

St Francis Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	108433
Inspection date	22 January 2008
Inspector	Deborah Jaqueline Newbury
Setting Address	Coronation Road, South Ascot, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 9HG
Telephone number	01344 291140
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Registered person	St Francis Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 Francis Pre-School opened in 1990. It is a registered charity, run by a committee whose members mostly comprise parents of children attending the setting. The pre-school operates from a self-contained portacabin with one main activity area, kitchen and toilets, which is set in the grounds of St Francis School, South Ascot in Berkshire. The pre-school has access to a large outdoor area and can make use of the school hall. The group serves the local community and surrounding areas.

The pre-school is registered to provide care for 20 children aged two to five years; of these not more than four may be under three years. There are currently 36 children on roll aged two to four years. This includes 35 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. The pre-school welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children with English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens five days a week during school term time only. Sessions are from 09:00 to 12:00 and 12:00 to 15:00. Children attending afternoon sessions have lunch at the setting.

A total of five members of staff work with the children; three on a full-time basis and two part-time. A total of four members of staff hold appropriate early years qualifications, one of whom is currently studying for the Foundation degree in Early Years, Development and Learning. The setting receives support from the local authority Early Years and Childcare Service.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow good practice to minimise the potential for cross infection and to protect everyone from illness. For instance, they make a point of cleaning tables before and after children eat, they provide children with paper towels and ensure parents are fully aware of the setting's sick child policy. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through consistent daily routines and the input of staff. They help themselves to tissues to wipe their runny noses and then dispose of these properly in the bin. Staff speak with them about the need to cover their mouths when they cough to stop the spread of germs. Children develop independence as they take themselves off to the bathroom to wash their hands after making playdough. They understand that they need to wash their hands after using the toilet or before eating. Staff keep a watchful eye at lunchtime and check whether children, who come in and sit down straightaway to eat, have washed their hands first.

Staff seek information from parents about any allergies or dietary requirements children may have and they take positive steps to ensure these are met. For instance, they are happy for parents to provide alternatives to cows milk if this is what they wish and they provide gluten-free flour for making playdough. This means that all children can help to make and play with the dough without fear of having an adverse reaction; this helps to ensure an inclusive approach. Children are offered a choice of milk or water at snack time. They can ask for drinks at other times during the session although they are unable to independently help themselves to these. Staff feel that a lack of surface space currently makes this difficult to achieve. Children enjoy healthy snacks; these include fruit, food from other countries to tie in with topic work and other things that children prepare during the course of the session, such as vegetable soup. Children who stay for lunch bring a packed lunch from home or have the option of a school dinner two days a week. Parents are requested to supply healthy options and to avoid the inclusion of sweets in their children's lunch boxes. Children enjoy sitting together and engaging in conversation. Lunchtime, in particular, is a very sociable occasion.

Children go outside to play each day in the school playground, even if it is raining, and so benefit from fresh air and physical exercise. They play with the different resources staff get out for them, such as bats, balls and hoops and can also explore some of the fixed play apparatus in the playground. Children enjoy kicking the balls around and they practise throwing and catching. Staff demonstrate how to roll the hoops. In addition to the playground, the pre-school is also able to access the school playing field and school hall. This adds variety to the range of experiences staff can offer and means that children develop familiarity with their immediate surroundings.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-school premises are decorated with educational posters and examples of children's artwork which helps to create a pleasant environment for everyone and adds to children's sense

of belonging. The room is maintained in a satisfactory state of repair overall although the kitchen has recently been refurbished. Currently, the toilet area is a little tired-looking but management are looking at ways of addressing this issue. Children are able to move around freely and sit and play in comfort although space constraints and current organisation of resources means that they cannot easily and independently access a broad range of items. This matter is in the process of being addressed through the purchase of low level shelving units which will afford greater opportunities for children to self-select play materials. Overall, children use a good range of equipment, furniture and resources; these are checked regularly to ensure they are clean and safe and contain no broken parts.

Staff are mindful of children's safety, indoors and outside. Practice is underpinned by appropriate policies and procedures. The layout of the room means that children can be easily seen by staff and arrival and departure of children is closely supervised. Security measures are good; children cannot leave the building unsupervised and staff control access to the premises. Appropriate fire safety precautions are in place and children practise fire drills each term to develop their understanding of the action they need to take should it be necessary to evacuate the premises. A risk assessment is conducted and staff undertake a daily safety check.

All members of the staff team hold a valid first aid certificate which means children receive appropriate care if they have an accident or sustain a minor injury, Staff complete accident reports, although parents do not always countersign these and some only mention children's first names; this is likely to make it difficult to identify which child was involved if it is necessary to review these reports at some point in the future and there is more than one child present with the same first name. Children are safeguarded because staff are secure in their understanding of child protection issues and the action they must take if they have any concerns. They have attended relevant training in the past and are waiting to attend a refresher course. The pre-school's safeguarding children policy has recently been updated to reflect latest guidance and parents are informed of the setting's responsibility with regard to child protection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very settled and happy, both within the pre-school environment, with their peers and with the adults caring for them. They are warmly greeted on arrival and make their own decisions about what they do from the range of activities staff have set out for them to explore. They quickly become involved in those that interest them and that they find enjoyable. Consequently, they often remain engrossed, whether when taking part in one of the directed activities on offer or when engaging in child-initiated play.

