to vetting procedures and robust recruitment procedures ensure all adults caring for children are suitable to do so. Safety features in the setting now include a low-level door on the kitchen to prevent children accessing the kitchen unsupervised and quilt covers on the radiators minimise the risk of burning. There are clear systems in place to record any existing injuries a child may have which further protects children in the event of child protection issues.

Nursery education is monitored regularly through staff meetings and the manager regularly reviews the assessment records to ensure they are kept up to date. Assessments of children's progress are clearly linked to the steps children pass through to reach the early learning goals and observations are used to inform the next steps of the child's 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 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):

- ensure the daily risk assessment is effective in identifying potential hazards to children
- ensure the complaints log contains appropriate information to be shared with parents.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the planning for the outdoor area and the detail in the weekly planning so that the areas of learning are clear
- consider the organisation of whole group times so that the needs of all children are met.



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)