

St Andrews Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Carol Johnstone

Setting address St Andrews Road, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 3BJ

Telephone number 01308 458151

Email

Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

St Andrew's Pre-school was first established in 1975 and has been in its current premises since 1997. It is managed by a committee of volunteers and operates from the old school house in the town of Bridport, Dorset. The pre-school operates from two playrooms and there is also an enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and both parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 36 children aged from two to five years may attend at any one time. There are currently 57 children on roll within this age group. The pre-school opens during term time only. Sessions are from 8.45am to 11.45am and from 12.45pm to 3.15pm, Monday to Thursday and from 8.45am to 11.45pm on Friday. A one hour lunch club is also offered each day. There are nine staff employed plus an administrator. Of these, eight have appropriate childcare qualifications. The group is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled and they have positive relationships with the staff. Resources are plentiful and children have a wide choice of activities. However, the quality of these vary as staff do not always plan them to meet children's individual learning needs and abilities. While some areas for improvement and development have been identified by the manager, there is no regular process of self-evaluation in place yet for all areas of practice.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- take steps to prevent the spread of infection if a child becomes unwell
- develop children's assessment records to more clearly track their progress and identify their next steps in learning, using the planning to facilitate these
- ensure that all staff have a consistent knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- review the organisation of sessions to ensure that all children receive learning and development experiences which are tailored to meet their individual needs and abilities
- develop a regular process of self-evaluation, involving all staff, in order to identify areas for improvement within all aspects of practice
- ensure that links are fully developed with other providers sharing the care of the children to promote continuity in children's learning and development

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and attend regular training to keep their knowledge updated. Consequently, children at risk would be quickly identified and the appropriate support gained for them. A clear safeguarding policy is in place detailing the preschool's responsibilities in this area and this is given to all parents. Risk assessments are carried out on a daily basis to ensure that all areas are safe for the children to use. There is effective security on the door to make sure that no unauthorised visitors can enter and a chain is used on the gate during outdoor play. Thorough recruitment procedures ensure that staff working with the children are suitable to do so. These include police, reference and health checks. A probationary period is undertaken by all new staff, during which time their interaction with the children is monitored.

Annual appraisals are carried out to identify training needs and all staff have access to the training information programme. However, there is inconsistency in staff's knowledge relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, some areas of practice in relation to children's learning and development, particularly in observations, assessments and planning, are not fully effective in helping children progress as quickly as they could. The manager is relatively new and shows commitment to developing the pre-school. However, as it is a very busy and popular group and the manager herself has a high number of key children, some aspects of leadership have not yet been fully addressed. For example, the regular process of self-evaluation involving all of the staff team in identifying areas for change and improvement. The staff team are cohesive, hard-working and motivated.

There are friendly relationships with parents and staff make themselves available at arrival and collection times. There is a parent committee and several parents who help in a practical way during the sessions. Parents feel that staff are approachable and that they can go to them with any concerns or questions about their child. However, although parent meetings have now restarted and are planned for twice a year, there has been a large gap in staff arranging these for parents and information has not been flowing home as well as it could. Links with other providers who share the care of the children such as other pre-schools and childminders are still in the early stages of development. This limits the exchange of information that would ensure continuity in delivering the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are supported effectively. In addition, some children have specific one-to-one support on a daily basis. There are strong links with external agencies such as Portage to help ensure children are assessed and supported appropriately where necessary. Children have valuable opportunities to learn about difference and diversity. There are activities during cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year and Eid. Recently, children made Chinese food and also explored cultural dress. Children who have English as an additional language are effectively supported with the use of key words and dual language books and resources.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are cared for in two separate playrooms. One is used mainly for the four-year olds approaching school and the other for the two to three-year-olds. The more structured four-year old playroom is well organised and there are some meaningful activities. For example, the children are currently studying a wormery. Each day, children feed the worms, observe what is happening and discuss what the worms are doing. Staff have obtained worm stories to read to them and they are making a 'worm diary'. Children are using old socks to make worm puppets and there are lots of discussions about different types of bugs and insects that the children have seen in their gardens. There are continuous opportunities for children to think and learn. During morning story time, children are given the task of being 'rhyme detectives' and they have to call out when they hear rhyming words and sentences in the stories.

Children in the two to three year old playroom have a wide choice of activities, such as play dough, construction, small world, role play, painting and a trampoline. Play is more unstructured and children move, sometimes quite quickly, between the different activities. When there are adult led activities, for example letters and sounds tasks, children really enjoy these. For example, a member of staff shows the children posters of how to use their mouths to make particular sounds and the children practise these together. She draws two chalk circles on the floor, one for 'S' sounds and the other for 'T' sounds. Children then sort through a box of objects to see which circle they should be placed in. There are also activities such as looking at numerals and trying to match them to candles on play dough 'cakes'. During such activities, children are actively engaged. However, for much of the time, the activities are not focused on the learning needs of the children. Staff interact positively with the children and chat to them during their play. However, because of the inconsistencies in both understanding the Early Years Foundation Stage and knowing where the children are within the areas of learning, there are missed opportunities for children to fully extend their understanding. The staff do make observations of the children during their play, however, these are infrequent and none of the assessment records contain identified next steps for children's learning. Planning has recently started to be used to help target children who have very specific needs. However, it is not yet used to facilitate the next steps in learning for all children.

Children learn that they must wash their hands before snack and lunchtime and staff discuss germs with them and why it is important to wash them off. Staff are very careful when using 'junk modelling' materials and always microwave them first to ensure they are bacteria free. Children benefit from a good selection of fruit at snack time each day, such as strawberries, grapes and bananas. Staff also try to promote healthy eating with parents when sending packed lunches in. However this is not always successful. Children grow their own vegetables in the garden and also benefit from daily exercise and fresh air in the outdoor area which is very well resourced.

There is a sickness policy in place for parents with guidance for minimum exclusion periods. However, children who become unwell during the day are not always isolated while waiting for parents to collect them, which does not minimise the risk of a potential spread of infections. Children learn about their personal safety through visits from the community police officer, who talks to them about road safety and 'stranger danger'. They are reminded not to throw toys into the box when tidying up in case they hurt another child and they are shown how to use equipment safely, such as scissors.

Children are actively encouraged to be responsible individuals and there are clear boundaries in place. Any challenging behaviour is managed effectively and there are regular reminders of the 'kind hands' rules. Children learn that they should share their toys with others. They use an egg timer for popular resources such as the trampoline and understand that on some activity tables, only two children are allowed at a time. When children are asked 'what do we do if more children want to play as well?', they answer 'we say please may I play after you'. Children are given lots of encouragement and praise, which helps to build their self-esteem and confidence.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	3

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	3
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	3

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met