

St Michaels Playgroup

Margaret Wix Junior & Infant School, High Oaks, ST. ALBANS, Hertfordshire, AL3 6EL

Inspection date

27/06/2014

Previous inspection date

14/01/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

2

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Children enjoy a varied range of learning experiences both indoors and outside. These are well supported by the staff's effective teaching. As a result, children make good progress in their learning and development.
- There is a strong management team in place. All staff are committed to professional development, which is continuous. They have a strong knowledge of safeguarding procedures. Therefore, children's well-being is promoted.
- There is a close partnership with other professionals to support children's learning and development. As a result, early advice and any assistance is quickly sought so that children can make the best possible progress in their learning and development.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to reflect the different ways children learn by extending the use of time-lines, pictures and photographs so that younger children and those with English as an additional language are able to express their preferences and make decisions about routines and activities.
- There is room to extend the already good partnership with parents even further so that they contribute to the planning cycle and share more information about their children's learning and development at home.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector spoke to the manager, staff and children at convenient times. She engaged in children's play and observed staff interactions during indoor and outdoor play.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager of the activities during the session.
- The inspector looked at children's development records and planning documentation. She also looked at evidence of the suitability of staff and a range of other records, policies and procedures.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through discussion at the inspection.

Inspector

Maura Pigram

Full report

Information about the setting

St Michaels Playgroup has been in operation for a number of years. It was registered again in 2004 due to a change of premises. It is committee led and is on the Early Years Register. The playgroup serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from a designated room in the grounds of Margaret Wix School, St Albans in Hertfordshire. The playgroup employs six members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold a recognised early years qualification at level 3. The manager holds a recognised qualification at level 4. The playgroup opens Monday to Friday 9am to 12 noon during term time only. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 37 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The playgroup provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The group supports children who speak English as an additional language and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- extend the educational programme for communication and language even further, for example, by using time-lines and photographs showing familiar people, objects and activities so that younger children and those with English as an additional language can be further supported to express their preferences and feelings about the activities and play opportunities
- extend the partnership with parents so that they contribute to the assessment and planning cycle, such as sharing more information about what children are learning at home.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children make good progress in their learning and development. The manager and her staff are experienced practitioners and have a good knowledge and understanding of how children learn and develop. They know how to challenge and support children's learning through play. They help children recall events during their play. For example, during the construction of a castle, discussions take place about the recent related story that was shared. In addition, they are reminded about the names of the different parts of the castle. This supports children's curiosity about the world around them. Children become immersed in building the castle using various play materials. They use pretend tools to build and saw their equipment. They negotiate well with each other and problem solve as they go. Staff know when to intervene and ask open questions to help extend their

thoughts and ideas. In addition, they spend lots of time directly with the children during their play. They teach children through small and large group activities and free exploration sessions. Therefore, children enjoy the freedom to concentrate and become deeply involved in activities of their choice.

Planning for children's learning is flexible and has recently been reviewed with positive impact. For example, children's changing interests are used in the planning of activities. The layout of the resources has also been changed along with the routine of the day. As a result, there is a good balance of child-led and adult-initiated activities. Staff keep a record of children's learning and development in a learning journal. They also keep a tracking document that shows how children are making progress. This also identifies if there are any delays or gaps in children's learning, which staff swiftly address. Staff make good use of the progress check completed for children aged between two and three years to plan for the next steps in children's learning. Summaries of these are shared with parents so that are aware of their children's progress. Older children's progress is shared through discussions and learning journals can be viewed whenever parents request these. However, staff are yet to fully explore various strategies to include what children learn at home in their planning. As a result, information about children's learning outside of the setting is not yet robustly used to support the next steps in their development.

Staff plan a broad range of interesting learning experiences with a good balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities. They value children's ideas and use spontaneous situations to extend children's learning according to their interests. For example, outdoors, children become interested in finding small creatures. Staff respond positively and find appropriate resources, such as magnifying glasses for them to use. Children are excited and interested in their findings. Discussions take place about the creatures seen and the tracks that they have left behind. A laminated card showing various insects helps children identify what they have found. Staff use gestures, simple language and some sign language to help children understand. This supports younger children and those with English as an additional language to understand. Key words used by children are obtained on entry and staff use this when necessary. Staff also use props during singing sessions to help children make connections in their learning. Staff provide one-to-one support as necessary and work closely with other professionals so that all children's individual needs are identified and supported. However, staff have not yet fully explored other ways to effectively support their good quality of teaching and children's understanding, for example, by using time-lines, photographs, visual cues, pictures and real-life objects to help children make further links in their learning. Children demonstrate that they are developing good skills to aid their readiness for school. For example, they concentrate for long periods of time during painting and printing sessions. In addition, they are able to confidently and safely use tools, such as play hammers and nails. These activities help to develop their small hand muscles, which aids their writing skills as they grow.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children are happy and secure and enjoy coming to this welcoming playgroup. The settling-in process is flexible and meets the needs of individual children. Parents are able to stay with their children until they feel settled and comfortable in their new