The pre-school has a good selection of play materials, including some interesting items for threading and pattern making. Staff are able to borrow items from the school and local library to supplement further the range available.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children make good progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals as they access different activities that have regard for all areas of learning. Staff interact with children in positive ways, both during adult directed activities and as children engage in self-initiated play; for instance by asking questions to make children think. However, they sometimes miss opportunities to build further on children's independence and self-help skills; for example, by encouraging them to pour their

own drinks and by encouraging children to do things for themselves rather than presenting them with pre-prepared cut-out resources for some adult-directed activities. The pre-school's system for planning and recording is currently under review and staff have been experimenting with different ways of doing this. Staff monitor children's progress although do not record the next steps in their learning.

Children form good relationships with others. They enjoy their time at the pre-school and display positive attitudes to learning. They engage easily in conversation and are keen to share their news and thoughts; for example about the things they did over the weekend and the current theme of sight. Staff encourage them to talk about what happens when they close their eyes and they explain to them how eye lids protect our eyes. Children enjoy looking at themselves in a mirror and identifying their eye colour. They are then encouraged to create a picture of their eyes using different materials. This activity is offered at different levels to cater for the differing capabilities of the children present; for instance some children are invited to write labels for the different eye parts such as iris and pupil. However, children use pre-cut shapes and ready prepared materials which restricts opportunities for them to be challenged further by doing things for themselves.

Children are helped to recognise their written names as they self-register on arrival and look for their name cards at snack time. Some children attempt to write their names on their work, either using correctly formed letters or tracing over the dotted letters that staff write for them. They have access to some writing materials within the pre-school room although these are not available in the role-play area to encourage children to explore emergent writing as part of their play. Children listen well to stories; their attention is held as they are asked questions and encouraged to contribute their thoughts.

Children chat about their ages and those of their siblings. They identify written numerals and count regularly; for instance, the number of children present and when playing games. They sort and match, identify shapes and make comparisons about size as they play a Bingo game with staff. Children complete puzzles and build with different construction toys. They enjoy using the computer to create pictures using the 'paint box' program; they print these off and are able to explain what they are doing.

Children have lots of fun as they race around the playground. They display good awareness of space and the presence of other children when running and they avoid collisions. They enjoy crawling through and climbing in and out of the play house. Children practise their balancing skills by walking along logs and on top of tyres in the school playground. They improve their fine motor skills and hand/eye co-ordination as they practise cutting with scissors and strengthen the muscles in their fingers as they knead the playdough they have helped to make and roll this out.

Children enjoy imaginative play. They remain engrossed as they play alongside others, using the new toy castle and fort. They make up stories using the play people provided and talk about the roles they have allocated for them; for example, 'the fairy godmother, the prince, and the king and queen.' Children are encouraged to think of appropriate 'rainy day' songs and make suggestions of 'Dr. Foster' and 'Its raining, its pouring.' They become excited at the prospect of using the musical instruments and are eager to choose one. They play these quietly and loudly and are encouraged to create sad and happy music. Examples of children's artwork displayed around the room and photographic evidence available at the inspection show that children explore a range of different media and materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff treat children with respect and equal concern. They seek relevant information from parents to enable them to meet children's care needs and the pre-school's 'getting to know you' booklet acts as a useful means for finding out about children's starting points. Staff make a point of explaining to children about the need to listen to one another and remind them of the importance of handling the new toys with care. This helps children appreciate the needs of others and to have respect for the resources they play with. Children are familiar with the expectation that they help tidy up in preparation for outdoor play when staff play the 'clean-up' song on the CD player. Most children are happy to do this and announce to other children that they need to tidy up now. The setting's practice of providing children with named coat pegs and drawers adds to their sense of belonging; many children understand that they should place any pictures they want to take home with them in their drawer. Children find out about social diversity and the wider world in which we live through access to resources within the setting and planned topics; this includes the celebration of festivals, some of which may be familiar but also others that may be entirely unknown. Parents are invited into the pre-school to talk to children and share their knowledge. Children's awareness of their community and the roles people play is fostered by means of going for walks around the local area and visitors to the group. The setting works with parents and other agencies as appropriate to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and any children who speak English as an additional language.

