

Southdown Methodist Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	123615
Inspection date	22/03/2011
Inspector	Hilary Preece
Setting address	130a Southdown Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 1PU
Telephone number	07950614504
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Southdown Methodist Pre-school is run by a committee. It opened in 1983 and was registered in 1992. The pre-school is located in the Southdown area of Harpenden, Hertfordshire. It operates from a church hall situated on the first floor and is accessed by stairs and a lift. There is no outdoor play area but an additional hall is used for physical play and an allotment is used on a regular basis. The pre-school serves the local area.

The pre-school opens on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays during school term times. Sessions are from 9.10am to 12.10pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 28 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 36 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of child care staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications Level 3 or above. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Effective working relationships with parents and exemplary partnerships in the wider context enable all relevant parties to work together in supporting children's needs. A generally secure and well-planned environment allows children to develop well and enjoy and make good progress in their learning. A commitment to reflective practice and generally accurate self-evaluation ensure that continuous improvement is maintained.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- take steps to prevent intruders entering the premises; 15/04/2011
this refers to security of the door to the pre-school room which is not locked while other hall users and members of the public are on the premises (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare).

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

- provide opportunities for parents to review children's progress records more regularly, and seek parents' views in order to contribute to self-evaluation.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

There is a rigorous safeguarding children policy and all levels of staff and management understand their roles and responsibilities in following procedures to safeguard and protect children from risk of harm. Safe recruitment procedures ensure that all staff are vetted and have suitable qualifications or skills to work with children. Daily checks of the premises and equipment and risk assessments carried out for each type of outing ensure that children keep safe. Staff are vigilant in supervising children when using areas of the building shared by other users and ensuring that safe procedures are followed as children arrive and depart. Children cannot leave the premises unsupervised, as they cannot reach the latch to undo the door themselves, but there is a risk that unwanted visitors could gain entry as there is no security system in use on the main door to the pre-school room. However, the management has agreed to review security arrangements in light of this regulation not being met.

Parents are warmly welcomed and encouraged to get involved through volunteering to help at sessions and on outings. Effective arrangements for sharing information with parents and carers initially contribute to children settling well and their individual needs being met. This includes finding out about any specific health or developmental issues and putting in place particular plans or additional support that is required. Parents report that children settle quickly and really enjoy attending the pre-school. They are kept informed verbally by staff and offered a formal consultation session once a year. They have recently been invited to contribute items to their children's learning journal records by reporting on particular achievements or events from home to encourage further sharing of information. Although parents know they can ask to see their children's records, they are not given particularly frequent access to them and so are not fully involved in working together to support and extend children's learning and development. Some special events are planned to involve fathers and grandparents who may not normally have the opportunity to visit the pre-school. An example of this is opening on a Saturday morning to allow fathers to attend and help their children make cards for Mother's Day. Very well-established and effective partnerships exist between the pre-school, external agencies and local schools. This ensures children with additional needs are fully supported and enables all children to make a smooth transition as they move on to nursery or school. In addition, it enables staff to develop further skills and share good practice with other early years settings and support groups.

Staff are well deployed throughout the session to support and extend children's learning. Their personal skills and attributes are assessed thoughtfully when deciding which staff member would make best use of a particular training course. Information from training is then cascaded to all staff in order to maximise learning opportunities for children. They make good use of available indoor space to

provide children with large-scale physical play opportunities and to bring the outdoors inside. A paddling pool filled with autumn leaves, for example, enables children to explore the natural world. The acquisition of an allotment very close by has also meant children can go on outings in the fresh air and be active learners. The whole staff team is encouraged to be reflective in order to evaluate what works well and what needs to improve. They all contribute to the self-evaluation process. Parents are invited to make suggestions or leave comments about the service but the staff team has not fully considered how to gather their views on whether the service fully meets their needs.

