



Children 1st

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY279966
Inspection date	03 October 2005
Inspector	Margaret Coyne
Setting Address	St Peters School, Cottonmill Lane, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 1HL
Telephone number	01727 853075
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Registered person	Children 1st
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Children 1st opened in 2004. It operates from St Peter's School and has access to the nursery classroom. The premises comprises of a main room with three additional adjoining rooms for various play experiences. In addition to this the pre-school also has access to the school hall, field and nursery playground. A maximum of 32 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 12.45 until 15.15 with an optional lunch club from 11.30 until 13.30. They are

open for approximately 39 weeks of the year.

There are currently 40 children on roll from 2 years 9 months to under 5 years. Of these, 6 children receive funding for nursery education. The funded nursery education was reported on in the school inspection because of the similarity of the provision. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Children attend from the local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children who have special educational needs and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The group employs 6 staff. Of these, 3 staff members, including both managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group receive support from a qualified early years teacher and the local authority. They are a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-planned daily routines. Older children have an excellent awareness of how and why we wash our hands and when it is important to do so. For example, before meals and snacks and after messy activities. Younger children develop their understanding through watching others, discussion and through the positive role modelling of the adults. The children are protected from infection through worthwhile hygiene routines which are practised by the pre-school. For example, the high level of well-maintained, clean toys and equipment, excellent hygiene routines and the sick child policy. Overall the high standard of cleanliness throughout the pre-school contributes to the children's good health. The extremely sensitive approach by staff if a child has an accident helps children feel valued and not embarrassed. Practitioners are well informed about children's health issues and all relevant records and documents are in place. A suitable level of staff hold first aid certificates and are aware of how to administer first aid to the children.

Children enjoy an extensive and stimulating range of equipment to promote a healthy life and their physical development. The outside area is very well planned to incorporate different activities which encourage children to use their bodies keeping fit and healthy. Children move with confidence and skill as they ride scooters and bikes. They thoroughly enjoy the cycle path and peddle around this with some skill. Children have access to climbing and balancing equipment and enjoy physical activities in the school hall. For example, children join in group activities with the parachute. They listen to instruction, work together and manipulate their bodies to create a desired effect. Children's dexterity and hand and eye coordination is well developed as they enjoy playing with small world figures, manipulate small cars, building traffic jams and roads. They cut, glue and paint using a variety of tools and gain control using the mouse and key board on the computer. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' guidance well to provide a superior range of physical play experiences

for younger children. As part of the 'keeping healthy' campaign parents are encouraged to walk to school with their children.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. The pre-school takes part in the healthy eating programme involving visits from a nutritionist to share healthy cooking experiences with the children. Children thoroughly enjoy their packed lunches which are provided by parents. The lunch club provides a extremely pleasant, happy, social occasion for children where they enjoy conversation and learn social skills. Children have opportunity to use appropriate cutlery and one child was observed using chop sticks in line with her culture and heritage. Children are able to eat at their own pace and are not made to feel rushed. Snacks and cooking activities are well planned in accordance to children's needs and any allergies or dietary requirements are complied with. Children enjoy a rolling snack time which has a positive impact on their play routines. They confidently and independently choose drinks and snacks during this time and other learning opportunities are introduced. For example, a number is placed on the table to indicate how many pieces of a food item they can help themselves to. Children are actively involved making their own snacks and most can confidently spread their cheese on their crackers. A superb range of cooking activities are planned for the children to develop their thoughts about healthy food choices. They enjoyed making fresh fruit salad, gingerbread men and vegetable soup. Children have access to fresh drinks throughout the day some bring drinks from home which are stored in named containers and milk and water is also readily available. The children take part in the Hertfordshire County 'piece of fruit a day' scheme and enjoy fruit at home time. Parents comment that this has encouraged their children to try fruit they would not normally have.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the pre-school. Staff recognise hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. Systematic risk assessments are carried out and all staff share in the responsibility to keep the children safe. The setting is well planned, with space for children to move freely and safely around activities and play areas. Well implemented safety and security precautions are in place to promote and safeguard the children's welfare. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation and the boundaries necessary to keep them safe such as, not running inside or throwing sand and toys. All suitable safety measures are in place such as, socket covers, high handles, fire safety equipment and fire alarms. All areas within the school grounds are checked for safety to enable children to explore and take risks within a safe environment. Children have taken part in a road safety topic which has given them a clear insight into being safe on the roads. They also enjoy visits from 'people who help us' such as the fire service and police who give children a further insight into 'stranger danger' and keeping safe at all times.

