



St. Peter's Under 5s

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY342158
Inspection date	07 March 2007
Inspector	Linda Janet Witts
Setting Address	St. Peters Catholic Infant School, Horton Road, GLOUCESTER, GL1 3PY
Telephone number	07816 223995
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Registered person	St. Peter's Under 5s Playgroup
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. Peter's Under 5s has been open since 1985 and is managed by a voluntary committee made up of parents of children at the playgroup. The group has close links to the Catholic Church and moved to its current premises in 2006. It operates from two playrooms in a separate building at St. Peter's Catholic Primary School that is close to Gloucester city centre.

The group serves the local area and children can attend for a variety of sessions. The group opens each weekday during school term times. There are two sessions on Monday, Thursday and Friday 08.45 to 11.45 and 12.30 - 15.30. A toddler session is held on Tuesday mornings and then an afternoon session for pre-school children. A morning session runs on Wednesday. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 82 children aged from two years six months to under five years on roll. Funded three and four-year-olds are accepted and currently there are 56 children who receive funding for nursery

education. The staff have experience of supporting children with learning difficulties, disabilities and English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs five members of staff who work with the children and an administrator. The leaders hold level three qualifications relevant to their role. Other staff either hold, or are working towards, childcare qualifications at different levels.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play within a clean, well-maintained environment, where staff take positive steps to ensure good hygiene practice. For example, tables are cleaned before food is served and toilet areas are monitored regularly. Pre-school children are familiar with the routine of washing their hands before they eat. They wash their hands under running water using soap and dry their hands on disposable hand towels. This minimises the risk of cross-infection. Children under the age of three use hand wipes and do not learn to wash their hands as older children do. Children are helped to understand about why hygiene routines are important. The group has suitable equipment for nappy changing but arrangements do not ensure the privacy of those being changed.

Children who require medication, become unwell or injure themselves are cared for sensitively. Parents receive written information about the group's sickness policy and about infectious illnesses. Appropriate permissions and records are in place regarding the administration of medication to children. Staff are all trained in first aid and records of accidents are appropriately maintained. The first aid kit contains some items that are out of date. Children tend not to require a sleep whilst attending the group, but there is a cosy book area where they can relax, if they wish.

Children are provided with nutritious, healthy snacks. For example, fresh and dried fruit and bread sticks. They are offered milk or water to drink. Children who attend afternoon sessions bring a packed lunch. This enables children to learn to serve themselves and to manage food packaging. Parents are not actively encouraged to ensure that the contents of lunchboxes, promote healthy eating. Mealtimes are relaxed, social occasions when children and adults sit together to enjoy their food and each other's company.

The new garden area offers a secure play space where children can enjoy fresh air and exercise. Children are taken out in small groups to use available equipment. The range of equipment is limited. For example, a sand tray, three small tricycles and a ride in car. The children are able to gain awareness of space as they manoeuvre the vehicles around the garden. They pedal and propel the vehicles competently. Children have indoor physical play opportunities such as, parachute games, stepping stone resources and use of a climbing frame. More able children are not physically challenged and children do not learn about the effects of exercise on their bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are secure and well supervised within the building and outside. They receive care from staff who are safety aware and help them to learn to keep themselves safe. For example, children learn to use scissors safely. Children also help younger children to stay safe. For example, a child reminds others not to put coins in their mouths, as they might choke. Regular fire drills help to familiarise children with emergency evacuation procedures. Visits from road safety officers reinforce how children can keep safe. The group's documented risk assessment does not show consideration made relating to the storage heaters, some of which can get very hot to touch and children are not protected from them. Staff check all areas of the premises before children's use and use a check list for reference.

