

# St Clare's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	305317
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 April 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Suzette Butcher
<b>Setting Address</b>	Hawthorn Road, Lache, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 8HX
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<b>Registered person</b>	St Clare's Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Clare's Pre-school opened in 1984 and is managed by a committee of staff and parents. It is situated in a designated classroom within St. Clare's Catholic Primary School in the Lache area of Chester. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 to 12.00 during term time only. Some extra afternoon sessions are organised during the summer term. Children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 21 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 14 receive funding for early education. Children attend from the local areas. The pre-school currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are three members of staff employed who all hold an appropriate early years qualification. The setting is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are encouraged to develop independence in all their self-help skills. They are learning to wash their own hands at appropriate times of the day and beginning to understand the purpose of good hygiene routines. They help themselves to accessible tissues to wipe their nose or find and put on their own coat to play outside. Children receive appropriate levels of care in the event of illness or minor injuries because staff are vigilant and suitably qualified in first aid. The environment in which the children play is well maintained and clean. A cleaner comes in on a daily basis and staff wipe down surfaces during the day with anti-bacterial spray, minimising the risk of cross infection.

Children enjoy a range of healthy snacks. They include fresh fruit, cheese slices or crackers with items presented attractively on a large plate. Snack time is an established social occasion where children enjoy chatting to each other and staff. Children enjoy taking their turn to hand out different coloured plates or offer snack items. Health and dietary needs are recorded and respected, ensuring that snacks provided are suitable for children with allergies and special diets. Individual preferences are acknowledged and staff take time to support children with individual needs. Children are offered a choice of either milk or juice with their snack and they are encouraged to drink from an open cup to suit their individual needs. However, fresh drinking water is not available for children to help themselves at other times during the session and staff do not actively promote the benefits of regular drinks as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Daily access to a suitable range of energetic activities indoors and outdoors, enables children to have fun and make steady progress in their physical development. Activities available provide variety and allow children to gain confidence to move with control and use their bodies in different ways. They enjoy running around in the fresh air and participating in ball games when playing outside. Weekly timetabled sessions in the large hall provide further opportunities to practise physical skills. Children have lots of fun as they crawl through the tunnel and negotiate the climbing frame. Children enjoy playing with different consistencies, such as paint or sand and gain fine motor skills with pencils and brushes.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in bright and stimulating surroundings. Imaginative, colourful displays, mobiles and role play areas are reorganised to maintain children's interest and to relate to the current pre-school topic. Examples of children's art work, friezes and posters create a purposeful learning environment and gives children a strong sense of belonging within the setting. Play areas are maintained at a consistent temperature and children move around their immediate environment with ease and confidence. A cosy book area with soft floor cushions is available for children to rest in comfort. The setting has a wide range of developmentally appropriate resources suited to the needs of the children within the setting. A large selection of play resources are well organised in low-level storage units around the room. Items are clearly classified and organised in plastic boxes with a written and photographic label to indicate the contents for children to help themselves. Toys and equipment are of a high quality and checked regularly to ensure that they are safe and clean.

Secure procedures are in place to enter the setting to ensure children's safety. The entrance door is kept locked and access can only be obtained by a member of staff opening the door. Risk of accidental injury is minimised by the use of safety features and good supervision of the children. Informal risk assessments are carried out at the beginning of the day. Fire drills are clearly displayed and carried out regularly. This allows children to confidently follow defined procedures in the event of a fire or emergency evacuation. Children learn about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe in role play activities, such as crossing the road safely. They are encouraged to consider the consequences of their actions when staff gently remind them that they may fall over and hurt themselves if they run too fast.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a clear awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse and know who to contact if they are concerned. They attend training on a regular basis to update their knowledge and review the child protection policy. This policy is accessible to parents.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young children enjoy themselves and are helped to achieve in a supportive environment where they relate warmly to staff and other children. Children who are settling in are offered extra adult attention and support as they gradually gain confidence. For example, staff take time to chat to children who are anxious when they first arrive. They discuss the day's routines and possible activities and create a visual time line together for reassurance. This helps young children to develop a sense of identity and belonging within the small, friendly group. Young children happily play alongside small groups of older children with brief interactions as they learn to appreciate the benefits of cooperative play in imaginative games. They learn to concentrate for longer periods as they sit with the group for register or to listen to a story. Everyone in the cosy circle takes their turn to say good morning and welcome staff and visitors. They have fun trying out new skills, such as cutting or sticking with appropriate guidance and support from staff. Children are offered time to practise and consolidate their learning when they choose what they want to do in free play activities .

