

St Peter And St Mary's Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251655
Inspection date	23 May 2007
Inspector	Andrea Caroline Snowden
Setting Address	St Mary's Community Centre, Silverdale Avenue, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 1LS
Telephone number	07790 544043
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Registered person	St Peter And St Mary's Preschool
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 good. 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 Peter and St Mary's Pre-school is a church run community group which has been operating for over 30 years. The pre-school meets in St Mary's Community Centre not far from the town centre of Stowmarket in Suffolk.

Children use the large hall and as there is no outside area, often go on local outings. The pre-school is registered to care for 24 children under the age of five years, and children can join the provision once they are aged two-and-a-half. The pre-school opens five mornings a week during school term time between the hours of 09:15 and 11:45 and also offers two afternoon sessions on Wednesday and Thursday between 12:00 and 14:30.

There are currently 44 children on roll in total and 32 of these children receive funding for early education. The setting also supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with English as an additional language.

There are eight regular members of staff employed to work with the children, six of these staff hold recognised child care qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health and welfare are generally well promoted in this setting, where there are good practices to ensure a clean, hygienic environment. Clear information is sought from parents prior to care commencing to ensure staff have all the necessary information to care for children's health and dietary needs effectively. Good policies and information to parents ensures children are not exposed to the risk of cross infection from childhood illnesses. Staff can respond to accidents appropriately as they seek regular updates to their training and have necessary equipment readily available. Step-by-step guides for dealing with children choking and for resuscitation are displayed to ensure staff can act swiftly and accurately. There are appropriate procedures in place for dealing with the administration of medicines and thorough records of accidents and incidents. Children are aware of their personal hygiene and whilst washing their hands explain that they are using soap to 'get rid of the dirt'. Visitors such as the dental hygienist help children learn about caring for their bodies in a fun and meaningful way.

Snack time is a peaceful, sociable occasion where children sit in small groups with an adult close by for support and guidance. They chat to their peers and are relaxed, understanding the need to wash their hands before sitting at the table. They enjoy a good variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, along with toast and water or milk to drink. There are opportunities to broaden tastes and experience new foods as staff introduce children to foods from different countries. Children's independence is fostered during snack time as they pour their own drinks and spread the butter on their toast. They have lots of good opportunities to learn about healthy eating and displays around the hall remind children of where fruit and vegetables grow in the world. Snack menus are displayed to ensure parents are well informed about their children's diet whilst at pre-school. Staff work closely with parents of children who bring in a packed lunch to ensure children eat healthily and that storage of food is appropriate.

Most children show enthusiasm when asked to change for the P.E session and generally children engage in the activity with energy. They recognise that when they are hot, they need to drink and also to have a rest after exercise. Children are energetic in everything that they do and planned activities ensure they become aware of their bodies and how they work. There is no outside play area at the setting, although plans to develop an area are well advanced. Children are taken on regular walks in and around the local community, to visit the park or to the shops to buy milk for snack time.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed into a colourful child-centred environment where staff have worked extremely hard to create a accessible and stimulating play room. Space is well organised to create areas for learning, creativity, quiet rest and physical play. Presentation of equipment is thoughtful and attractive and contributes to children's enthusiasm in the setting. They use a wide range of good quality toys and furniture which are clean and well maintained. A good selection of this equipment is organised in a way that children can self-select promoting their free choice and independence. Children show a great deal of respect for equipment and almost all engage willingly in tidy up time.

Staff help children to learn about looking after themselves, for example by explaining how to use equipment correctly to prevent accidents and children are reminded to use their 'walking feet' indoors. Children practice fire drills with staff and are therefore becoming aware of how to react in an emergency situation. Fire drills are carried out frequently and records are retained, however there is information missing relating to any problems or incidents which may occur. Detailed procedures are available about action to take should a child become lost or is not collected and at all times the children's welfare is paramount. Risk assessments are carried out daily in order to maintain safe conditions and health and safety policies are purposeful and ensure good standards of safety are generally upheld in the setting. Most staff are vigilant towards children's safety, however when a child is quickly removed from playing with an unprotected electrical socket, the staff member fails to cover the socket with a protector, resulting in the further potential to compromise children's safety.

Children are very well protected by a staff team who demonstrate a clear understanding of child protection issues. There are robust recording systems in place to ensure potential cases are not missed and all staff are trained and are able to put the child protection procedures in place. Documentation is readily available and parents are informed of the pre-school's duty to safeguard children via the comprehensive policy documents and the child protection statement on the notice board. Children's safety is further enhanced as all staff are required to declare their suitability to work with young children annually. Adults who have not been vetted do not have unsupervised access to children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The relationship between children and their peers and the staff is warm and friendly with children pleased to greet their friends offering hugs. Staff listen carefully to what children are saying and respond with interest. As a result children feel valued, their self-confidence grows and they are more ably equipped to deal with their play and learning. Children know their own minds and are confident to voice their feelings and declare 'I've finished' as they leave the table to move on. Children are very excited in their play. Whilst looking at a book about the planets children shout 'what's this, what's this', showing an eagerness to learn. Staff support children's activities by making them sound intriguing and fun and children follow willingly. Staff are confident to follow children's interests rather than the planned activities and when a child makes a wand, all the children become involved, extending the activity to make fairy wings and running up and down the hall in role play.

