

St Joseph's Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	130578
Inspection date	18 July 2007
Inspector	Maura Pigram
Setting Address	St Joseph's Church Hall, Oxhey Drive, South Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD19 7SW
Telephone number	020 8428 6465
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Registered person	St Joseph's Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

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

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

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

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

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

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are 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 Joseph's Pre-School was registered in 2006 and operates from a unit at the back of the main church hall of St Joseph's Church, in South Oxhey. The group has sole use of the pre-school unit with access to the large church hall and to a secure garden within the church grounds.

A maximum of 20 children may attend at any one time. St Joseph's Pre-School is open each weekday, from 09:00 to 11:30 and 12:45 to 15:00 during term time only. In addition, it operates lunch club sessions.

There are currently 47 children from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 10 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs six members of staff. Of these, three staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early year qualifications. One staff member is working towards a qualification. The group is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA). It receives support from a local authority qualified teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to understand the importance of good hygiene and personal care. They follow well organised routines such as washing their hands before eating. They are reminded to wash their hands after using the toilet. The availability of tissues, soap and paper towels contribute to the children's awareness of developing good personal care skills. Staff follow suitable hygiene procedures to prevent the spread of infection, such as encouraging the children to cover their mouths when coughing. Children do not attend the pre-school if they are unwell or infectious and this information is clearly shared with parents. This means that there is a continuation of care between the children's parents and the staff.

Children are generally nourished. They are provided with a snack and some children stay for lunch which parents provide. Social skills and good manners are encouraged. They are encouraged to learn about healthy eating through the sharing of fruit. Staff prepare the snack and drinks for the children. Consequently, children do not have the opportunity to pour their own drinks. Dietary needs are known and daily information is exchanged with parents about children's individual diets. However, occasionally children receive treats such as lollipops and fizzy drinks. This means that children's health and well-being is not fully promoted.

Procedures are in place to help staff act in the children's best interests should they require medical attention. All necessary documentation, including written parental consents and contact details, are in place to permit staff to act quickly if children become ill or if there is a medical emergency. All members of staff have a current first aid qualification. The first aid kit is easily accessible and well stocked. This means that children's health, if they have an accident, is appropriately protected.

Children's physical skills are well supported. They become confident at using utensils and tools as staff plan useful activities, such as art and craft activities. Children enjoy using large outside equipment, such as climbing structures, sea-saws and slides. Consequently, they develop skills of balance and coordination. Children regularly take part in movement and music sessions which involves them in vigorous exercise. The daily routine and organisation of the room offers space and appropriate areas for quiet play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where most risks are identified and minimised. This means that children can move around safely, freely and independently. Children use a varied range of good quality, developmentally appropriate toys and equipment. Many resources are easily accessible. The cleaning and checking of equipment ensures they are safe for the children to use. Resources are stored safely and effective procedures such as the completion of risk assessments ensure that accidental injury is minimised. However, the lock on the gate is not always used. This potentially hinders the children's safety. An emergency evacuation procedure is in place which is practised with the children. Consequently, children know what to do in an emergency. Staff are deployed to supervised children at all times and visitors sign in and out.

Children are kept safe outdoors and potential dangers are explained to them. They routinely sing a song related to road safety. They are reminded to hold a friend's hand and to be careful walking up the 'little step'. Children are helped to use the outdoor equipment safely. When using the sea-saw, for example, they are reminded to hold the handles. Consequently, children are beginning to understand about how to keep themselves safe.

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. There is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection. Staff members are aware of the pre-school's child protection procedure and what to do if they have concerns about a child in their care. They continually up-date their knowledge and work closely with outside agencies to ensure children's welfare is paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a supportive and caring environment. They are helped to feel settled through one-to-one interaction and through small groups. Consequently, they form positive relationships with their peers and the staff. They receive good adult guidance and extra support if needed. Personal, social and emotional development, in particular, is very well fostered. Staff spend valuable time with children ensuring they feel secure and at ease in the setting.

Encouragement and support is valued, staff engage children in conversation offering reassurance to any children who are unsettled. Children take part in a range of interesting and stimulating indoor activities such as role play and art and craft activities. As a result, they develop confidence and self-esteem. Staff implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure that children's abilities and independence skills are fostered. This means that all areas of children's development is promoted.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

The children are progressing well, supported by staff who have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children of this age group develop. Comprehensive planning covers all six areas of learning. This is linked with an assessment procedure which is evaluative. Both planning and children's assessment are linked closely to the stepping stones and the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The level of challenge is sufficient to interest all of the children. Staff interaction with the children is high. They use every opportunity to reinforce children's learning, particularly during everyday events such as registration and the procedure of counting each other on their return from outdoor play. However, they do not have systems in place to obtain formal information on the children's starting points at registration. This means that potentially there are missed opportunities to plan effectively for new children.

Children generally arrive happy, quickly settle and engage into the routine of the pre-school. They have a positive attitude to learning, they show interest, ask questions and are helped to develop confidence and self-esteem. They are aware of boundaries and behavioural expectations, for example, sharing and taking turns. This means that they develop good relationships with the adults and with their friends. Children independence is effectively fostered. Children, for example, have free play time when they can choose which toys to play with. During this time they use their imagination and initiate their own games which are well supported and extended.

