

St Nicholas Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	103850
Inspection date	25/03/2009
Inspector	Beryl Witheridge
Setting address	St Nicholas Church, 2 High Street, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TR
Telephone number	07801 907620 or 01634 721227
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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).

Description of the setting

St Nicholas Playgroup opened in 1989 and operates from one room in a church hall. It is situated in the town of Strood, Kent. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 to 11.45 and 12.30 to 15.00 Monday to Thursday and Friday morning only for 38 weeks of the year.

There are currently 36 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Children receive funding for nursery education. This provision is registered on the Early Years Register. Children come from a local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. Five of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One of the staff is working towards a qualification.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The pre-school staff have a good understanding of how to support children's welfare and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All children and their parents are openly welcomed into the group. Staff ensure they provide the appropriate care according to the children's interests and individual needs, with support from outside agencies when this is required. All staff are included in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-school at staff meetings but there are no records of how they will implement plans to move forward and improve their provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- clearly identify children's starting points when they first come to the playgroup, to enable staff to know what is required to move them forward
- carry out the emergency evacuation practise more regularly so that all children are included and know how to protect themselves in an emergency
- review the toilet/snack procedures so that children are not kept waiting for long periods of time with nothing to do
- provide a clear record of the self evaluation of the provision and how strengths and weaknesses are identified and addressed

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The pre-school offers the children a warm and welcoming environment for children. All records, policies and procedures are in place, they are well written, easily understood and are well maintained. Children's starting points are discussed with parents when the children first start at the group but these are not recorded, although staff do in depth observations over the first term to identify what children know. All staff are involved in the planning and execution of the EYFS. The keyworkers identify next steps for their children and use these as well as the children's ideas and interests to lead the future planning. Staff evaluate the activities that they do with the children to enable them to improve or develop the activity to ensure it is helping children to move forward.

The staff are all involved in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-school but there are no written records of the steps taken to improve and develop the provision. Staff have a positive attitude towards training, they identify their training needs through yearly appraisals and they are extending their qualifications as well as attending short courses to help develop their good practice.

There is a good working relationship with parents who are encouraged to be involved in their child's development. They receive a settling in report after the first three months at the pre-school and then meet up with the keyworker twice a year to talk about their child's development, they are able to see the records and have an input into them. There is also an open door policy which provides them with the opportunity to talk to staff at any time. A welcome pack informs them about the aims and objectives of the pre-school and supplies them with information about the EYFS. Regular newsletters keep them up to date with what is happening in the pre-school. There are good links with other agencies who are involved in the care of the children as well the local schools.

All staff understand their responsibility to the children in their care. They know the procedures to follow if they have a concern and who to go to for help and support.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Staff ensure that children are involved in a broad range of activities to help them make good progress in all areas of development and learning in the EYFS. Children are able to make independent decisions what they want to play with choosing from the resources available or asking staff for other equipment which has not been put out. Staff support them in their learning allowing children to lead the play. Children's needs and interests clearly lead the planning and opportunities provided for them. Staff take children's interests and extend them through the play. They involve the children in 'Talking and Thinking' books when they show particular interest in something such as 'Our Fruit Kebabs' or 'Sea life'. These books show how staff have extended learning opportunities for the children; in the Sea life book there are photos of the children looking at fresh fish, making a fish collage, looking at shells and treasure baskets. Staff record children's reactions, comments and ideas in these books. They are able to extend their knowledge and learning by

asking open ended questions and encouraging them to face new challenges and develop an interest in the world around them.

Children's safety is addressed through activities such as visits to the local area, the nearby shops, learning road safety, having house rules in place for example not running in the pre-school. Staff have carried out emergency evacuation drills with the children but not often enough to ensure that all children are aware of the procedures and how to keep themselves safe in an emergency. Staff are aware of their responsibility towards the children in their care.

Children are encouraged to be and stay healthy. They do not have daily opportunities for outdoor play as there is no secure outdoor area. Staff provide them with indoor activities which encourage their physical development which includes action rhymes, dancing and music and movement. They also have visits to the local area which helps to extend their knowledge of the wider world. They know the importance of good hygiene and are introduced to healthy eating options at snack time. However the routines at snack time are not well organised with children spending long periods of time with nothing to do as they wait for all children to go to the toilet, wash their hands, then wait again while each child pours their own drink and selects their food. The snacks provide children with a well balanced diet offering choices such as toast and a variety of fruits.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school; they have a good relationship with each other and the staff. Staff are fully aware of individual children's needs and aim to support them through all activities. Each child is accepted for who they are and staff aim to provide all children with all possible opportunities to grow and develop. Children are learning to become independent and make decisions for themselves. They are fully engaged in their learning. They are active and absorbed in what they are doing; there is a busy feel to the group but it is calm and well organised. They play happily on their own but are also seen to interact well and play with each other; collaborating in their play such as two boys on the 'pirate ship'. They are looking for food on the 'island'; they go off in search of 'apples, grapes and bananas'. Children's behaviour is of a good standard, they think about the feelings of others, they learn to share well and take turns. Children attend from a variety of different backgrounds; they are very respectful and have a good understanding of the needs of others such as children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) or the youngest children who may need support.

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	3
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

