



Office for Standards
in Education

NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 123615

DfES Number: 580733

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 15/11/2004
Inspector Name Sheila Harrison

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Southdown Methodist Pre-School
Setting Address 130a Southdown Road
Harpenden
Hertfordshire
AL5 1PU

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Southdown Methodist Church Pre-school

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Southdown Methodist Church Pre-school
Address 130a Southdown Road
Harpenden
Hertfordshire
AL5 1PU

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public 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

Southdown Methodist Pre-School is run by a committee from the church and opened in 1983. It operates from a first floor room in the church hall with toilets nearby and an extra hall for physical play. The setting serves the local area.

There are currently 27 children from two year six months to five years on roll. This includes 10 funded 3 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting willingly supports children with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens four days a week during school term times. Sessions are Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 09:15 until 12:00.

Four part-time staff work with the children. Three staff members have early years qualification to NVQ level 3. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). They are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision of nursery education at Southdown Methodist Church Pre-School is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals.

Teaching is generally good. Staff are developing a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and use this knowledge to plan a broad, balanced and purposeful curriculum with a wide range of interesting activities. They make satisfactory use of time and resources, working directly with the children. However, children lack chances to choose and replace some mark making equipment and develop their independence at snack time. Staff frequently observe and assess aspects of children's development and learning. They draw on these detailed assessments in planning what children need to learn next. Staff introduce activities well, encouraging children to move on in their learning. Children have some opportunities to work on a larger or more active scale. Staff praise and encourage the children in their play, helping the children to understand acceptable behaviour. Children's confidence and sense of belonging are fostered through the effective key worker system.

Constructive and carefully planned provision is made for children with special needs to ensure they are included in all activities. There are few strategies to assist children with English as an additional language.

Leadership and management are generally good. The committee, leader and staff are committed to training and professional development. Information from evaluations of the session, staff meetings and regular informal discussions are used to monitor and improve the quality of care and education. Staff discuss and implement ideas from courses.

The partnership with parents is generally good and contributes positively to the children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child and to be involved in their child's learning.

What is being done well?

- Staff build warm and trusting relationships with the children. They provide a suitable range of worthwhile activities responding to their interests, helping them to progress in their learning, settle and leave their main carer confidently.
- Staff have become a consistent and strong team. They share a common purpose and are all involved in the planning and recording of children's achievements, which ensures the children are well supported and confident. Training on sand play inspires staff to introduce new opportunities to the children.

- Children fully participated in a purposeful music and movement session. They move confidently, practise good posture and rhythm and sing with enthusiasm.
- Parents are provided with worthwhile information about the policies, routine and activities and how this helps the children learn. Staff form successful relationships with parents and effectively share information on children's progress.

What needs to be improved?

- the availability of tools and different mark making resources to encourage children to initiate their own learning and independence
- the organisation of snack time to make the most of the learning opportunities
- strategies to enable children with English as an additional language to be involved in all activities.

What has improved since the last inspection?

n/a

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's confidence and self esteem are built up with children encouraged to explore their emotions. They are choosing between activities, although some self care tasks are not fully encouraged with some resources not being selected or replaced by themselves. Children behave well, are taught to share, take turns and be considerate of others. They have valuable chances to bring items from home and to discuss their families with staff who are sensitive to their needs and know the children well.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children communicate keenly with staff. They listen and respond with enjoyment to stories and songs with chances to interpret gestures such as "what song comes next". Staff are aware the book corner is not sufficiently used and plan to review the staff deployment in this area. Children speak confidently in a large group describing the objects brought from home. They have some chances to recognise their first names and to use different mark making equipment, although these are not fully extended.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children benefit from support to count, use mathematical language at circle time and sing popular number rhymes, but do not see the full use of numerals as labels. They have chances to use real money when singing "5 currant buns". Children discover "one more, one less" and "which is most" by suitable questioning from the staff. They learn the names of shapes and are beginning to develop an awareness of weight and capacity with the sand and water.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children notice the different properties of ice in the water and wet and dry sand through planned activities. They discuss Harvest Festival and Christmas, but do not fully appreciate other people's customs and beliefs and have some limited links to children's other languages. Staff bring different types of machines to show the children but they lack chances to experience various technological toys.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are set challenges to develop their physical skills on the climbing frame and on tricycles in the large hall. Children move with control and coordination developing an awareness of space during a music and movement session. Children are beginning to handle tools and objects with increasing skill, although due to the organisation of snack time, children find handling the cups difficult which leads to spilt drinks. They miss chances to pour their own drinks.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children participate enthusiastically in the music and movement sessions exploring the sounds, moving to the rhythm and using their imagination as fish in an aquarium. They create feely pictures with different textured materials, describing their thoughts on how it feels. Children are given information about the way animals use their senses and practise being giraffes and elephants. They paint freely with brushes extending the experiment to using their hands.

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

- extend the availability of tools and different mark making resources to encourage children to initiate their own learning and independence
- review the organisation of snack time to make the most of the learning opportunities
- develop strategies to enable children with English as an additional language to be involved in all activities.

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.