

# St Lawrence Playgroup & Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 109848                                    |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 01 July 2008                              |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Louise Bonney                             |
| <b>Setting Address</b>         | Vicarage Hill, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 2BY |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01420 82442                               |
| <b>E-mail</b>                  |   |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | St Lawrence 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Lawrence Pre-school is a voluntary group run by a parent committee and has been registered since 1974. It is registered to provide sessional care for up to 26 children aged two to five years. The pre-school opens five days a week during school term time, offering morning and afternoon sessions. Sessions run from 09:15 to 11:45 Monday to Friday and 12:45 to 15:15 on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. Currently there are 29 children on roll, of these 28 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The group provides support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for children with English as an additional language.

The group operate from a church hall and have access to the main hall, kitchen and toilets. For outdoor play there is a small area with temporary fencing and the church grounds are used for group activities.

The group employs four staff, all of whom hold Early Years qualifications. The setting liaises and receives teacher support from local schools. Support and advice is also received from the Early Education and Childcare Unit.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children develop awareness of how to maintain their personal hygiene through daily procedures, such as washing hands after toileting and before snack time. At snack time they enjoy eating healthy foods such as strawberries, apple and banana and have milk and water to drink, with water available at all times. This ensures they develop awareness of healthy eating and have plenty of fluids. Children pour their drinks, choose their snack and clear up afterwards as they put their bowls and cups in a collection area. This develops children's independence and self-care.

Children have daily opportunities for physical activities. Inside they balance on and jump across stepping stones and use the slide. Outside, they run at speed, kick balls and play parachute games.

Children laugh as they pant after running with a member of staff, and take off jumpers as they warm up. This shows they develop awareness of how their bodies change with exercise and activities promote their good health.

Children in nappies receive support as they toilet train. Changing procedures such as the use of gloves by staff support good hygiene. However, there is no changing mat available to further ensure hygiene is maintained.

Children have their allergies and medical needs taken into account. Staff seek information from parents and agree procedures in case of medical emergencies and staff have first aid training. This protects the children's health.

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

The provision is good.

Children play in safe and secure premises. On arrival they find the hall freshly set up with a good range of resources. Staff divide the hall into more intimate spaces using rugs, screens and trolleys. This provides a bright and welcoming environment for the children.

Children learn to manage tools safely, such as scissors during craft activities or knives when spreading rolls. They queue to go outside and climb the steps to the outside area in single file holding onto the railing. They show clear awareness of their boundaries on the green and staff are vigilant. This helps children develop awareness of how to stay safe. Children run at speed and take care not to collide. Indoors they balance and jump across upside-down bowls used as stepping stones. This provides children with suitable challenges that help them learn to assess and manage risk. Visitors such as the police and fire service also help children develop safety awareness.

Children stay safe on the regular outings, such as a bus ride around Alton or a walk to the watercress beds, through staff knowing the venues well and carrying out risk assessments in advance. They seek parental support so that ratios are increased. When using the outdoor area daily staff first check the grass to remove any hazards. This protects the children's safety.

Children receive protection from possible abuse and/or neglect. Staff display the child protection procedures on the notice board in the entrance foyer for parents to share. They record existing

injuries children arrive with and share the record with parents. Staff attend training and know to take action if they have any concerns. This safeguards the children.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff provide a wide range of activities and use resources imaginatively. They organise routines so that children have time to develop concentration well during their chosen activities, and create an enthusiastic and happy environment. Children find activities stimulating and are at all times busily engaged. Children mostly participate in free play with staff circulating to engage with them during their chosen activities. This uses children's interests to support learning as staff encourage them to develop their ideas through modelling actions and discussion. Staff plan adult-led activities which provide a focus for learning, such as making a boat to then float in the water tray. However, planning for these activities does not support the provision of sufficient challenge through the identification of possible learning outcomes, grouping of children, use of resources and ways in which to extend children's understanding and learning.

Staff develop medium term plans together and identify some learning aims and themes, which are further developed in short term plans. However, use of a selection of stepping stones to plan against rather than the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage means they limit their expectations for children's learning, and do not fully develop their own understanding of the Foundation Stage. They observe children's achievements and record their progress towards the early learning goals. Staff identify some children's next steps in learning although this is not systematically done and these are not shared with parents to further support learning at home.

Children develop strong personal relationships with staff and each other, forming close friendships without exclusion as they allow others to join in their activities. They show care as they help each other, such as when giving another child a rolling pin or putting another's painting up to dry. They approach staff confidently, even when they have a problem such as clothes made muddy during water play, as they know that staff are caring and supportive. Children enjoy the praise they receive from staff during their activities, and know that staff value what they say and do. This supports children's development of confidence and self-esteem well.

Children develop independence as they pour their own drinks and look after their personal care. They concentrate for long periods at their chosen activities through the successful implementation of new routines, which lead to fewer interruptions in their play. Children anticipate activities enthusiastically, such as outdoor play, story time or show and tell, when they share items brought from home with the group. They are keen to join adult-led activities, although this can lead to over-crowding.

Children communicate clearly as they share their ideas during activities such as role play or with staff during activities. Children recognise their names and write them clearly and use emergent writing during role play. Many children count beyond 10 accurately. They weigh different materials and consider which is heavier or lighter. They experiment with shapes as they model playdough, build with blocks, or stick round cake cases on rectangular sheets of paper.

Children make links with their community through frequent trips out supported by parents, such as to the museum, on a bus trip around Alton and visit the railway station, or pond-dipping at the watercress beds. They learn how to handle pets carefully brought in from home, such as a hamster and tortoise. Children observe how materials change during cookery activities. They develop a sense of time as they reflect on previous experiences as they look at photograph albums, such as for sports day or a visit from the fire services. Children use technology such as the tape recorder, or freely access the digital camera to take photographs of a model they have just made.

