



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN EY295043

DfES Number: 546097

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	02/02/2005
Inspector Name	Jill Nugent

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	St Michaels Playgroup
Setting Address	Margaret Wix Junior & Infant School High Oaks St. Albans Hertfordshire AL3 6EL

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	The Committee of St Michaels Playgroup Parent Committee 800378
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	St Michaels Playgroup Parent Committee
Address	Margaret Wix Junior & Infant School High Oaks St. Albans Hertfordshire AL3 6EL

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

St Michaels Playgroup has been established for over 30 years and moved to its present location in Margaret Wix School, St Albans, in September 2004. It operates from one classroom of the school and children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open each weekday from 09.15 to 11.45 during term time. A parent and toddlers group meets on Fridays from 12.30 to 14.10.

There are currently 30 children on roll aged from two years to under four years. Of these 18 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide area. The playgroup currently supports one child with special educational needs and one child who speaks English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs 5 staff, 3 of whom have appropriate early years qualifications. It is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives input from a qualified teacher.

How good is the Day Care?

St Michaels Playgroup provides good quality care for children. Staff are well qualified and have many years experience. Their policies are clear and all documents well maintained, particular care being taken regarding confidentiality. Their organisation of the playgroup is very effective and sessions run smoothly. The room is bright and welcoming. Resources are set out and available space arranged to help stimulate different kinds of play. There is a wide range of toys and equipment, organised and stored so that they are easily accessible. However, the resources are not always used effectively to provide children with extra choices.

Staff offer a selection of activities and work closely with the children to extend their play. All children are encouraged to participate in the planned creative activity. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs and make good arrangements for children with special needs. They manage behaviour appropriately, intervening to help children sort out disputes and rewarding those who behave well. Good use is made

of the incident book to record all significant events.

Staff have good systems in place to ensure children's safety and security, although the main door is not always monitored at the beginning of the session. Termly risk assessments are carried out and acted upon but weekly safety checks are not recorded. Staff have a good knowledge of child protection issues. They pay good attention to hygiene and children have a variety of facilities for handwashing. The first aid box is easily accessible and precise details of any accidents are recorded. A healthy snack is provided each day. Information about allergies is available to all adults preparing food.

Staff provide good information for parents and carers regarding the provision, including guidance on sick children and the day-to-day procedures. All parents are involved as parent helpers and they have good opportunities to talk to staff before and after each session.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable.

What is being done well?

- Staff make good use of their time by organising a daily routine that keeps children happily involved throughout. There is a good system of self-registration and children are grouped effectively at story times so that all are included.
- The environment is welcoming, clean and tidy. There are many colourful displays and a selection of flowering plants. Good use is made of a screen at singing time helping children to focus and providing extra security when they are collected.
- Children's individual needs are met appropriately. Staff are all aware of any special needs and work alongside a learning support assistant to ensure that children are given good and appropriate support.
- All parents are involved as parent helpers. They are given guidelines on how best to help and particulars of any jobs they are expected to do. Children benefit from the extra individual attention that this arrangement provides.

What needs to be improved?

- use of resources so that children have more choice
- security of children at arrival times
- recording of weekly safety checks

PREVIOUS COMPLAINTS (This section applies only to inspections carried out

from September 2004. The complaint record relates to complaints from the last inspection or 1st April 2004 whichever is later.)

There are no complaints to report.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
5	Make more effective use of the resources to provide children with a wider choice.
6	Ensure the security of children as they arrive and record the weekly safety checks.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for nursery education at St Michaels Playgroup is of good quality overall. It enables children to make very good progress towards the early learning goals in communication language and literacy and generally good progress in all other areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff work directly with the children for much of the time and provide a stimulating environment which is well organised to enable children's independence. They form supportive relationships with the children and intervene in their play to offer challenging questions and encourage their thinking. Teaching methods are varied, effective and show an understanding of how children learn. Staff manage children's behaviour positively, helping them to understand and respond to the boundaries.

The group monitors and assesses children's learning and progress but these records are not yet fully shared with parents although they are sent on to the next setting. Also planning does not show a sufficiently clear link to the Foundation Stage so that some opportunities for learning are missed. However, there are effective systems in place to identify and work with children with special needs.