Staff have basic knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and they have implemented some aspects of this framework for younger children to supplement their current practice. For example, children enjoy exploring different sensory materials, such as sand, paint or sound makers. Staff differentiate the daily planning on an informal basis to include appropriate activities for younger children. However, staff lack confidence in this area because they have not had the opportunity to attend appropriate training to develop their skills. Consequently, play and learning opportunities are not fully differentiated for the youngest children in the group and assessment profiles and recording systems have not been adapted to meet the needs of younger children.

### **Nursery Education.**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has a significant impact on children's learning. Staff have good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals and a strong awareness of the underlying principles of early years education. They know the children very well and clearly identify their individual strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to build on what children already know and can do which helps every child to make good progress within the Foundation Stage. Effective recording systems identify children's ongoing progress and informative profiles are collated for each child with relevant observations and examples of

work. This information is used to inform future planning and to identify next steps for individual children. Planning is based on topics and themes, such as Wild Animals, Families or Kings and Queens. Activities are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and this information is used to adapt future plans and identify children's interests and preferences. Staff meet on a daily basis to review outcomes for individual children and discuss the plans for the next day. The small staff team ensures that everyone is actively involved and contributes to the planning procedures.

Activities are organised on a daily basis to provide opportunities for children to access all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children eagerly choose between the different options and move around confidently between the groups. They take turns to choose the 'activity of the day' and sometimes ask staff for a different activity from the surrounding shelves. However, many activities are adult led and children often have to wait patiently as they line up to move to another area or quietly watch as staff organise the next activity. Opportunities for free-play are available but children are not offered enough opportunities to make their own decisions or given enough time to initiate their own games. This restricts opportunities for children to become active learners as they develop independent learning skills. Nooks and corners around the room are used imaginatively to promote areas for quiet stories or a listening area with headphones and tape recorders. Learning opportunities are maximised during informal and every day activities, such as discussing the shapes that are left on the carpet are like a clock and finding the right numerals to make the clock face. Children complete simple calculations as they carefully count the number of elephants in a puzzle or work out how many children are left at the end of the session. They learn to follow instructions and the meaning of prepositions as they climb under, over or through apparatus in the large hall. Activities are quickly adapted and improvised on a snowy day with exciting adventures outdoors or walks around the school grounds on a spring day. They plant beans in pots and watch them grow or find mini-beasts and examine them carefully with magnifying glasses. This provides practical opportunities for children to learn more about their natural environment and the world around them. Staff are skilled in talking and listening to children as they sensitively ask appropriate open ended questions to extend children's experiences and learning. For example, children have fun sharing their interest in a photograph album of wild animals and compare their different features, colours and sizes. Children are confident communicators and they happily chatter together about what they are doing and involve adults in their conversations. The promotion of language and communication is given a high priority within the pre-school. Group sessions are organised by a speech therapist on a regular basis to develop children's listening, attention and communication skills.

Lively themes and topics capture children's interest and extend their imagination. The pre-school room is transformed into a wild landscape with a safari camp or the role play area becomes a castle with colourful flags around the palace library. Children are gradually introduced to different aspects of the current topic, such as examining a selection of items with an elephant theme. They consider different sizes, shapes and textures as they cuddle a soft toy or compare the height of a giraffe with a tiger. They have fun initiating imaginative games with a large selection of realistic wild animals and this is reinforced in group activities when everyone pretends to be a snake or a kangaroo. Songs about monkeys and crocodiles or lively stories about wild animals provide further opportunities for discussion and enjoyment. Children learn to make connections with other areas of learning when they create colourful paintings of their favourite wild animal and consider how many stripes a tiger has. They think about aspects of camouflage, such as how you can see a green snake in the green grass or dress up in a leopard skin shirt to hide. Children eagerly look forward to a trip to the zoo to see real animals and consolidate their learning experiences.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy each other's company and play happily together in the relaxed, friendly atmosphere. They are well behaved and considerate towards adults and each other. Children benefit from the staff's calm, consistent and respectful example and, consequently, learn to share, take turns and play together cooperatively. Minor disagreements are skilfully dealt with in a way that is appropriate to each child's age and stage of development and individual children's level of maturity and understanding is acknowledged and respected. For example, staff quietly remind older children of the importance of being kind or helping each other. Younger children are gently redirected when they want the same toy. Clear boundaries are established when playing outside which helps children to understand that rules are required to create a safe and fair environment. Enthusiastic praise and encouragement encourages children to develop confidence and positive self-esteem. Individual achievements are enthusiastically celebrated when, for example, children proudly display their colourful painting to everyone.