Staff are skilled at presenting difficult concepts to children in a way which is appropriate to their stage of development. Children looking at the planets are told about the constellations in the sky by explaining that 'some very clever people looked at the stars and made some shapes'. All the children contribute to a puppet show using lamps and shadows and children are so excited they stamp their feet and clap their hands when they engage in new experiences.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Very good steps have been taken to ensure all staff have a thorough working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and as a result all staff are involved in developing the curriculum plans. Staff demonstrate that they understand the learning intentions from all activities in the setting and are able to ensure children gain the most from what they do. Staff understand how young children learn. They present new experiences, with support and then provide opportunities for children to revisit and consolidate their learning

by practicing the skills again. Staff ask lots of open ended questions, such as 'how do you think we could do it', promoting children's thought processes and problem solving skills. Staff have higher expectations for older or more able children and this differentiation is detailed in planning. Staff work directly with the children and make excellent use of the resources they have at their disposal creating an environment where children can be self-sufficient and confident. Curriculum planning reflects a broad and varied subject base and incorporates children's interests and activities they particularly enjoy. Planning is effectively shared and all staff are fully briefed on the desired learning outcomes and how to promote the learning from the activity. Staff make quite regular observations of children and incorporate these into assessment records. The records are informative and nicely written to reflect the positive attitude children display. The system in place for using assessment information to help children move to the next stage of their learning is not robust enough to ensure this always happens, and as a result some children may not make the progress they otherwise would.

Children are motivated in their attitude towards learning. They confidently leave their parents and engage in activities swiftly. They work independently and talk to their friends and staff about home life. A child excitedly tells staff of a big birthday celebration in the family. Self-confidence is high and children are able to stand up for themselves, confidently reporting concerns to staff or managing the situation for themselves. They manage self-help skills very ably, such as dressing after physical play. They see a variety of print during their time at pre-school and understand that it carries meaning. Younger children tentatively form the letters of their name, whilst others are very competent in this. They listen to stories and quickly learn the refrains and join in enthusiastically. They engage in hand-eye coordination activities such as lacing cards to help them with later writing skills. Children use language well to describe what they are doing and to talk through activities with their peers and staff. Children's understanding of number is very good. They can rote count and know that to write 20 they need a two and a zero and that 22 comes after 21. Staff talk to the most able children in terms of tens and units and children use mathematical language in their daily routines and play. Children name shapes easily and plans show that they have been introduced to simple calculation techniques.

Children experience many opportunities to observe change. They squeal with delight as stick on shapes are removed from a faded background to reveal the shapes in the original colour, they mix powder paints, play with ice in the water tray and toast bread. Children demonstrate that they are comfortable operating a computer as they manage the mouse accurately and turn up the volume when they can not hear. Topics such as 'Our Neighbourhood' help children learn about their community, whilst activities such as making a Menorah to celebrate Hanukkah raises awareness of other cultures. Children's design and making skills are fostered through the wide selection of manufacturers construction sets and when they use cartons to make castles, as they did to celebrate St Georges Day. Children's imagination is well fostered as they use the fantasy cubes to travel by boat, instigate their own stories in role play and perform shows for their parents at Christmas and Easter time. They have made didgeridoos and played them and have access to an exiting selection of musical instruments and beat out a rhythm as they sing. Children explore a variety of media including making a sensory board to compare and contrast textures. Children's fine motor skills are promoted and displays show how they use scissors to accurately cut along zig-zag and wavy lines, they thread beads onto laces and carefully use glue sticks to create their collages. Children mostly enjoy the P.E session where they work with hoops, do stretching exercises and roly-polys. They bounce on the trampoline holding with just one hand showing their confidence and scrabble through tunnels, climb on the frame and develop ball skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff have created an environment of mutual respect and a willingness to help others and children demonstrate this as they go about their play. Equality is promoted throughout the setting from publicity documents through to the children's activities. Children take part in many planned events to help them become aware of and learn about different countries and cultures and the similarities and differences in people around the world. They have tried Flamenco dancing, made poppies for Remembrance Day and used blocks to build their Great Wall of China. When thinking about World Disability Day they smeared vaseline on glasses to try to understand how a partially sighted child might see the world. Staff ensure they obtain detailed information about children and parents complete an 'all about me' booklet which helps staff understand children's individual likes and dislikes and become to know them well.