The leadership and management of the group is generally good. The manager has a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the group and has built a committed staff team. They all share the responsibility for organising and planning activities and work extremely well together. As yet the systems for monitoring and evaluating their practice and the children's progress do not sufficiently influence their future planning.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Staff are regularly available to talk to parents informally and they are asked for a written input into their child's individual learning plan. Whilst there is excellent information on display relating the Foundation Stage to activities provided by the group parents are unaware of how it relates to their child.

What is being done well?

- Staff listen to children and encourage their communication at all times. Throughout each session staff interact and share information with children, discussing activities and questioning their thinking. They reinforce and develop children's vocabulary and language structure by expanding what they say and carefully modelling correct forms of speech. As a result, children are confident communicators who use language for a wide range of purposes.
- Staff are well deployed to support, encourage and interact with children throughout the session. They carefully develop and extend play situations

alongside children so that their attention and concentration is lengthened and the opportunities for learning are increased. Each member of staff has their own well-defined role in planning and organising separate parts of the daily routine and these are rotated on a weekly basis. As a result, sessions operate smoothly and efficiently and staff can give the maximum amount of attention to the children.

- Support for children with Special Educational Needs is very good. The group seeks funding to provide an extra member of staff to support children with special needs and liaises closely with advisory teachers and other involved professionals. The whole staff team then make any necessary changes to their teaching strategies or grouping of children in order to create the optimum learning environment for the child. Progress is carefully monitored and discussed with the parents on a daily basis.

What needs to be improved?

- the opportunities for children to develop their understanding of numbers, calculation and problem solving through practical day to day experiences
- the sharing of information with parents about the Foundation Stage and their child's progress towards the early learning goals
- the linking of planned activities to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable. This is the playgroup's first inspection of nursery education.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are happy, settled, confident and eager to learn. They form supportive relationships with both adults and their peers. They are very aware of the behavioural expectations of the group and are supported with praise and a star system for positive behaviour and caring attitudes to others. Children generally have good self help skills but some opportunities to develop their independence still further such as during snack time or when putting on their coats for outside play are missed.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children use language confidently with adults and their peers. They use their developing vocabulary and sentence construction to explain their thinking, reflect on past events and expand their imaginative play. They share and enjoy stories and are encouraged to begin to link sounds with letters and to recognise and spell their names phonically. Daily mark making opportunities and an environment which values the written word ensure that children are interested in writing.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's knowledge of colour and shape is well developed through the use of planned topics and staff also reinforce these concepts throughout play. Opportunities to experiment with measure and volume are regularly provided through sand and water play and construction activities. Children are encouraged to count and learn number sequences with rhymes and songs but opportunities to reinforce counting, calculation and problem solving within everyday routines are not sufficiently developed.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Chances to explore, investigate and look at change are built into curriculum themes to encourage children's interest in the natural world and their environment. They develop a sense of time through daily discussions about the weather and confidently access everyday technology through push button toys and role-play equipment. Many planned activities have a pre-determined end product which means that children have limited opportunities to fully develop their design and making skills.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Generally Good
Children move with control and co-ordination and negotiate space well. There is provision for them to climb, balance, crawl, run and jump both inside and outside. They develop hand-eye coordination through planned activities such as throwing and catching bean bags and balls and through play activities such as threading, fishing games and cutting. There are not sufficient planned opportunities for health and bodily awareness to be highlighted.	

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Generally Good
Children know and enthusiastically join in with singing familiar songs on a daily basis and are exposed to a variety of different types of music at tidy up time. They develop role-play scenarios alone and in small groups using a wide range of imaginative play materials attractively set up within the playgroup. Creative art activities utilise a variety of painting techniques but use pre-cut shapes and offer children few opportunities to experiment or use their imaginations freely.	

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- increase the opportunities within everyday activities and routines to develop children's understanding of numbers, calculating and problem solving
- improve the sharing of information with parents about the Foundation Stage and their child's progress towards the early learning goals
- clarify the linking of planned activities to the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.