

St Catherine's Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	110745
Inspection date	09 February 2007
Inspector	Doreen Forsyth
Setting Address	St Catherine's Pre-school, Wittenham Avenue, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 5LN
Telephone number	07745 909348
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Registered person	St Catherine's Pre-school
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Catherine's Pre-school opened in 1966. It operates from St Catherine's Church Hall in Tilehurst, near Reading, Berkshire; there is a small attached enclosed area for outside play. The setting is organised by a management committee.

The pre-school is registered to care for up to 26 children aged between two and five years old. Currently there are 39 children on roll, this includes 30 children that are in receipt of government funding for nursery education. The setting welcomes children that have learning difficulties or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens each morning during school term times. Sessions are from 9:15 until 11:45; a lunch club is offered three times a week.

There are nine full or part-time staff working with the children. Of these three have relevant early years qualifications at level 2 or 3. There is one member of staff currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from infection and are well taken care of if they have an accident or become ill because the pre-school practitioners follow good health and hygiene routines, and they encourage children to learn appropriate health routines. For example, children know they should wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Children's welfare is promoted as most staff have current first aid training and the manager ensures there is always a first-aider in the pre-school when children are present. All the required records, policies and procedures that positively promote children's health and welfare are well kept.

Children have a healthy mid-morning snack each morning; this is usually fruit and vegetables which is supplied by parents. The fruit is attractively presented which encourages the children to try and taste different fruits. They drink milk or water; there is always drinking water available that the children can help themselves to if they become thirsty. They begin to learn about healthy lifestyles through discussion and topic work. If children have special dietary requirements or allergies these are well noted and observed.

Children have good opportunities to take part in daily physical activities. They use the attached garden freely during the session; here they play in the fresh air with wheeled toys such as bikes and buggies. Children have regular opportunities to use large play resources such as a climbing frame, a slide and a mini-trampoline. They also enjoy movement rhymes and songs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. Staff work hard at creating a child-centred and attractive environment with the equipment and resources they set out each day. The premises are kept very secure, for example, doors are locked once all the children have arrived. There are good procedures in place to ensure children are collected by the correct adults. Staff carry out daily visual risk assessments both indoors and outside, and minimise any potential hazards, promoting children's safety. Children learn about keeping themselves safe, such as they are often reminded why they should not run in the hall at group time.

All necessary fire and emergency equipment and procedures are in place, children practise emergency evacuation procedures. Children use a very good selection of safe and suitable resources and toys, which are chosen by staff to help children learn and progress.

Children are safeguarded because staff understand their role in child protection and are confident in putting appropriate procedures into place if necessary. Some staff have attended recent safeguarding children training. However, parents are not informed about the setting's child protection procedures before children enrol into the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle well and enjoy their time at pre-school. They interact very well with each other and with the staff present. They are happy, focussed and are interested in what is going on in the pre-school. They can concentrate well on their chosen activities. Staff have started to

incorporate the Birth to threes matters framework when planning for the youngest children in the setting, which helps to ensure the activities that are provided are appropriate to their age and stage of development. Staff then plan activities that promote the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage for children aged three to five.

Nursery Education.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some staff have a suitable knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals, but other new staff have a more limited understanding. Staff plan a suitable range of activities which are based on topics and themes. All six areas are promoted in the daily plans, but children's learning in mathematics is weaker than in the other areas. The planning used is easy to understand and well evaluated; it is displayed for parents to see. Planning shows what children should learn from the adult-led activities, although the staff are not always clear of what the learning intention is from the activities they present. The staff do not use the information gained from the observation records when planning, to help meet children's individual learning needs. Children's progress is well recorded in the local authority 'pebbles' observation scheme, but because staff do not find out where children are in their learning when they first start out onto the stepping stones towards the Foundation Stage or plan sufficiently for children's individual learning, it is difficult for the setting to help children progress appropriately in relation to their individual starting points.

Children are confident and relaxed, they quickly understand the rules of the setting, for example, they know they should listen when they hear the chime bars played. They are encouraged to be independent, they can select some of their own toys and resources, they put on their own coats for outside play, pour their own drinks at snack times and get tissues when they need one. They mostly sit well at group times, for example when listening to stories, however, if they have to sit quietly for too long they begin to become inattentive and restless. They enjoy books and stories and can recount some aspects of a story. They enjoy writing and mark-making, such as when using the 'office' resources. Most children can recognise their own names, some are beginning to write letters and their names. Children count up to five with confidence, they could show five fingers to the play leader at story time. They use resources such as puzzles and games that help them to recognise shapes and compare sizes, but they do not count and use mathematical language and concepts enough in their daily routines.

Through their topic work children learn well about their own environment and the wider world. At present their topic is the natural world, for example, children have learnt about farm animals and discussed where milk comes from. They were very excited to play outside in the snow, feeling it on their faces and then watching it melt indoors. They have good opportunities to use information technology, such as a computer, to support their learning. Children have some good opportunities to develop their creative skills, they paint, draw and use chalk. At the craft table they can freely explore a wide range of different resources. They have good opportunities to use their imaginations in role play in the well resourced home corner or when using small world toys.

Children's physical development is well promoted. They choose to play outside each day in the small attached garden. Inside they enjoy balancing and climbing on the climbing frame and using the slide. Children learn to control their small muscles well when handling different tools such as scissors, pencils or rolling pins and cutters in the play dough.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are valued and welcomed into the pre-school, including those that have disabilities or learning difficulties, and any children that speak English as an additional language. Staff plan to attend further special needs training as the setting's special needs co-ordinator recently left the pre-school and there is not a dedicated special needs co-ordinator in post at present. However, the manager and co-manager are able to ensure the needs of all children are met, they use the advice of the area special needs co-ordinator if necessary.

Children benefit from using resources and taking part in activities that help them to learn to value diversity. They learn about their own and others festivals and special events, such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Christmas. They begin to consider the needs of others and can co-operate and work together, such as when they help to tidy up at the end of the play session. They share and take turns well, for example, a child brought a 'whoopie cushion' into pre-school, the children enjoyed playing with it, they ensured that they all had a turn to use it, giggling as each child made a noise!

Children are helped to behave appropriately. The setting has a suitable behaviour policy in place; at group times the staff often remind children of some of the pre-school rules. Appropriate behaviour is valued and praised; staff acknowledge children's achievements. For example, children's construction models are labelled and saved to show parents at the end of the session. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Children benefit from the close working relationship between the setting and parents, who are made very welcome into the pre-school. They receive some written information about the setting, but this is not very attractively presented and is out of date, so staff are in the process of updating this information. Parents also receive some written information about the Foundation Stage of learning. Parents are able to spend time in the pre-school to help children settle, they help on the parents' rota and serve on the management committee. They help with fundraising events. There are regular newsletters and a parents' notice board. Parents exchange information with the setting on an informal basis before and after the session. However, they do not have many opportunities to talk to staff about what they know about their children's learning or to find out about their children's progress and achievements. Parents are given suggestions on how they can help their children learn in the newsletters, such as bringing in items from home linked to the topic.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The two co-leaders who are fairly new in the role of manager, are very experienced in childcare. They ensure the setting is suitably organised and that children are well supported in their care, learning and play. Good adult/child ratios are always maintained; this promotes children's well-being and ensures they receive sufficient attention. Most staff have attended some short courses, including first aid, but there are not enough staff with level 2 or 3 qualifications working in the setting to meet the required national regulations.

The attendance of visitors, staff and children is well recorded. Most the required records, policies and procedures that safeguard children's health, safety and well-being are in place and well kept. The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The setting is supported by a new management committee who are keen to develop their roles and responsibilities and help the staff in providing a good standard of childcare and education. Annual appraisals are planned to help staff identify and review their development targets and to support staff training. The staff have formed a strong and committed team, within which their strengths are valued. The pre-school reviews and monitors its provision by using a self-evaluation form and by seeking advice from outside support agencies. They value the assistance and guidance of professional agencies.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was set recommendations regarding ensuring the correct documentation, records and policies were kept, and that the setting should develop ways of helping children to choose their own resources. Children now have some opportunities to select their own resources, such as craft resources and small world toys on the carpeted area, which is helping to develop their independence. Most of the required documentation to promote children's welfare is in place, but a recommendation concerning ensuring parents are informed about the setting's child protection procedures will carry forward from this inspection.

At the last nursery education inspection the pre-school was given key issues for improvement regarding children's independence in selecting their own resources, improving planning, the opportunity for children to use information technology resources and staff's knowledge of including mathematics and problem solving in the everyday programme. At this inspection children were seen selecting their own resources and using everyday technology well to support their learning. The planning is working in practice, but does not include how children's individual learning needs will be met. Staff still do not use everyday activities sufficiently to encourage children's mathematical understanding.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents that they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a level 2 qualification in childcare
- provide parents with details of the pre-school's child protection procedures before children enrol into the setting.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- use the information gained from the children's observation profiles to help plan for children's individual learning targets
- obtain information about where children are in their learning when they first start out onto the stepping stones towards the early learning goals, so that you can build on what children already know
- provide parents with more opportunities to be informed of their children's progress and achievements.

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