



St Augustines Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY263188
Inspection date	18 October 2005
Inspector	Linda Janet Witts
Setting Address	Matson House, Matson Lane, Matson, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL4 6ED
Telephone number	01452 384442
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Registered person	St Augustines 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 Augustine's Playgroup has been registered at this address since 2003. It is a committee-run group and offers sessional day care for up to 24 children aged from 2 years, 9 months to 5 years. Occasionally younger children are accepted, at the group's discretion. The playgroup has 69 children on roll of whom 38 are funded three-year-olds. The group also supports children with special needs and has experience of caring for children for whom English is an additional language.

The playgroup is open Monday to Friday, term-time only, from 09:15 to 11:45 hrs and 12:15 to 14:45 hrs. Monday, Thursday and Friday morning sessions and Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon sessions are for pre-school three and four year-olds only.

Fundraising has enabled the playgroup to purchase their own premises. This consists of a purpose-built cabin, offering an open-plan playroom, kitchenette and toilet facilities. It is situated within the grounds of Matson House, in Matson, a suburb of Gloucester. The Moat Primary School, Gloucester Ski Centre and Country Club are in close proximity to the playgroup. The group has the use of a spacious, secure outdoor grassed area and secure hard-surfaced tennis courts.

A team of 7 staff are employed, 3 of them hold level three qualifications relevant to their roles and 2 are currently working towards level 2 National, Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in child care. A high percentage of the staff are trained in first aid, child protection and food hygiene. Staff are supported at each session by parents, on a duty rota. Teacher support is accessed from the local authority, Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is actively promoted. They play within a clean, well-maintained environment and see the staff wiping tables before and after snack time, vacuuming as necessary and keeping the toilets hygienic for use. Children of all ages wash their hands independently after messy play, handling the rabbits and before preparing food or eating and are helped to understand why this is important. Staff ensure that young children who wear nappies or have any 'little accidents' are changed promptly, in privacy, ensuring their comfort. Children who appear unwell are monitored and supported to ensure that their needs are met. The group has effective procedures for dealing with sickness or injury and most staff hold up-to-date first aid training certificates.

Children attend on a sessional basis and are too busy to sleep. They are able to relax, as they wish, and often take themselves off into the quieter cosy areas of the book corner or sensory area. For example one two year old snuggled, undisturbed amongst the cushions in the sensory area. As he rested he gazed, fascinated by the movements of a lava lamp and twinkling fairy lights.

Children are extremely well nourished. They have an excellent snack menu, offering a substantial meal. The snacks are balanced, healthy and nutritious. Staff limit the amount of processed foods offered and encourage children to make healthy choices. Snacks are served café-style, which promotes children's independence; even the youngest two-year-olds are confident with this system. Children are able to choose what and how much they eat and drink, and there is always plenty available should children choose to have more. Children also have opportunities to prepare snacks. For example children chopped a variety of vegetables and helped to prepare soup, which many then later tried at snack time. Activities are also used to promote

children's understanding of healthy eating.

There is a set time during each session when children of all ages can play outside and during summer months many activities are undertaken outside. Children enjoy fresh air and exercise, running freely within the extensive outside play space. Children are able to develop their physical skills, such as moving in a variety of ways, balls skills and balance. For example children can co-ordinate dropping a small ball with one hand and using the other to strike the ball hard with a bat. They race one another at speed on space hoppers and use acquired skills to walk on low stilts. Younger children enjoy using the wheeled toys but older children are too big for most of them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. They are secure and parents/carers are welcome. Indoor and outdoor space is organised effectively, creating a child-friendly environment. Children are able to explore and take risks while being appropriately supervised. Children move freely and safely within the indoor play space. They learn to keep themselves safe. For example, when preparing vegetables for soup, children used adult knives to cut and were told how to do so safely, and responded appropriately. Visits from a fire safety officer and police officer have also promoted children's awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Regular fire drills help to familiarise children with emergency evacuation procedures. There is a high ratio of adults to children present, and adults are effectively deployed, ensuring children are always well supervised.

Children use suitable and safe equipment. There is an extensive range of toys and equipment that are of good quality, for children to use. Children can access resources safely and play an active role in tidying up, helping to maintain a safe play environment.