Children use a broad range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. These are well organised throughout the setting in

child height storage units to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. Children play an active role in their own safety by helping to tidy toys away and notifying an adult if something is broken. Sensitive reminders by staff encourage the children to share in the responsibility for their own safety and that of others. For example, asking a child to pick up dolls from the floor in case someone trips over them. Equipment and activities are attractively presented at the children's height to encourage independent access and to help children learn to respect and look after their resources. For example, the dressing up clothes are hung on a rack and children are encouraged to put clothes back so they, and others, do not trip over them. This helps children gain an awareness of safety and take some responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Appropriate numbers of children and high staff ratios ensure an effective level of supervision is maintained to support the children. This is aided by parent helpers and on some days the nursery teacher stays to help support the staff.

Children's welfare is safe guarded and promoted through current policies and procedures for their protection. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection and all procedures are up to date. Their good practise ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. However there is no procedure in place in the child protection policy to clearly show the steps taken in the event of any allegations made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, contented and secure throughout the pre-school. They confidently access the stimulating and challenging range of activities and are forming secure relationships with the staff and other children. Staff have a sound awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive effect on the younger children's achievements. Staff plan activities in line with this framework and have gained a secure knowledge about what children can learn. Children of all ages and abilities use a range of creative materials such as paint, sticking, collages, playdough, and other messy activities. Children learn through their play experiences and are directly involved and interested in their play. Children learn about responsibilities and are allowed to make errors, decisions and choices as they select activities and share their play with others. Staff admirably allow children to make mistakes with the knowledge that this is fine and they can learn from them.

Children exhibit high levels of confidence and security and this has been achieved by the consistent support and direction of staff. Staff help children resolve their differences when any conflicts arise. They are encouraged to talk about it and find their own solutions. This provides children with tools to become aware of others and negotiate differences. Younger children often seek out staff to share experiences with or to gain support for an activity. Attractive displays all around the pre-school gives children pride in their work. Low level displays encourage children to talk about their work. For example the gingerbread man, family trees and pictures of favourite foods. Staff throughout the pre-school make the experiences enjoyable and meaningful for the children which in turn aids their concentration and confidence to participate.

Children are receptive to the constant praise and encouragement that is provided by staff. This has a clear impact on their self-esteem and encourages them to try new tasks and participate in activities. During a group activity making hand prints for their home link books, children exhibit great pride in their individual piece and were praised by staff. Children are learning to communicate their needs and older children confidently use language to discuss items at group time, take part in imaginative play and relate personal events. Older children confidently describe a process and order of work. For example, talking about how they first have to paint their hands then press them down on the paper. One group of children enjoyed being builders creating a building site using hard hats and large wooden blocks. They worked out how to make the wall more stable but enjoyed it when it fell down. This activity also expands their language skills with words such as cement, blocks and tumble, and broadens their horizons with familiar role play experiences. One child picked up the toy phone and told me he was ringing his Mummy because Daddy had got on a train to the North Pole. It was very cold in the North Pole he was concerned that his Mummy was missing him while he was having fun at school. This showed him thinking about others and concern for Mummy. He was confident that she was OK when he put the 'phone' down and moved to something else. Children of all ages and abilities develop a concept of counting, sorting, shape, colour and problem solving through the very well planned and managed activities on offer. Children are able to explore within the school grounds where they can see nature first hand and use different senses as they visit the herb garden.

Nursery Education

Staff enrich the experiences for all children with well planned activities and resources. They have a good awareness of children's starting points and use this to plan next steps in their development. Consistent staff and carers impacts on children's high levels of confidence and security. Children make connections in their learning as they explore and investigate using natural objects, language, imaginative play, mathematical concepts and simple scientific experiments. Children enjoy circle time and break into smaller groups for structured learning activities and stories. This helps maintain children's concentration and causes less disruption as a whole group. Excellent deployment of staff throughout the pre-school aids children's fun and learning. Staff know the children well, know when to step back and let a child take over an activity. A realistic balance has been created between adult-led and child-initiated play giving children tools to succeed in most given tasks. Children's assessments are in place to show their clear and steady progress. The early learning goals are used in conjunction with the morning nursery. This flows through to the pre-school session with the funded children attending in the afternoon. Staff ensure they gain their educational programme throughout both settings.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding and this links closely with the St. Peters School report. This is due to the expertise of the staff, the excellent shared resources, the planning and the assessments which are used in the maintained nursery class in the morning and the pre-school session in the afternoon. Children are making excellent progress towards the Foundation Stage in all areas of their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have access to a meaningful range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity. Children take part in a range of activities that depict both familiar and unfamiliar festivals and celebrations. Staff have very positive attitudes and present themselves as sensitive role models which in turn helps children relate to others and gain a positive understanding of the needs of others. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and supports the educational program the older children receive. All children are valued and respected as individuals and all their needs are well documented and implemented. Children thrive in their environment where they are engaged and nurtured free from any type of stereotyping. Children are provided with sensitive learning opportunities so their understanding of diversity and the wider world is fostered.