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

Children's learning and development is promoted well by the broad range of exciting and stimulating activities and play opportunities provided. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and child-initiated play so children have chances to become confident, active learners. Arrangements for observation, assessment and planning have recently been reviewed in order to provide a greater focus on planning for individual learning based on observations of children. Staff also take account of the needs of particular groups of children. An example of this is how they have encouraged boys to broaden their imaginations by providing a greater range of dressing up clothes and hats so they can explore different roles and characters to those they normally choose. Frequent observations are made of children that show their achievements and identify some next steps in their learning. Records are monitored closely to ensure all children, given their starting points, make good progress across all areas of learning.

Children make secure relationships with the staff and many are forming friendships and playing with other children. They play particularly well together in role play and imaginative games in which they apply their developing knowledge and skills. For example, a group pretends to make a space rocket by lining up chairs, counting how many seats there are and deciding how many people they can take in the rocket. Staff support children's imaginative play by introducing props to turn the climbing frame into a rocket in which another group of children count down as they blast off to the moon. Children behave well, show positive attitudes to learning and take active roles in the setting. They learn to be respectful of others and their surroundings by taking turns to be the daily helper and actively contributing to tidy up routines. They are keen to make sure that every last grain of sand is swept up, for example. Each day the child who is the daily helper is allowed to take a photograph using the digital camera of a subject of his or her choice which they then display on the board for parents to see. The children love to watch the photograph being downloaded from the camera to the mini printer and are encouraged to operate the equipment under guidance. They are fascinated to see the image appear as a printed photograph. This gives children a real sense of belonging to the setting, ownership over their learning and encourages their use and understanding of technology.

Children's communication and language is supported very well, regardless of their

ability or individual needs. For example, use of Makaton sign language throughout daily routines enables children to understand language through visual gestures which allows full participation in group activities such as songs and rhymes. This is helpful to all children and particularly to those who are less confident or have speech and language difficulties. Children generally listen and respond to stories and instructions very well. They join in with familiar text and actions, predict what happens next and offer their own thoughts and ideas. They experiment with mark making by tracing their fingers in the cornflour gloop, using paint, pens and crayons.

Children lead healthy and active lifestyles in pre-school and develop high levels of independence as they manage their own needs. They decide when they are ready to eat their snack and effective staff deployment at the snack table means children consistently follow good hygiene practices to clean their hands and faces. They pour their own drinks skilfully because small jugs are provided that they can manage. Staff talk to them about different foods so they begin to recognise which foods are good for their health and which are not so good. They enjoy being physically active each day as they use indoor apparatus or musical movement sessions to develop gross motor skills and coordination. Staff ensure that children become aware of the impact of exercise on their bodies as they feel their racing heart beat and recognise the need to let their bodies rest after exertion. Children also enjoy regular outings to the pre-school allotment or local shops where they enjoy fresh air and learn about keeping safe. Risk assessments are managed well by staff to ensure children are kept safe. Adult to child ratios are high and consideration is given to minimising potential risks. Children practise using the zebra crossing safely and become aware of the potential dangers of traffic as they cross the busy car park to reach the allotment. Children find out about the natural world and where some food comes from through first-hand experiences as they plant and nurture seeds, watch them grow and then harvest the vegetables to make soup. They take part in activities and use resources to help them understand the wider world and diversity. These include celebrating Christian festivals and finding out about other faiths and cultures, and taking part in charitable events, for example to help less fortunate children in Africa.

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?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

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	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
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	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

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

Not Met (with actions)

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

Not Met (with actions)

The registered provider does not meet the requirements of the compulsory and or voluntary part/s of the Childcare Register.

To comply with the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register, the registered person must take the following action/s by the specified date:

- ensure that no one can enter the premises without the knowledge of a person who is caring for children on the premises (Suitability and safety of premises). 15/04/2011

To comply with the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register, the registered person must take the following action/s by the specified date:

- take action as specified in the compulsory Childcare Register (Suitability and safety of premises). 15/04/2011