Children are protected because all staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. The leader enrolls new staff on child protection courses promptly to ensure that they, like other staff, have sufficiently up-to-date knowledge to promote children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages happily engage in the activities on offer. They enjoy both adult-led and freely chosen activities. They are helped to acquire new knowledge and skills and to make positive relationships with their peers and adults. Two year olds attending are full of enthusiasm and often run between activities to ensure that they are able to do all the things they want to. They are keen to paint and construct. They enjoy sensory experiences such as drizzling glue over their hands as they make junk models, hand painting or spending time in the sensory corner exploring different

textures and objects.

Teaching and learning are good.

Children really enjoy themselves at the playgroup. They are interested in all the activities offered to them and move freely between activities, choosing what they do. Resources such as writing and creative materials, books and imaginative play resources are readily available to children. Children show excitement in their learning and are making good progress towards the Early Learning goals in all six areas of learning. They do particularly well in their personal, emotional and social development.

Children relate well to one another, and to adults, and happily link up with others for support. Most children talk confidently and those who find it more difficult, receive appropriate support and encouragement to develop their language. Children are introduced to new vocabulary and use language to communicate ideas, share news, talk about their families, recall past experiences and also to talk through what they are doing. Staff give them time to talk and listen to them. They ask questions effectively to promote children's thinking. Children's use of imagination is evident as they play in the home corner and with small world toys. Much of their play is based on their own first-hand experiences such as going to the shops, carrying out household chores and going on picnics. They do also use their imaginations to initiate lively play. Many boys relish the role of 'baddy' and chase the girls or scare them. Others, boys and girls, in this situation act as the defender and fend off the 'baddy'.

Teaching is good and appropriate for all children. Adults have an excellent knowledge of children's individual needs and know where children are in their learning. Individual education plans effectively aid the progress of those children who have special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is proficient in her role and liaises closely with children's parents and outside professionals to ensure that children are helped to meet their full potential. All adults have a sound knowledge of the foundation stage and voluntary helpers and students are supported appropriately in their roles, to benefit children's learning. The leader and staff motivate the children so they are keen to learn. They also instinctively know when to extend activities to challenge more able children. The planned curriculum is broad and balanced, giving sufficient attention to all areas of learning. When planning staff use their mental assessment and some written evidence of children's learning to build on. This ensures that planned activities help children to move onto the next stage in their development. Individual records of children's progress do not clearly show their learning over time.

Staff manage the children and their behaviour well, creating a happy environment, conducive to learning. The premises are attractive. Inside there are plenty of positive images, displays of children's work and print for children to see. The outside area is extensive and well-maintained. Although children do have regular opportunities for outside play, the wealth of learning opportunities available to children here, are not used to their full potential.

Good use is made of the group's links to the local community. Visitors such as a

paramedic, police and fire officers and outings enhance children's learning. Visits from school teachers help to ensure that children have a smooth transition into school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Many outstanding aspects of practice ensure that children's personal, emotional and social development is promoted extremely well. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children at the playgroup are very happy and enthusiastic in their play and learning. Most children come running into the playgroup and cannot wait to get busy. Even younger individuals who are reluctant to leave their parents, with reassurance from staff, settle quickly. Children are all valued and made to feel very welcome, as are parents and visitors. There is a real buzz of excitement and happiness within the setting. It is a place full of happy smiling faces, giggles of delight and often infectious laughter.

Children are kind, considerate and thoughtful of others. They are well-mannered, share and take-turns. Children and adults respect each other. Clear boundaries for behaviour are understood by the children. Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour and manage behaviour in a way that is appropriate to each child's age and stage of development. Children's self-esteem is fostered impressively. They are encouraged to take pride in all their achievements and these are highly valued by staff. Children receive plenty of praise and encouragement. Staff offer this verbally or in the form of beaming smiles and cuddles. Their achievements are shared with their parents when they come to collect them, further fostering their self-esteem.

Children's independence is actively promoted. They are encouraged to try things for themselves, but help is at hand for those who need it. For example, all children hang their coats up on arrival and after outside play. They attempt to put their coats on unaided and many do this successfully, even managing the fastenings. Children make choices in what activities they undertake and how they do things. They choose what they eat and how much, and their ideas are valued.