Children mostly behave very well. They benefit because staff always speak to them calmly and quietly and have a consistent approach when dealing with the minor issues that do occur. For instance, they explain to children about the need to share resources and they have high expectations of good manners. Children cheerfully join in with the snack-time song which acts as a useful reminder of the importance of saying please and thank-you. Older children show good understanding of the purpose of the egg timers and explain that when the sand runs through, it will be someone else's turn to have a go on the computer. Younger children show fascination with these and watch intently as the sand trickles through from top to bottom. Children feel good about themselves as staff praise them, giving reasons why they are pleased with them. They clap one another as they complete the bingo game they are playing. Children like receiving stickers.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are welcomed into the group at the start and end of sessions and staff form warm, friendly relationships with them. They are provided with written information about the pre-school in the form of a general information booklet and a welcome pack when their children start at the pre-school. They are able to easily access policies and procedures as copies of these are available in the foyer, together with information about the committee and any meetings held, and general information about childcare, education and children's health matters. Parents are provided with information about the term's themes and intended learning and the weekly number and letter of the alphabet children will be introduced to. Information is exchanged informally and is supplemented by an annual parents evening where key workers discuss children's progress with parents. Parents are encouraged to share in the life of the pre-school by joining the committee, adding their names to the parents' rota and participating in social events. They have opportunities to share in their children's learning as children regularly take home books to share with their families.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are settled and relaxed in the pre-school environment. They are cared for by a well-established staff team with whom they form confident relationships. Staff work together well; they are aware of their roles and responsibilities, which ensures sessions flow smoothly and children are not left waiting around for the next activity to start. On occasions when staff are waiting, for example for all children to finish washing their hands before snack, they start impromptu singing or games of Chinese whispers which captures children's attention and means that they remain occupied. Appropriate recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure staff are suitable to work with children. Most members of staff hold appropriate qualifications and they are encouraged to develop their knowledge through ongoing training. Appraisals are conducted annually although systems for ensuring ongoing suitability of staff are not yet fully developed.

St. Francis pre-school is a committee-run group; overall responsibility for the provision rests with the committee whilst the day-to-day running of the group and delivery of nursery education is delegated to the supervisor and her staff team. There have recently been some changes to the committee and Ofsted has been informed of new members and those individuals who are no longer involved with the group. Application forms and criminal bureau disclosure application forms are in the process of being completed for submission to Ofsted so that required checks can be undertaken to ensure overall suitability. However, currently there is no system for monitoring completion of these to ensure that information is forwarded to the regulator as quickly as possible. This could potentially impact on children's safety if the information is not sent. Committee and staff work closely together. There is a regular exchange of information to ensure the smooth running of the provision; the supervisor attends committee meetings and provides support to the committee as new members develop understanding of their role and responsibilities. For instance, she has arranged for some committee members to attend health and safety training as they will be responsible for undertaking risk assessments of the provision.

Detailed policies and procedures underpin practice; these are reviewed and updated. Required documentation and other records that promote the health, safety and welfare of children are generally well maintained although staff do not record children's full names on the attendance register.

Leadership and management are good. There is a reflective approach evident at this setting, with areas for improvement identified and plans in place to address these. For example, new low shelving units are being purchased to increase opportunities for children to independently access a wider range of resources. The pre-school has recently enrolled in the EEL (Early Effective Learning) project as a means of reviewing practice and improving the quality of its provision for children and their families.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last day care inspection, the setting was asked to improve some aspects of its written behaviour management and complaints procedures. These issues have been addressed appropriately overall; the policy statement for behaviour management now includes details about how the setting would deal with any episodes of bullying and parents are made aware of how they can contact the regulator if they wish to report any concerns they have. However,

the information available does not include details of the time-scale in which parents can expect to receive a written response if their complaint relates to a National Standard.

There were two key issues raised following the pre-school's last nursery education inspection. These related to the use of children's individual assessments to determine the next steps in their learning and to provide more able children with greater challenge in respect of their development of mathematical concepts. The pre-school has purchased new resources to support children's mathematical learning. These are used to good effect to promote children's exploration of mathematics. For instance, children enjoy playing with the 'Mathsmobile' game; they place play people in the cars provided and are encouraged to count how many there are in each car and how many they have altogether. Children manage this well; some are extended further by recording their answers using correctly formed written numerals. They enjoy moulding playdough in the shape of the different numerals written on number cards and then making sufficient playdough balls to correspond with the numeral. The setting has re-introduced a key worker system and developed further its system for undertaking observations on children. Staff discuss children's progress at their weekly staff meetings although it is not clear from children's achievement records what the next steps in their learning are. This issue has been carried forward as an area for further development following this inspection.

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):

- ensure children's full names are recorded on all accident reports and the attendance register. Ask parents to countersign all accident reports to acknowledge the entry
- improve monitoring arrangements to ensure all new committee members complete required application forms promptly
- develop further the written complaints procedure to include details of the time-scale in which parents can expect to receive a written response if their complaint relates to a National Standard.

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 systems for recording the next steps in children's learning and use the information gathered to inform future planning
- consider ways of enhancing existing opportunities for children to build further on their self-help skills and thus, challenge them further.

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