Children confidently select books and 'read' these to each other. They listen to stories attentively and respond with excitement to favourite stories. The gifts of teddies from America enliven a

planned teddy bears picnic and create many opportunities for discussion. Questions related to the weather and days of the week are discussed during registration times. As a result, children's thinking is developed and they take turns in conversation. Children are using a mix of Letter land and phonics to help them link sounds and letters. As a result, many children can recognise their own name cards. Children have ample opportunities to attempt writing for different purposes. They make shopping lists, create books and complete worksheets. Children recognise numbers on the telephones and readily count each other during play. They have a wide range of resources to support their mathematical development such as matching and comparing games. Computer games are used to reinforce the children's understanding of simple calculations such as adding and subtracting. They regularly take part in cooking activities. Consequently, they learn about measurement.

Children relish their time in the outdoor area. During this time they join in with running races and cheer each other as they run. They practise their physical skills such as riding bikes, playing with hoops, balls and skittles. They love hiding under the climbing apparatus creating imaginative play situations. They have opportunities to explore with sand and water. Children begin to develop an understanding of different cultures and beliefs. Staff members skilfully share their knowledge of festivals such as Diwali. During this time children taste new foods and delight in trying on a Sari. Visits to appropriate venues such as animal parks take place regularly. Consequently, children develop an awareness of the wider world. They explore various media and materials when taking part in the many art and craft activities. Themes such as 'Under the sea' and 'Our Garden' support this. Children learn about rhythm and sound through use of musical instruments and regular music sessions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and included. They receive a warm welcome and are helped to feel part of the pre-school community. The flexible settling-in procedure means that staff have the opportunity to informally discuss the children's needs. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. Many of the staff can communicate using appropriate sign language. There are strong links with support agencies such as health visitors and speech therapists who regularly visit offering advice and guidance. One-to-one support is offered if necessary and home link books are used to assist with communicating children's needs. Consequently, children benefit fully and are able to flourish from their attendance at this setting. All children have a main key worker whose purpose is to ensure that the child is happy and reaches their individual potential. This is successfully achieved as staff use their observations, experience and close communications to support children's personal development.

Children understand responsible behaviour and play together well. Children are clear of the boundaries and expectations are explained and reinforced to them during outdoor play, where they are reminded not to play with the 'big swings'. Any displays of unacceptable behaviour are followed with an explanation on why it is not appropriate. As a result children learn right from wrong and learn to respect each other.

Children's spiritual, moral social and cultural development is fostered. Children are encouraged to be kind to each other, to share and take turns. In addition, the gifts of soft toy bears create discussions about the importance of caring for their belongings. The setting has a wide range of equipment and toys, such as role play artefacts, posters and books, which present positive images of diversity. Some of these are linked to planned projects, such as celebrating St Georges Day, which increase children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children benefit from the sound partnership with parents and carers that the pre-school has formed. Parents receive detailed information about the pre-school which informs them about the services it has to offer. In addition, local information from the community is displayed such as relevant childcare courses. Weekly planning is on display so that parents can find out about what topics are being followed. Parents speak well of the caring and approachable staff and are welcome into the setting at any time. The pre-school has a complaints procedure for parents and carers to use should it be necessary. There is a procedure in place to record any complaints which complies with the requirements of the national standards. This means that parents are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns regarding the welfare of their children.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory.

Information about nursery education is provided for parents as the pre-school makes all its policies available to parents. Parents are encouraged to share information about what they know about their children when they first start, although this is not carried out formally or routinely as they get older. Consequently, staff are not fully informed of children's starting points or of factors that impact on children's development. Informal discussions with parents take place daily. However, there are no formal opportunities to discuss children's development with parents. Consequently, the partnership with parents of funded children is not fully developed. Parents have some opportunities to be involved in children's learning through the information displayed on the window. This includes the daily planning and the name of the story read to the children during the day. As a result, parents gain some knowledge about their children's day.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in setting where the experienced adults have a clear sense of purpose. The organisation of the sessions ensures that children enjoy a balance of free play time and adult led activities as well as one-to-one support if required. As a result, children's play successfully promotes their learning. Professional development of staff is given a high profile so that that staff are able to continue to evaluate and monitor practice.

Policies and procedures are comprehensive and work in practice to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. Recruitment procedures ensure staff have relevant experience, qualifications, knowledge and skills to do their job. Staff records are suitably maintained and appropriate checks are completed.

The leadership and management of funded children is good.

The manager has a clear vision for the setting. She works closely with the team ensuring the children are happy, feel secure and making good progress towards through the Foundation Stage. Children's assessments are effectively used so that planning for the next steps in children's learning can take place. Staff meetings and appraisals are held regularly. As a result, discussions regarding children's activities, progress and development of the practice can be shared. Close links have been developed with another playgroup and a nearby Nursery and Infant school. Consequently, good use is being made of development opportunities and of qualified teacher support to review ways of working. The manager is appropriately qualified and experienced. She is proactive and committed to providing a high standard of care and nursery education for all children.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to extend the children's opportunities for physical play and activities in the large hall. This has been done. Children regularly use the hall for indoor physical activities especially if the weather does not permit them to play outdoors. As a result, they are able to develop their coordination during all weather conditions.

At the last education inspection the provider was asked to ensure parents are aware of the opportunities available for funded four year old children. They were also asked to inform parents about the support offered to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This has been done. Parents receive information about these issues through the detailed policy booklet and from discussions with staff members. This means that children's parents are informed about the education and support their children can receive.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there has been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet 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

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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 snacks and meals are healthy and nutritious
- ensure the garden gate is secure when children are outdoors.

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):

- ensure parents are encouraged to share what they know about their children, to enable staff to plan effectively for children's learning and provide opportunities for discussion about the children's 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