Children use safe and suitable toys and equipment. Resources are of good quality and stored in low storage units to enable children to be involved in the selection of activities. Children are still learning that they can select resources for themselves. This was not possible at the group's previous setting. Equipment is regularly checked to ensure it is a good state of repair.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff ensure that children are protected from people who are not vetted and understand their responsibilities in relation to child protection. All staff are trained in child protection and they are aware of possible signs of abuse or neglect and appropriate action to take if they have concerns about a child's welfare. The group has a suitable strategy to deal with any allegations against a member of staff or volunteer and this is included in the group's child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children of all ages enjoy their time at the group. They all arrive with enthusiasm, detaching from their carer with confidence. They are relaxed in the company of the staff and adult helpers. Children are familiar with the session routines and happily join in group activities such as registration, meal-times, singing and story-time. Children are able to choose from a variety of planned activities. Some activities are adult-led and adults will join in with the children's play as they see appropriate. Children aged under three years join in activities with older children and receive additional support from adults to ensure their participation and enjoyment. Assessments are not routinely made of the progress of younger children, to identify how they can be supported in their development. All staff are trained to implement the Birth to three matters framework but are yet to do so effectively.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children benefit from the staff team's childcare experience, enthusiasm and sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage of learning. Children are making satisfactory progress across most of the six areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The learning environment is attractive. Children can see print used as labels and some numerals. There are displays of children's art work, some photographs of children at play and some posters that show positive images of ethnicity. The visual displays, except for a

welcome sign, do not include writing in the children's home languages as well as English. The available resources and space are not used to their full potential, to support children's learning. For example, there is no interest table or accessible resources to encourage children to explore and investigate both natural and man-made materials. Although staff say children can use creative resource materials using their own ideas, the designated area does not facilitate this effectively.

An enjoyable range of worthwhile activities is offered at each session, although the choice remains the same over different sessions, so some children can lose interest. Children have some outdoor play opportunities and visitors are invited into the group and trips to places of interest undertaken, to enhance children's learning experiences. Staff make regular observations of children and share information with one another. There is a heavy reliance upon mental knowledge of where children are in their learning, as assessment records do not clearly show this. The information gained through assessment is not always used effectively to inform future planning, to help each child to move onto the next stage in their learning. Support for children with special educational needs is very good but more able children are not always sufficiently challenged. Staff plan together, using planning ideas from the Gloucestershire Planning Guidance, but do not routinely differentiate plans for individual children. Plans do not give sufficient attention to all areas of learning. Written plans do not clearly show learning intentions so that all adults, including parents who help out, are aware of how activities aim to support children's learning. Staff do not explain to parents about the support they can give children or how to extend activities to challenge more able children. The group has not developed an effective system to evaluate activities and to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The group has an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who works successfully with children's parents and outside professionals to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual education plans are implemented and consistency for each child is ensured, because she visits other settings children attend and works closely with other practitioners involved in the support of each child. Sign language and picture cards are used effectively to aid communication between children with particular needs and the adults caring for them. Other children are not introduced to sign language as a means of ensuring that children are fully included and can communicate with their peers.

Support for children with English as an additional language is limited. They are warmly welcomed and encouraged to be involved with the group, as are their parents. Communication is initiated through gesture, facial expression and children are able to speak some English. Staff seek support from outside agencies to learn how they can further support these children, and they have plans to work more closely with the school to ensure consistent practice. Some bilingual books are available reflecting the home language of some of the children. The range of dressing-up clothes includes some provided by the children's parents following visits to their homelands.

Most children are developing confident communication skills. Many are happy to talk in large and small groups, to both familiar and unfamiliar adults. Those who find it hard to communicate, use sign language to make their needs known. Children have few opportunities to recognise and show respect for each child's home language. Able speakers talk about what they are doing and recall past experiences. Children converse happily with one another within their peer groups.

Three and four-year-olds join in and show their enjoyment of rhyming stories and rhythmic activities. They enjoy listening to stories; they listen attentively and show interest in the illustrations. The cosy book corner is accessible throughout each session so that children can look at books as individuals or with their friends. Children are able to draw and paint, gaining control when using writing implements. Many can hold a pencil correctly and make marks such as lines and circles and give meaning to the marks made. Children learn that writing can be used for different purposes. Children 'write' their own 'letters' and place them in envelopes; they make 'lists' and take 'orders' in the café. Children are not encouraged to write their own names and to learn to form letters correctly.

