

St Cuthberts Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Janice Ellis
Setting address	St Cuthberts Church Hall, Botanic Road, Southport, Merseyside, PR9 7NN
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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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*.

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Description of the setting

St Cuthbert's Pre-School Playgroup is a registered charity run by a board of trustees comprising of members of St Cuthbert's Church and a parent representative. It registered in 1984 and operates from two rooms within St Cuthbert's church hall in Churchtown, Southport. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. The pre-school playgroup serves the local area. A maximum of 31 children may attend the group at any one time.

The setting is open five days a week during school term-times. The pre-school is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 9am until 3pm, and Thursday and Friday from 9am until 1pm. The playgroup is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 1pm until 3pm.

The setting employs 10 staff members, including the manager, and they all hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting is supported by the local early years team and are members of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are safe, secure and happy in this setting and their individual needs are met well. Partnership with parents is particularly strong and this, together with proficient deployment of knowledgeable staff and quality resources, ensures effective support for all children. Ongoing self-evaluation ensures that priorities for improvement are identified and acted upon. This means that children make good progress in all areas of learning and development.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure that there is a balance of adult-led and freely chosen or child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play.
- ensure that children have some independence and control over their learning to keep their interest and to develop their creativity and 'provide experiences that help children develop autonomy and a disposition to learn

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded and well protected in the setting because staff are knowledgeable about local safeguarding policies. There are effective procedures in place to manage any concerns staff may have about children in their care. Staff are also appropriately vetted and are safe and suitable to work with young children. The setting is kept safe and secure by implementation of rigorous risk

assessments and signing in registers for visitors. This means that children can play safely and with confidence.

The resources on offer to the children are very attractive and areas are extremely well-stocked. Staff are very knowledgeable about the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and use this knowledge well to plan appropriate activities for individual children. They attend training courses such as 'Every Child a Talker' and use the information and skills gained to further support their work with children. They have addressed previous recommendations by ensuring that the children have more freedom in what and how they will learn. However, some set routines, for example, whole-group snack time followed by whole group physical play, prevent the children from deciding when they can play at activities of their own choosing.

The manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and in consultation with staff and parents, she looks for ways to improve her provision for the children. For example, the ongoing development of the outdoor area which means that children who prefer to learn outside can do so every day. This is not available at present.

The staff form extremely close working relationships with parents and carers. They have ongoing discussions about children's learning formally at Parent Information sessions and also informally at the end of each session. There is a newly-established Parents' Forum which promotes even stronger partnership working, for example, by shared planning for the forthcoming Christmas activities. Parents are especially pleased with the level of emotional support given to their children in the setting, describing practitioners as 'caring' and 'responsive' towards their children. Parents also emphasise how supported they feel about any additional needs their children have. The setting takes every opportunity to work with them over any issue that may affect their child, for example, speech and language delay or behaviour difficulties. This means that parent's wishes and children's individual needs are met very effectively. Successful relationships with professionals involved with the children are also well established, and efforts have been made to liaise with the local school and nearby childcare providers.

Staff offer sensitive support to children who have special educational needs and or disabilities. They readily adapt activities to ensure that all children can access them and add strategies to their working practice, such as, the use of picture cards that show children the structure of the day. An effective equal opportunities policy is regularly reviewed and supports the staff well. This means that the individual needs of all children are met and all children are included fully in the life of the setting.

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

Staff are knowledgeable about the Early Years Foundation Stage and their role as a child's key person. Staff in the setting work, in their key person capacity, as a pair so that the children's needs are always met, even during staff absence. This means that children are known well by more than one person and ideas for support can

be explored more thoroughly. Staff use their knowledge of the curriculum and their relationships with individual children to offer valuable, personalised support. Staff can talk about individual children's progress and plan for their interests. For example, children who enjoy counting and can recognise numerals are given every opportunity to develop this interest. Staff also obtain useful information about each child from the parents and use this knowledge to plan enhanced activities such as a child's interest in cars or music.

Children enjoy being in the setting and have good relationships with staff and with other children. The children are confident to work with adults and make particular requests such as putting on their favourite music so they can dance. The children use scissors and other equipment safely and are given gentle reminders about safety rules, such as walking around the room. Children who are upset are given extra attention and soothed by staff; comfort and explanations are given until they are smiling and playing again.

Children's good health is actively promoted through reinforcement of good hygiene habits and healthy food options offered at snack times. Fresh drinking water is available at all times and the opportunity for more lively play is offered, at present, in the annexe after snack time or in the nearby park whenever possible.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because activities are offered which cover all the areas of learning and development, for example, number rhymes and sorting activities with pine cones or printing with different objects onto large sheets of paper. Weekly plans include a balance of adult-led and child-led activities and are based on observations of children's needs or interests from the previous week, for example, the use of the pirate ship which captured the attention of many children the week before. Children's language skills are good as they are supported by practitioners who speak clearly, emphasising key words. There are also lots of colourful books on offer at all times, special 'circle time' discussions and shared song and story times. Physical development is supported by vigorous dancing and marching around to their special music tapes with a lively practitioner. Staff also encourage the development of thinking skills and allow the children to make choices, for example, 'Have you finished now? (painting) Do you want to wash your hands or do you want to carry on?' The environment is also effective in supporting children's investigative skills, such as, children playing freely with magnetised construction materials to discover what they will and will not stick to, or working on the computer.

Children behave very well in the setting because the practitioners give clear explanations and reinforce simple reminders gently. Children's behaviour is also good because their needs and interests are well provided for. Children develop a respect for themselves and others and they show this by taking turns in their games and sharing resources.

The children learn about other cultures and beliefs as the practitioners make effective use of books, resources and activities to introduce new ideas and promote diversity. For example, the children celebrate occasions, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali through food tasting and dressing up in costumes.

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	1
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	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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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