

St Michaels Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY361446
Inspection date	28 April 2008
Inspector	Lisa Paisley
Setting Address	St Michaels Playgroup, Roding Road, Loughton, Essex, IG10 3EJ
Telephone number	07951421981
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Registered person	St Michaels 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 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 Michael's Playgroup is privately owned. It originally opened in 1967 and was re-registered in 2007. The playgroup operates from a large hall within the St Michaels and All Angels church building in Loughton, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 09.30 to 12.00 and 12.30 to 15.00 and Thursday 9.00 to 12.00 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 52 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 48 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six staff. Five of the staff, including both managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is currently attending training. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are learning about the importance of personal hygiene through established daily routines such as washing their hands after creative activities and before snack time. Children have access to warm water, liquid soap and paper towels. Disposable wet wipes before snacks further minimise the potential risk of cross-infection. All documentation in relation to children's health, for example, medical details, medication and accident forms are in place and signed by the parents. Over half of the staff are first aid trained and a first aid box with all the required items are in place. Consequently children receive suitable care and attendance in the event of an accident or administering medication.

Children are effectively nourished and benefit from a healthy diet. They enjoy eating a variety of food at snack time. This is usually fresh fruit such as oranges, apples, bananas, strawberries and kiwi. Snack time is a social occasion when staff sit with the children and encourage them to eat and promote good table manners. Drinking water is freely available to the children to prevent them from becoming thirsty or dehydrated. The staff are fully aware of any allergies or special dietary requirements and preferences so that individual needs are met.

All children enjoy on-going opportunities to engage in physical activities and have access to a range of both indoor and outdoor play equipment to support their whole bodily movements. For example, children confidently use the tricycles, stilts, hoops and balls. Children use a suitable range of tools and equipment to promote their finer manipulative skills such as scissors, puzzles, peg boards and threading activities. As a result, children are making secure progress in all aspects of physical development and their skills are challenged appropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment where there are designated play areas for children, for example, the book corner and table top activities. Staff have a suitable awareness of how to organise space, furniture and equipment effectively enabling children to move freely with independence around activities and different play areas. As a result, children feel confident within the playgroup and are safe and secure. Children benefit from using a suitable range of toys and play equipment which are maintained to an adequate standard. Children are able to generally self-select their own play resources which are appropriate to their ages and stages of development, fostering choice and independence.

All areas of the provision are risk assessed by the staff so that any potential hazards to children can be identified and minimised or removed. Staff also carry out daily checks of the areas used by children, ensuring each play area is safe before children arrive. For example, the main entrance is secure and fire exits are in working order, all low-level electrical sockets and radiators are protected and the garden is secure ensuring children are unable to leave unsupervised. There are clear procedures for the arrival and departure of children, ensuring children arrive and leave the premises safely. Fire evacuation procedures are in place, however, fire drills do not take into account children and staff's attendance patterns. As a result, not all children and staff know how to evacuate the building quickly and safely. Children learn about keeping themselves safe as staff provide consistent, gentle reminders such as walking indoors, tidying away toys and using the play equipment and resources appropriately.

Children are suitably safeguarded because staff are aware of their child protection responsibilities. This ensures that they act in the best interests of children. There is a clearly written child protection policy which includes a written statement of the procedure in the event of an allegation being made against a staff member. However, staff lack clarity with regards to the procedure of recording children's existing injuries, potentially comprising children's welfare. Staff have access to the new guidelines from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Parents are informed of the group's responsibility regarding child protection reassuring parents of their child's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the playgroup and are happy and settled due to staff relating to them sensitively and providing a suitable range of activities which are interesting and stimulating. Activities include peg boards, books, cars, trains, play dough, drawing and creative activities. Staff know the children well, they greet them warmly on arrival at the playgroup, which makes them feel safe and secure. Routines provide opportunities for children to socialise with each other on a regular basis. Staff set out a range of activities, toys and equipment for the children, which enable them to make choices and extend their own play.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children play and learn. Planning is in place and this includes evaluations of activities, however, written focus activity plans are not in place identifying clear learning intentions and next steps in children's learning. Staff provide children with an adequate range of activities and play experiences that generally capture children's interest. However, further development is required with regard to communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative activities, ensuring that children's play activities and experiences are consistently interesting, varied and stimulating for children. On occasions children's learning is limited as teaching methods used by staff are not always fully extended. A 'key person' system is in place and is used to ensure that children's individual abilities are identified and respected. Children's observation and assessment records contain appropriate levels of information. The organisation of the session is free play with an emphasis on children's choice, large group activities, for example, registration and story times the children clearly enjoy their time at the playgroup.