Children play outside daily, when they use a range of small apparatus, such as bats, balls, rubber rings and hoops, and staff help them extend their skills. They exercise control as they run in a circle holding onto the parachute, and stop and change direction on command. They move at speed as they run races and show good spatial awareness as they avoid colliding with others. Indoors they balance on stepping stones, experimenting as they turn and jump without falling off. Children use various tools to develop dexterity, such as brushes, rollers, scissors, pencils and construction kits.

Children have good opportunities to develop their own creative ideas and access art and craft resources independently. They choose collage materials and use different kinds of paints and applicators, such as various brushes or rollers. Children make up stories using the puppet theatres, and dress up in lengths of materials or hats as they develop their role play. They use resources symbolically, such as a large funnel for a hat and solve puzzles as they plan how to make model dumbbells using craft materials.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children with additional needs receive support through staff liaising with parents and specialists. They identify activities to support their needs and development and apply for funding to provide additional adult help. This supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well. Staff are aware of some children's cultural backgrounds and provide resources such as dual language books to support this. However, they do not seek this information systematically to ensure all children's cultural backgrounds are acknowledged.

Children show a sense of belonging and are very relaxed and confident as they play. They behave well and follow staff's instructions, such as when lining up to go outside and walking carefully. Children know right from wrong and remind others of the rules occasionally. They play collaboratively as they help each other, such as when helping to hold a model steady and passing bricks while another builds a tall tower, or as they take turns during ball games. Staff praise children when they are helpful or achieve well, and all the children applaud those whose names are highlighted on the 'golden board' for special praise. This encourages the development of appropriate behaviour. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and/or carers is satisfactory. Staff provide parents with information about the Foundation Stage curriculum through displays of planning, posters and children's work, as well as through the introductory brochure. Children benefit from parents widening their experiences as they share expertise and knowledge by supporting activities, such as by bringing in their pets or musical instruments or helping children learn how to pond dip. Staff and parents share information about children's learning when they first join the setting and informally at handover. Home links are reinforced through parents completing a diary for staff describing their child's activities and interests. This supports children's learning and develops

partnership with parents. However, there is no effective system in place to share children's achievement records with parents to further support learning at home.

Parents are aware of the recent reorganisation of activities following the setting's previous inspection, although not all parents understand why the changes were necessary or whether they are effective. This shows a lack of communication with parents. At the same time parents express how they feel their children are very happy at the setting and love attending, and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The committee, managers and staff have drawn up an action plan for development which they are currently implementing. There have been many changes since the previous inspection, which shows their commitment to the improvement of the provision. Children benefit from the changes introduced to routines and the layout of the hall. Staff now plan and assess children's achievements, although systems are still under review. Managers and staff continue to evaluate and monitor changes and implement their development plan with the support of their committee and external advisors. This helps to improve the children's learning and care. Managers and the committee are aware of the need to develop effective systems to monitor the provision of nursery education and the quality of teaching.

Managers have a committed team of staff who work well together. They support their continual development through annual appraisals and identify their training needs. All staff are qualified, with two currently attending level 3 training as well as additional workshops, such as mark making or creative play. Managers organise half-termly meetings, when staff plan themes and identify learning aims. However, staff are not sufficiently involved in short term planning to further develop their understanding and use of the Curriculum guidance to the foundation stage.

Staff have clearly identified roles, such as for child protection or the Special Education Needs Coordinator. All staff act as keyworkers to a small group of children, and observe and assess their progress against the Foundation Stage stepping stones. Managers ensure children have a good selection of resources available and negotiate improvements to storage with the hall committee. They improve documentation, such as the complaints log and registers. They review policies and procedures and update them, such as for child protection. This supports the children's welfare. However, the complaints procedure does not yet include full information, such as how to formalise a complaint, response times and the correct contact details for Ofsted.

The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the previous inspection the provider was set actions to improve the provision and monitoring of nursery education. Staff have drawn up a development plan and are in the process of implementing improvements. Managers are currently receiving and have acted upon external advice and support. They have made improvements to the resourcing of activities, layout and routines of the setting. They are currently trialling new planning systems which identify some general learning aims. Staff have begun to observe and assess children's learning and maintain achievement records. They share information about the activities with parents through displays

of planning, learning aims and photographs of activities. Support agencies meet with the group to support evaluation of their provision and plan future developments. Managers carry out staff appraisals and develop training plans. Staff have already attended workshops for creative play and mark making, and two members of staff are attending level 3 training. This improves the provision of nursery education for the children.

Under the care inspection the provider was set actions to share changes to the provision with Ofsted, maintain documentation and develop a procedure to follow should allegations be made against a member of staff. All committee members have now undergone suitable vetting procedures. Staff maintain registers and the complaints log appropriately, and a procedure is in place to follow should allegations of abuse be made against staff. This protects the children's safety and welfare.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### **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):

- develop the complaints procedure to fully reflect regulatory requirements and share this with parents
- develop opportunities for staff and parents to share information about changes within the setting and for the views and concerns of parents to be respected and acknowledged
- seek information about children's home cultures and languages and reflect these within the provision.

#### **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):

- further develop staff's understanding and use of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage
- share children's achievement records and their next steps in learning with parents

- develop detailed short term plans to clearly identify possible learning outcomes, extension, resources and grouping of children
- continue to develop systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and the provision for the Foundation Stage.

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)