Children are helped to consider diversity. They have access to a broad range of resources, play opportunities and activities which reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural differences.

Parents and carers are actively encouraged to become involved in their child's learning, by supporting fundraising events that help to extend the resources available for children to use, by joining the voluntary management committee and by regularly undertaking playgroup duty. Parents speak highly of the playgroup provision and staff. They praise staff enthusiasm and knowledge of their children's individual needs. They say that they are well-informed about all aspects of the provision and are made to feel very welcome within the group. Partnership with parents and carers is good. In relation to the foundation stage of children's learning, parents on rota duty are able to gain an insight into how their children learn and relate to other children. They gain an understanding of how the curriculum is planned and offered. Because parents are aware of themes and topics they can extend their children's learning at home.

Parents also receive verbal information about their children's progress and have access to their developmental records. Written end of year reports clearly show where children are in their learning, but others records do not clearly show parents their child's progress over time.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a well-organised playgroup. It is led by an enthusiastic, experienced individual, who is supported well by the rest of the staff team. They are all committed to training for their own and children's benefit. Three of them hold level three qualifications relevant to their role and two are working towards level two qualifications in child care. Staff have high regard for the well-being of all children and staff deployment contributes to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. The provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

The playgroup's policies and procedure documents are currently under review, to ensure that they reflect their new responsibilities with regards to vetting of staff and dealing with any complaints. The staff employed are suitably qualified and experienced and are appropriately vetted. A new committee of parents has been formed and they have not yet been appropriately vetted. Staff ensure that any person who is not vetted does not have unsupervised access to children. All legally required records are appropriately maintained.

Each session is structured to make good use of available time and to provide a balance of activities for children. Children do have some time outside but the outside areas are not used to their full potential. Children are familiar with the routine and it works well for all children.

Leadership and management are good.

The leader has a clear vision for the nursery education with a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children. The provision is managed well, making good use of staff, time and resources. The leader monitors the work of staff and identifies any training needs, for their own personal development and to benefit the children. Team spirit is fostered and ideas for activities or improvement suggested by staff are valued. The team acts upon suggestions from parents. Together, staff review their practice and identify strengths in their provision and any areas for improvement.

The committee enables staff to access training and employs staff who are committed to their roles. The high adult to child ratios that are maintained ensure that each child receives the support they need. It also ensures that staff have time to plan and provide a successful curriculum, are able to carry out assessments of children's learning and to support students and other adults within the group as necessary.

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations for improvement were made at the previous care and nursery education inspections. The recommendations arising from the last care inspection were to display children's work more frequently to offer children the opportunity to take pride in their achievements and to extend the range of outdoor-wheeled toys available, to offer greater physical challenge to older children. In response to this, examples of children's work are now routinely displayed. Those children wishing to take their work home receive meaningful praise that encourages them to take pride in their achievements. Staff have identified high-quality, wheeled equipment which they want to buy to ensure that children are sufficiently challenged. Fund-raising to make this possible is well underway. Additional physical play resources have been received as a result of parents collecting supermarket vouchers. These have enabled children to engage in a wider variety of physical play, and have worked particularly well to improve children's ball skills.

A point for consideration following the inspection of nursery education was to extend the use of assessment, to ensure that they are routinely used to inform future planning, helping to challenge more able children. Also to ensure that all adults are aware of how individuals can be supported. In response to this the group has reviewed its methods of assessment and has tried different means of recording information gathered. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of where children are in their learning and use this when planning to help children to move onto the next stage of their development. However, records available to share with parents do not clearly show children's progress over time. All adults working with children, including parents on duty are now briefed at the beginning of each session, about activities and how they can support individual children in their learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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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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 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):

- consider making the outdoor environment available simultaneously to the indoor one, to aid those children that learn best outdoors and to offer greater opportunities to work on large-scale (also applies to nursery education)
- ensure that policies reflect new responsibilities with regards to dealing with complaints and staff vetting. Also ensure that all committee members are appropriately vetted.

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):

- find an effective means of recording individual children's progress over time, that can be shared with parents to give a clear picture of where their children are at in their 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