The young children are encouraged to show interest in counting. They talk about numbers such as, how many children are present and enthusiastically join in counting. They enjoy number rhymes counting up and back. Some children can make simple calculations. For example, children act out the rhyme 'Five Currant Buns'. Five children wait with coins to visit the 'baker's shop' to buy a currant bun. A child recognises that when three children are left to visit the shop, only two children have currant buns. Some children are able to recognise numerals. Children use and are introduced to mathematical language such as 'big', 'small' and positional language. Children select objects by shape, such as jigsaw pieces and construction resources, but do not often talk about the shapes of everyday objects.

Children's progress in knowledge and understanding of the world is limited, as insufficient attention is given to this area of learning when staff plan activities. Children have few opportunities to explore and investigate the indoor and outdoor environments. They have no interest table. Children are able to investigate ice and make playdough to observe changes. They investigate sand and water, filling and emptying utensils. Children will plant flowers for Mothering Sunday gifts but the plants are pre-grown so children are unable to monitor growth and gain awareness of time. Children do not have the use of a computer. They can operate simple equipment such as programmable toys, a play microwave and mobile phones that they use in role play. The children have access to some construction resources that they join together, building for their own purpose. Children are introduced to different cultures through planned activities, for example, festival celebrations.

Children safely use a range of tools and equipment; for example, using a paint brush with control, pencils, and scissors. They manipulate resources of different size and shape skilfully as they go about their play. They transfer resources between different areas of the premises with care.

Children use their imagination within their play. Children express themselves as they draw and paint, selecting and mixing colours. For example, a child prepares to paint at an easel. She studies her paper, then the range of paint colours available. She then delicately paints her hands, in turn, until each is totally covered in blue paint. She examines them, then coats each with red paint and announces that she has made purple. She then transfers the paint onto her paper and proudly shows off her hand-print picture. Creative materials other than those available for planned activities are stored at low level but not all children are aware that they can access them to create as they wish. Children pop in and out of the home corner and engage in role-play based on their own first hand experiences. The home corner is often changed to reflect different themes, such as a café. The young children are keen to involve adults in their imaginative play.

For example, two, four-year-olds set up a table attractively for their customers and welcome adults to their café. They offer suggestions of what to eat and make a note of orders. They busily prepare and serve the meals and check that their customers like the food. Others play happily alongside one another or co-operatively, engaging in the same theme. Children also use small world resources imaginatively. Such resources include, farm animals, train track, house and figures. Children also enjoy singing activities. They join in familiar songs sung routinely during the session. They sing nursery rhymes and songs, such as 'five currant buns' using props that initiate their involvement. They join in action songs with gusto. They have opportunities to use musical instruments and listen to the different sounds created.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are warmly welcomed into the group and have developed good relationships with the staff. Their personal, social and emotional development is promoted well. They are relaxed in the company of staff and their peers. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The group has close links with the Catholic Church and children learn about the Christian faith. They say prayers of thanks before they eat and at the end of each session. Children are introduced to other religions through planned activities. Children are encouraged to be independent in their personal care and activity choices and many persevere at activities for extended periods of time. Children learn good manners and are familiar with the behavioural expectations within the setting. They are well behaved, follow instruction well and are encouraged to share and take turns. The atmosphere within the group is calm and happy. Staff are good role models for children. They foster children's self-esteem well, valuing what they have to say and offering meaningful praise and encouragement. Children can choose to relax as they wish and children can find peace away from activity in the book corner. Children see positive images of ethnicity, gender and disability in resources such as some jigsaws, books, dressing-up clothes and small world resources. However, the environment does not reflect the home life of all children attending, including those for whom English is an additional language. For example, there are few links to their home language or familiar objects to aid children's feeling of security and to show that their ethnicity is valued.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents receive written information about the provision and regular newsletters to keep them up to date with group news. Full details of playgroup policies are readily available for parents to examine. The group's complaints procedure does not clearly detail how complaints will be dealt with and there is no system to record complaints should any be received. Each member of staff is committed in their role as key carers to individual children. They have established good relationships with the children and their parents and promote two-way communication. Parents report that staff are friendly and approachable and that staff offer family support and respect confidentiality. Positive steps are being taken to encourage parents to take an interest in their children's learning. They are encouraged to help out at sessions regularly and a display board gives a basic introduction to the Foundation Stage of Learning. Parents are not helped to understand how activities undertaken promote learning and there are no regular arrangements to share children's progress with parents. Children's assessment records do not clearly show where children are in their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children play happily within the play space, moving freely between the two rooms. They can select activities from a suitable range of pre-planned activities and more confident children will help themselves to different resources and initiate their own activities. Children are not always appropriately challenged and helped to meet their full potential. They have regular opportunities to play outside. Ratios of adults to children are extremely good and help to ensure that children are appropriately supervised. The play rooms are attractively decorated and the resources available are of good quality. The newly completed garden area is the result of the hard work of parents and staff, who cleared the overgrown area in their spare time. The area has yet to be used to its full potential. Routines promote good hygiene and children eat healthy snacks. Equal opportunities are promoted and children with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. Staff are consistent in their behavioural expectations and children are well-behaved. Staff are warm and affectionate towards all of the children in their care. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management of the playgroup are satisfactory.