The inclusive environment promotes equality of opportunity for every child and creates an atmosphere where children are valued as individuals. Staff are proactive in developing a strong partnership with parents and relevant support agencies to support individual children. This enables staff to clearly identify children's strengths and weaknesses and provides appropriate support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual education plans are implemented and reviewed with parents on a regular basis. Key staff have a clear understanding of Code of Practice procedures and they attend relevant training to increase their knowledge and experience. Effective links are maintained with local support agencies. For example, a speech therapist visits the setting on a regular basis to enhance children's language and communication skills. Children learn about the wider world in stories, topics and during celebrations of different festivals and cultures. Posters and labels that are displayed around the room are translated into different languages. Every child has access to a broad range of resources and play opportunities, which reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural differences. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. The positive relationships shared between parents and staff promote good continuity of care for children. Parents complete a comprehensive information form about their child before they attend. They also receive a booklet with information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework, the Foundation Stage and copies of the setting's key policies and procedures. Good settling in procedures are followed to meet children and families individual needs and parents are warmly welcomed at any time or on specific days as parent helpers. Information is shared during informal chats each day and key worker systems provide a constant point of contact. Parents receive regular written reports about their child's progress which they are invited to comment on. Parents' meetings are arranged to provide opportunities for a fuller discussion of their child's progress and share any ideas or concerns. Older children take activities home to share with their parents. This creates stronger links between home and pre-school and enables parents to become actively involved in their child's learning. Regular newsletters and notices keep parents informed of special events and current topics. Parents comment on their overall satisfaction with the quality of care and education provided and praise the staff team very highly. Parents are invited to join the management committee to take an active role in the organisation and progression of the pre-school.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Management are actively involved throughout the setting where they lead by example. They attend committee meetings and hold key positions, such as treasurer or secretary. Regular staff meetings and informal discussions take place to review the setting's strengths and weaknesses and prioritise areas for improvement. Action plans are agreed and clear targets implemented to achieve their goals. For example, significant improvements to the outdoor play area have recently been identified as a priority to enable staff to provide further exciting opportunities for children's play and learning. Staff are dedicated, suitably qualified and work well together as a team. They have worked together for a number of years and consequently, provide valuable stability and consistency for parents and children. They communicate effectively with each other and attend relevant training courses to enhance their skills and update their knowledge. This information is cascaded to other members of staff to enable them to offer appropriate care for children.

Acceptable procedures are in place for the recruitment, selection of staff and assessment of their suitability to work with children. Systems are in place to induct new staff or volunteers within the pre-school, such as students or parent helpers. Contingency arrangements are in place to cover for staff shortages or illness.

Space is organised to provide children with a balanced range of activities. Staff are deployed effectively to ensure that children receive good levels of support throughout the session. Documentation, relating to the continuity of care for the children, is in place and organised to reflect confidentiality. Policies and procedures are reviewed, agreed with the committee and updated on a regular basis. The complaints procedures reflects amendments to the National Standards. However, the system to provide an appropriate record of complaints for other parents to see on request has not been fully implemented, which is a breach in regulations.

The quality of leadership and management for nursery education is good. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined within the staff team where everyone is strongly committed towards continually improving the overall quality of care and education that they provide. Informal systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in early education. However, current systems do not clearly identify areas for improvement within teaching and learning which has a negative impact on children's development.

There are strong links with the head and staff in the adjoining school and regular meetings are held with the Foundation Stage teacher. Good practice is shared and systems to monitor children's progress are discussed. Individual progress records are transferred to create a smoother transition for children moving on to their different early years settings.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection, the providers agreed to improve one aspect of their behaviour management policy documentation. Consequently, this has been amended to include strategies to combat bullying which further protects children and improves the overall quality of care provided.

At the last nursery education inspection, the providers agreed to formalise their system for identifying staff strengths, weaknesses and possible training needs. Appraisal systems are now

in place to manage the professional development of staff and improve the overall quality of nursery education provided.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection, 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, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## **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 good.

### **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):

- ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water at all times
- differentiate assessment profiles and recording systems to meet the needs of younger children
- increase play and learning opportunities for younger children in line with 'Birth to three matters' framework
- implement a system to maintain an appropriate record of complaints, which parents can see on request.

#### **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):

- increase opportunities for children to develop independent learning skills
- further develop systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)