Staff recognise that at some time all children will exhibit a 'special need'. This could be a developmental need or personal need. Not all needs are educational and staff are clearly committed to supporting each and every child in order to meet their needs. A one to one carer is in place to support and develop children with special needs and all supporting documents are in place to ensure any child's needs can be met. Extra support for children who speak English as an additional language is offered once a week with language support carers who come to visit the group. Also available is a hearing loop system throughout the school including the pre-school room to aid children with minor or more extreme hearing difficulties.

Children have an excellent understanding of the boundaries within the pre-school and respond to direction from adults in a positive fashion. They eagerly respond to the consistent approach followed by all adults and this impacts clearly on their security and confidence as they know what is expected of them. Children develop high levels of self-esteem as they are able to resolve differences and gain an understanding between right and wrong. This also has the effect of building their managing skills and self-reliance. Effective behaviour management defuses situations and engages children in worthwhile activities. Children share in the responsibility for their own behaviour as they learn to listen to others, share and wait turns and being kind to our friends. Staff are sensitive role models for the children, creating a calm, positive, fun and interesting environment in which they thrive. Children are heard to use the same positive language in their play and discussions with each other. For example, when engaged in role play children discuss being kind to each other. Children also play an active role in keeping their environment clean and tidy. Children help at tidy up time and work cooperatively together filling a large box of toys together. Staff have high expectations for all children.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding and this contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Parents play an active role in their child's care and a two-way sharing of information is encouraged with the use of home link books. Parents are invited to regular open days and events. Staff are extremely approachable and friendly, making parents feel secure and at ease, confident with the care provided for their child. This impacts on

the child's sense of security and trust of all staff. Parents are fully informed about their child's progress and achievements and their involvement impacts greatly on the children's good health, safety, care and learning. Children quickly become settled and secure as they can see parents are happy and positive about the pre-school. Full information is gained about each child in their profile to gain a sound starting point when first arriving at pre-school. This follows them through the main stream school giving a clear record for each stage of attainment.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is greatly enhanced by the systematic organisation and the excellent leadership and management of the pre-school. Daily routines are well organised to ensure all children attending have time and opportunity to take part in all activities. This particularly benefits the children who attend part time.

Leadership and management is outstanding. Both managers continually enhance their own knowledge through extensive training and encourage staff to take part in additional training. The management team are responsible for all aspects of the pre-school including staff supervision and employment, ratio's and deployment, operational plan, staff training and qualifications. All staff have a useful knowledge of the National Standards which they are committed to applying throughout the pre-school. High regard for the well-being of the children, the adult support provided and the well planned activities, contribute to children's enjoyment and achievements. The managers work extremely well together and have built a positive, motivated, and dedicated staff team. The organisation of staff within the pre-school includes a sensitive mix between young and mature staff and enables them to share experiences and enrich and promote the well-being, play and learning opportunities provided for children.

The premises are very well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is effectively arranged to maximize the play opportunities for children. Some indoor and outdoor areas are shared with the main school and enhance the opportunities available for the children. This is managed agreeably between the Head Teacher and the managers and contributes to the extensive, imaginative and safe environment the children enjoy. The partnership with St Peters School is very strong and a positive asset to the organisation of the pre-school. This in turn aids the children when moving up to the main school and reception class as they become familiar with the setting and the staff.

The excellent organisation of all records and documents ensures children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their child's care. Staff are committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their practice. They regularly monitor and improve the quality of their care through the daily organisation of the nursery and the varied and interesting activities provided for the children. Overall the needs of the children attending are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the providers have taken positive steps to ensure Ofsted is kept informed of any relevant changes to staff and areas within the school used by the pre-school. They have introduced a thorough risk assessment which identifies areas of risk in order to keep the children safe. This is continually reviewed and acted upon. Excellent hygiene practise is now in place for the children with regard to washing their hands during the day and the knowledge they have been given as to why and how this is done. Sensitive reminders for some children ensure a high level of hygiene is observed. The pre-school were asked to seek advice about environmental health issues surrounding the use of the sink. They have taken positive steps to ensure the sink area is kept clean and separate bowls used to wash dishes, hands and paint pots. This advice was gained from the site agent in line with original advice from environmental health for the whole school premises. The pre-school has introduced a confidential system to record any incidents or concerns in line with their behaviour and child protection policies.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report

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 outstanding.

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):

- update the child protection policy with a procedure to follow in the event of any allegations made against a member of staff.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk