



St Oswalds Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	206874
Inspection date	19 January 2006
Inspector	Diana Pidgeon
Setting Address	St Oswalds School, Mayfield Road, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1AS
Telephone number	07980 420232
E-mail	
Registered person	St Oswalds 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 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 Oswalds Playgroup was registered in 1987. It is managed by a voluntary committee and operates from one room within St Oswalds School in Ashbourne. Children attend from the local area that includes residents of both Derbyshire and Staffordshire. The playgroup is open each morning, Monday to Friday, from 09:15 to 11:45 and on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from 12:45 to 15:15, during school term times only. Children attend for a maximum of 5 sessions per

week. They have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

The playgroup is registered to care for a maximum of 20 children at any one time. There are currently 58 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these 50 receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports a number of children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs a total of eight staff to work with the children. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and a further two are working towards a qualification. The playgroup receives the support of advisory teachers from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is effectively promoted because staff follow appropriate hygiene routines that minimise the risk of cross-infection. They are protected because tables are carefully wiped before food is served and appropriate checks are made to ensure all areas remain clean and suitable throughout the session. Children begin to understand the importance of washing their hands before handling food and why doing so keeps them healthy. Clear arrangements ensure children are well cared for if they are sick or injured as staff hold relevant first aid qualifications and follow clear procedures when administering any necessary medication to children.

Children are starting to understand why certain foods are good for them and are provided with a variety of healthy choices at snack time. They develop their independence skills as they pour milk into their own cups and pass round the plate of fruit. Children enjoy snack time, eagerly tasting the foods offered and talking with their friends and the adults present. Through these conversations children learn about different foods and how, for example, milk makes their bones strong.

Children benefit from well-planned daily physical activities. There are good opportunities for them to play outdoors where they run, ride wheeled toys and develop co-ordination and control of their bodies. Regular use of the school hall for physical play sessions enables children to use a range of large apparatus. This provides suitable levels of challenge for all abilities. Children enjoy moving their bodies in time with the music, curling up to be snowballs and fluttering like snowflakes. They use a wide range of different tools within their activities, which helps to develop their dexterity. For example, children competently use scissors to cut paper into hat shapes to stick onto their snowmen.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. The playroom is

for their sole use and is decorated with displays relevant to the current themes and showing examples of each child's work. Activities are set up before the children arrive, which means they quickly settle to play. The room is thoughtfully arranged to allow quiet areas where children can sit and read or build away from more active pursuits. Resources are presented so that children access them easily and develop their independence through helping themselves from the safely stored items available.

Children stay safe because staff are vigilant in their supervision of the children. There is good security in the playroom and collection procedures are effectively maintained. Comprehensive risk assessments, policies and procedures are followed by the staff to create a safe environment for the children at all times. Children begin to develop an understanding of keeping themselves safe as they understand why they should pick up toys from the floor so that others do not fall on them. Their awareness is further raised through topic work and visits, for example to the local fire station and police station where further important safety messages are learned.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as all the staff are clearly aware of their responsibilities towards protecting children from possible abuse or neglect. Their knowledge has been raised through attending recent training, which ensures they have current information to meet children's needs.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and enjoy their time in the playgroup. They are confident and keen to access the range of play activities provided. These are planned around a theme and offer opportunities for children to extend all areas of their development. Children eagerly plunge their hands into the tray of shaving foam and are totally absorbed as they explore what they can do with it. New children receive good levels of adult support, which enables them to quickly settle. Children develop good relationships with staff, often involving them in their play. They benefit from joining in small group activities and enjoy coming together for singing rhymes or listening to a story. The playgroup has a few children who are under three years of age. Staff successfully adapt activities to be appropriate for their abilities, but have not yet incorporated use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework within their planning or assessment.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a thorough knowledge of the Foundation Stage and understand how children learn through play. Good emphasis is placed on free-play, which allows children to make choices from the planned activities, thus fostering their enjoyment and interest. All areas of learning are covered on a regular basis, with time provided for children to consolidate their skills. Staff clearly understand what children are expected to learn from the activities but are also open and alert to the spontaneous opportunities for learning that occur. For example, when children put shaving foam into the water tray and comment this is like icebergs, staff

use skilled questioning and offer suitable vocabulary to ensure children are able to extend their own learning. Staff use their observations of children to record their achievements and use this information to accurately record their progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. This information is then used to plan for each child's next steps in learning, so that they continue to make progress. Staff spend their time working closely with the children, promoting their self-esteem through the use of praise and encouragement. There are clear systems in place to effectively support children with special educational needs. Staff generally make good use of the areas available to them. The playroom is organised to offer sufficient space for children to play comfortably and select additional resources as they wish. Currently the school hall is used on one morning a week, allowing the children to use the school gym apparatus to extend their physical skills. Children use the outdoor area on a regular basis and staff are beginning to recognise the potential of the outdoor learning environment for extending all areas of learning. However, this is not yet maximised.

Children are motivated and show positive attitudes towards learning. They eagerly participate in activities and concentrate very well to complete their chosen tasks. They relate well to their peers, staff and visitors, showing confidence and self-esteem. Children behave very well throughout the sessions and show high levels of care and concern for others. At circle time children sit quietly and listen attentively to staff, taking turns to express their own opinions. Their independence skills are developing as they find aprons to put on before messy play and return these to the pegs after use. Children's language is developing well and many are confident to share their news at circle time. Some children are able to predict what will happen, for example when water is added to the magic snow, and to describe this using appropriate vocabulary. They have access to a range of mark making resources and show enthusiasm when creating patterns in the foam. Children begin to write within their play and some competently label their own work. They begin to link sounds to letters in a group activity and use books for their own enjoyment. Children count and use numbers competently within their play. They recognise how many snowmen are in the line and count the number of beads on a thread. Some children are able to count backwards and are able to work out how many are left as they sing 'Six Stately Snowmen'.

Children are beginning to explore and find about the world in which they live. They eagerly observe change and predict what they think will happen, for example when they mix cornflour with water and watch blocks of ice melt. Their awareness of the local community is raised through a well-planned programme of outings, such as visiting the local market to buy fruit. They learn about their own and other cultures through topic work and the use of appropriate resources. Their physical skills are enhanced through use of both large and small equipment. Children are helped to learn appropriate skills, such as how to hold scissors, and given plenty of opportunities to practise as they cut materials for their own craft work. They create pictures and models to support their topic work and sometimes from their own ideas. Children like to dress up and play imaginatively in the home corner, often involving the adults in their games. Children imitate their home experiences as they bath dolls in the water tray.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are confident and settled in the playgroup. They are familiar with the daily routines and readily share their knowledge with visitors, for example explaining about how snack time is organised. This shows their sense of belonging in the setting. Children are treated as individuals. Through the effective use of initial information sheets and ongoing discussions with parents, children's needs are clearly met. Additional support is available to children with specific needs and staff work co-operatively with parents and external agencies to ensure these needs are met.

Children are beginning to understand how they are part of the local and wider community through planned activities and use of appropriate resources. With the support of parents and volunteers, children enjoy a variety of outings into the local community that help them appreciate the world in which they live. The use of resources that promote positive images and the celebration of festivals from a range of cultures helps to broaden their overall awareness of the similarities and differences in society.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They show a clear understanding of the expectations for their behaviour, and show care and consideration for others. For example, at circle time children sit on their own individual cushions and listen when others are speaking. They willingly share equipment, such as scissors, and take turns at activities. Older children show concern for others, for example when another child bumps his head. Staff readily praise children to affirm their good behaviour and stickers are used positively to reinforce this and build children's self-esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Ongoing sharing of information ensures children's care needs are met. Parents are welcomed into the group and have a variety of ways in which they can take an active role. For example, parents have an opportunity to be a part of the elected management committee and to help in sessions or with outings. Good written information is available to parents and is displayed both in the foyer and playroom. This explains clearly about the educational curriculum and the policies and procedures that guide the group. Current planning is displayed and this ensures parents are always aware of the topics their children are following. Parents' opinions are sought and valued. A number of changes to the provision were made in response to a questionnaire sent to parents. Parents have good access to their children's assessment records and contribute to them. They are aware of their child's next steps in learning and report that they are very pleased with the education and care their children receive. A number of ways, such as a shared book and game scheme, encourage children's learning to be extended at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children receive good levels of support and supervision to help them feel secure. Staff are clear about their designated responsibilities and work very well together to

meet the needs of the children. They receive the support of the voluntary management committee, who are still learning about their responsibilities since the recent changes to some of the personnel involved. Whilst suitable overall recruitment procedures are in place to guide the appointment of new staff, these are not yet sufficiently robust to provide clear guidelines about seeking appropriate checks on the applicant, to ensure their suitability. All the relevant documentation is in place to support the care of the children and held with good regard to confidentiality. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated, although the content of the complaint procedure does not reflect the requirements that have been recently introduced.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The committee, supervisors and staff work very well together to ensure the smooth running of the group in line with the identified aims. The staff constantly strive for improvement which is evidenced through the group currently working toward a recognised quality assurance award. Children benefit from having a qualified and experienced staff team who continue to extend their knowledge through attending training. Responsibilities within the playgroup are shared and staff work very effectively as a team, creating a calm and happy atmosphere in which children learn while having fun. Overall the playgroup meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was recommended that the playgroup made Ofsted details available to parents in the event that they had a complaint. This has now been included in the complaint policy and is displayed for parents, which ensures they are now better informed.

At the last nursery education inspection the playgroup were asked to consider the organisation of snack time and to provide greater opportunities for children to link reference books and print to the activities provided. Since then children are encouraged to take turns to set out the cups at snack time, to pour their own drinks and tidy away their dishes afterwards. This has served to increase their independence. Reference books have been bought and borrowed from the library to support the topics. For example, reference books are displayed alongside artefacts on the interest table. This helps children understand that books can be used to locate information as well as to tell stories.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004.

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.

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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 and update the complaint policy and recruitment procedures to reflect current legislation, national standards and guidance
- extend staff awareness of how use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework can support the outcomes for younger children.

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):

- continue to develop the use of the outdoor environment to support all areas of children's learning.

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