Children having learning difficulties or disabilities are well supported by the staff team. A trained member of staff taking responsibility for the co-ordination of the children demonstrates a determination to ensure children are cared for and integrated effectively. Careful research and close liaison with parents and outside agencies means that she and the whole staff team are well informed about children's needs and strategies to promote good opportunities for learning and play. Individual plans are created alongside the parents, and wherever possible the child, ensuring they have a say in activities they would like to do. Children who speak English as an additional language are equally well supported, with staff following parental wishes. Key words have been noted and pictures used to communicate meaning are available.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Their self-esteem is consistently promoted with praise both as individuals and as a group. Children are nominated by staff at the end of the session for good behaviour and a child is over the moon, calling out 'I've got two ticks', showing pride and developing positive self-image. Children have been involved in making the 'golden rules' for the pre-school and as a result understand the type of behaviour that is required. Positive strategies are used to help children understand right from wrong and staff remain calm and collected when dealing with children, some of whom repeatedly display challenging behaviour. Liaison with parents to develop consistent strategies benefit the children who begin to understand what is expected of them and how any unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with both at home and in pre-school.

Parents are valued and recognised as children's first and most important educators by the staff and they are greeted warmly every day. Parents are relaxed in the setting and remain to settle their children, chatting to staff as they do so. There is valuable information for parents on the notice boards to help them in caring for their own children. For example information about new legislation regarding car seats is displayed. Parents are well informed about current topics and what children have been looking at, and enjoy 'sharing mornings' where they can informally talk to staff about their children's development, see activities in action and understand how children learn and socialise with one another. There is a robust system in place for the investigation of complaints and parents are made aware of how to raise any concerns they might have.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents are given varied information about the curriculum their children are following and have access to a video, colourful posters on the notice board and explanations about the Foundation Stage in the prospectus. Parents may ask to see their children's assessment records throughout the year, where they contribute their observations, but these are formally sent home each term. Parents

are able to become involved with their child's learning at home because detailed project information is always available on the notice board. The pre-school seeks parental feedback by sending out a questionnaire which asks questions pertinent to the moment in order to gain an insight of parents views. Parents also have the opportunity to share their expertise in the setting, and when following the topic 'People Who Help Us' a parent was able to support this activity by sharing their paramedic knowledge and skills. Parents speak positively of the setting, describing it as 'fantastic' and say that children have moved on in their development and learning since joining the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are thriving in this pre-school because of the good organisation of the hall and the usually effective deployment of staff. The manager of the setting is enabling and dedicated to providing a setting which provides good quality care for children. All but one member of staff hold either a level two or three qualification and are very experienced and led by a manager who is recognised in the county for her good practices. The staff work as a very close team and as a result children benefit from the seamless and smooth running of the sessions. Most staff have a designated role within the setting ensuring that skills are used appropriately and providing a system to ensure all staff are informed about the latest legislation or good practice information. There are effective induction procedures and robust systems for ensuring staff are suitable to work with children and the policies and procedures enable staff and parents to work together effectively to meet the needs of the children. Almost all the required record keeping is in place and maintained to a good standard.

The leadership and management is good. The manager has a clear view of her role in supporting the staff and children in the setting and remaining up to date with all requirements and legislation of childcare. She has high, but realistic expectations of her staff team, who she supports very well. Staff are valued and annual appraisals along with day to day exchanges ensures staff have opportunity to reflect on their training needs and personal development. The training plan ensures that staff update mandatory training, but in addition to this staff have attended a raft of short course training in order to enhance their knowledge and skills. The manger, and therefore the staff, adopt a 'can do' attitude and are continuously reflecting on practice and monitoring the provision. Detailed self evaluation forms are completed looking at each outcome for children and identifying possible areas for improvement and staff are soon to be involved in peer to peer observations so that good practice can be observed and shared. In order to benchmark and improve the setting further the staff team have completed the Suffolk Quality Assurance Scheme and liaise with other providers. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school manager was asked to place more emphasis in the planning for children to sing, to develop strategies at tidy up time to ensure children felt secure and to create a more welcoming entrance hall. The setting have made good progress and as a result children are now singing songs every day and learning new ones for productions for parents. Tidy up time is now an ordered time where almost all children are involved in helping to tidy rather than left feeling insecure whilst equipment was moved. The entrance hall has been redecorated and the colourful murals, and informative notice boards now make a more welcoming entrance for parents and children alike.

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 good. 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):

- improve systems for recording fire drills to ensure any problems encountered are detailed and fully addressed
- ensure electrical sockets do not pose a hazard to children

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):

- further develop methods for the identification of children's next steps for learning to ensure all children make good progress.

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