Children are developing secure attitudes and dispositions towards their learning and the older and more able children are keen to complete tasks such as completing threading activities. They enjoy participating in a range of activities provided and are encouraged to independently select resources and initiate their own activities and games. Children show a secure sense of belonging as they greet staff and each other upon arrival. They work very well together in a purposeful manner and understand the importance of co-operation during group activities such as children sharing farm animals and taking turns. Children are confident speakers, using a range of descriptive words effectively to convey their experiences both real and imaginary, for example, events over the weekend included going to the park and visiting a relative's new house. The book corner is warm, welcoming and comfortable for children to use. They are confident and enjoy looking at books with either their friends or the staff, children particularly enjoyed the 'Night Night' story. Children confidently use tools and resources to make marks and they have opportunities to recognise and write their own names independently through daily routines such as self-registration. However, activities are not always fully extended, for example, mark making is not linked into role play enabling children to develop meaningful experiences. Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy is suitably promoted through daily

routines, for example, discussing shapes, playing games and singing songs. Older and more able children count up to 10 and beyond confidently. They have suitable opportunities to sort objects and participate in matching games. Cooking, sand and water activities supports children's experiences and understanding of weight, size and capacity.

Children have opportunities to find out about the natural world through topics such as growing flowers and going on nature walks. They occasionally go on trips out into the community, for example, to the local primary school at Christmas. However, there are limited opportunities for inviting people into the playgroup to talk about their work and develop children's understanding of the local community. Children are developing a secure awareness of the uses of information technology in everyday life and are able to operate equipment, for example, domestic items, computer laptop, telephones, magnifying glasses and tape measurers. Their imaginations and free expression are effectively promoted through the range of activities such as play dough, painting, music and movement. However, sand and water do not form part of the core activities. and role play is not out on a daily basis or linked into current topics to further consolidate children's learning. Children enjoy music and movement, using musical instruments freely to experiment with rhythm and sound patterns. Their physical skills are promoted through a variety of mediums such as scooters, tricycles, hoops, bean bags and an obstacle course. Children's finer manipulative skills are promoted through a range of activities such as threading, puzzles, building with small bricks and mark-making tools.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued as individuals and are able to make choices and decisions while at the playgroup. They develop confidence, self-esteem and respect for others. Children become aware of the wider society as they celebrate festivals and traditions from around the world. For example, Holi, Valentines day and Easter. A selection of books and play equipment portray positive images of diversity. However, resources and play activities are limited, hindering children's understanding of the wider world. Systems are in place to support children that may have additional needs. The special educational needs coordinator has a secure understanding of their role, they have attended relevant training and practical experience of working with children with varying needs. As a result an inclusive environment is provided where children feel valued, secure and contented in their surroundings.

Children behave well due to the consistent, positive strategies that staff employ to help them understand right from wrong and how to get along with others. Warm friendships are developed. Staff are calm, respectful and provide good role models. As a result children are polite and considerate to their friends and carers. Children help to tidy up, listen attentively and follow instructions carefully. Plenty of praise and encouragement is heard to raise self-esteem. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. The effective key person system enables frequent exchanges of information so that care is consistent. Notices and regular newsletters help keep parents informed about topic work and current events at the playgroup. The recent parent evening provide opportunities for parents to view their child's records and keep up to date with achievements and progress. Parents' notice board provides parents with all the required information about the playgroup, including staff qualifications registration certificates and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, ensuring parents are fully informed with regard to their child's developmental progress, topic work and any events or celebrations.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is adequately supported by the secure organisation of the playgroup. All staff have been vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), ensuring their suitability when looking after children. Staff make sufficient use of available play space and resources, however, the organisation of daily routines occasionally limits children's free choice, play and learning experiences and independence. Documentation and records have been recently updated, they are comprehensive and organised effectively and confidentiality is maintained. This ensures the secure running of the playgroup on a daily basis.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The registered providers and managers have recently taken over the ownership of the playgroup, they have worked extremely hard to ensure a smooth transition for all persons involved and identifying short and long term goals for the setting. As a result improvements have been made, for example, developing professionalism within the staff team and working more effectively with parents. All the staff including the managers work closely together to ensure the day to day running of the playgroup runs smoothly. Staff have developed a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are effectively deployed within the playgroup and staffing ratios are maintained throughout the session ensuring children are effectively supervised and supported during activities. Consequently, children are cared for by an experienced staff team and benefit from continuity of care.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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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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):

- review fire evacuation procedures
- review procedures for recording existing injuries
- develop a range of activities and play resources to further promote diversity
- review further the organisation of daily routines to further promote child initiated play and learning experiences and foster independence.

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 written focus activity plans with clear learning intentions and identify next steps in children's learning
- review planning to ensure communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative activities are sufficiently covered.
- develop further the range of teaching methods used by staff.

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