Systems are in place to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and cleared for work with children. The ongoing suitability of staff is assessed by the committee who regularly see the staff at work and complete annual appraisals. All staff are childcare trained and have completed training in first aid, child protection and Birth to three matters. The leaders both hold level three qualifications relevant to their role. Other staff hold level two and three childcare qualifications or are working towards qualifications at different levels. Staff utilise local training workshops for their own personal development. Their obvious skills are not always used effectively to support their delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum, to assist children in their learning. There is no system to monitor the effectiveness of assessment, planning and evaluation.

The under fives group has already developed good links with the school. The leaders liaise closely with the head teacher and reception teacher. Information about each child is shared with their future teacher to aid children's smooth transition into school.

Documentation reflects the practice within the group. Many policies are comprehensively written, but others such as the complaints procedure, lack information. Records of children's and staff details and attendance, records of visitors, accidents, medication administered, incidents and safety records are appropriately maintained. A system to record parental complaints is not in place.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the group's first inspection under this registration. Therefore there are no care actions or recommendations to report on. With regards to nursery education, at the group's last inspection they were asked to further extend children's assessments to include an observation component, and to use the information from children's assessments to inform planning so that activities can be extended or supported for individual children. Secondly, it was recommended

that they increase children's spontaneous learning opportunities across the curriculum; to provide children with independent access to a variety of resources that promote learning in all areas, and to extend staff's knowledge of the learning intentions for the core activities, to ensure the maximum learning opportunities are met. A final recommendation was given to expand the programme for physical development to include opportunities for children to link health and bodily awareness and the changes that happen to our bodies when we exercise.

In response to the recommendations made staff now make regular observations of children at play, which are added to children's progress record. This information from children's assessments is not effectively used to inform planning. As a result there is no differentiation in planning so that activities can be extended or supported for individual children. Learning intentions for the planned activities, are now agreed with staff ,as they plan together. However, other adults who help out at sessions are not always clear about expectations. The new premises enable resources to be stored accessibly for children. However, some children lack the confidence to independently select resources and will play only with those activities set out for them. The programme for physical development has not been extended to include opportunities for children to link health and bodily awareness and the changes that happen to our bodies when we exercise.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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 satisfactory.

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 the use of a framework for assessment and planning for children aged under three years, such as the Birth to three matters framework
- make greater use of the outdoor play environment to enhance children's physical health and all-round learning (also applies to nursery education)

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):

- improve assessment of children's progress and use information gathered to inform future planning. Ensure that more able children are sufficiently challenged
- ensure that plans effectively cover all aspects of each of the six areas of learning and that learning intentions are clear to all adults working with the children
- provide regular opportunities to share children's progress with their parents/carers

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