surroundings. Information from parents is collected on entry about children's dietary needs and care routines. This contributes to the continuity of care between both staff and children's parents. A key-person system is well embedded and information about children is effectively shared among the staff. As a result, they know children well and are able to support them as and when necessary. Transitions to the nearby nursery are well managed. For example, children who are moving to this setting are taken on regular visits to the nursery. This contributes to smooth transitions when the time comes.

Children's behaviour is positive due to the clear guidelines and boundaries provided by staff. Any issues of unwanted behaviour are quickly managed through simple explanations and discussions. Children are encouraged to be kind to each other and to share resources. For example, the use of a sand timer helps children understand the concept of time passing when waiting for a turn on popular wheeled toys. Consequently, children are learning to manage their feelings and behaviour. This promotes their personal, social and emotional development, which is important for their move to school. Children's play spaces are organised well and resources are of a good quality. These are easily available and many are clearly labelled with photographs. This enables children to be independent, play with their friends and use their imagination. As a result, children are happy to explore and are confident to play in this bright and friendly environment.

Children's understanding of safety is promoted during the routine of the day. Gentle reminders ensure children are considerate of each other during their play. For example, when playing running games they are reminded to give each other space to play safely. Children are able to take supervised risks in their play when they play outdoors. In addition, they learn about keeping themselves and others safe from visitors to the playgroup, such as fire officers. Children have frequent opportunities to enjoy daily fresh air and to take part in a range of activities to promote their physical development. For example, they take part in music and movement sessions in the school hall. In addition, at various times during the session children can choose to play in the garden area or to carry out activities indoors. Staff teach children to be independent in managing their own personal care needs. They support them in using the bathroom to wash their hands. Simple equipment is provided so that children can easily use the soap and dryers to wash and dry their hands. Snack time is taken in small groups and children are encouraged to pour their own drinks. Good eating habits and social skills are encouraged as they tuck into their toast and chosen fruit. This promotes children's good health. Staff teach children about the different fruits as they choose from a plate at snack time, which helps them to learn about healthy eating and promotes their independence.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager has a clear understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and monitors the children's learning very well. She is passionate about providing high quality care and education for children. Staff have a secure understanding of safeguarding children procedures, such as possible symptoms of children at risk and how to respond to concerns. They attend related training and a detailed policy is available and regularly reviewed. This is shared with parents so that they are familiar with the staff's

responsibilities to safeguard children. Staff are vigilant regarding child safety and are proactive in minimising potential hazards. Consequently, children are able to explore safely and freely. Good adult-to-child ratios are always maintained and staff are deployed well. This further contributes to ensuring children are safe and well supported in their play and learning. Recruitment and induction procedures are robust and help to ensure that all those working with the children, are suitable to do so. Induction systems, appraisals and clear supervision means that all those working with children, including volunteers, are clear about their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children.

Staff attend regular training, such as effective learning. Following this they reviewed their planning and the organisation of the sessions so that children are more fully involved in their play. This has a positive impact on children's learning and development. Since the last inspection, some core staff have gained recognised qualifications in early years. This has increased their knowledge about effective teaching and the impact this has on children's learning and development. In addition, the provision has been successful in completing a quality assurance award. This has contributed to the effective evaluation of the provision provided. The manager and staff have a clear vision for the future so that they continue to offer a high quality service to children and their families. Views of parents and children are included in the ongoing monitoring process. The manager has an overview of the educational programme to ensure that it is broad and balanced and reflects individual children's specific learning needs. She carries out regular discussions with staff to ensure learning journals and planning reflects children's progress and individual needs.

There are positive relationships between the staff and parents resulting in some parents volunteering at the playgroup. They state that their children love coming and that their social skills have developed greatly since attending the playgroup. They take part in annual activities, such as picnics and a sports day. They are encouraged to view the informative website, which provides a wealth of information about the services provided. Partnership working with other professionals is highly valued. For example, advice and support is actively sought as and when necessary so that children's welfare and learning is promoted. This means the early identification of any learning needs, such as speech and language delay, are quickly and effectively supported. Overall, this is a good quality and friendly playgroup where children receive a positive early years experience. This means that they have a solid foundation upon which to support their future learning.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY295043
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	861533
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	37
Name of provider	St Michaels Playgroup Committee
Date of previous inspection	14/01/2009
Telephone number	0781611 8130

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
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