

St. Nicholas Play Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	146467
Inspection date	01 June 2007
Inspector	Gyatri Rupal
Setting Address	Pilgrims Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 4PT
Telephone number	01438 722753
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Registered person	Stevenage Borough Council
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Nicholas Play Centre is an open access scheme for children, held on a Stevenage Borough Council site in Pilgrims Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. St. Nicholas Play Centre opened in 1974. The setting has the use of a hall, a separate art and craft room, an office, a kitchen, suitable toilets facilities and an outdoor play area. The setting serves the local area.

There are currently 115 children from five to eight years-old on roll. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and who speak English as an additional language.

During school holidays the centre is open Monday to Fridays from 09.00 to 12.30 and from 13.30 to 17.00 and Saturday it is open from 10.00 to 12.30 and 13: 30 to 16.00.

During school terms it is open from 15.30 to 18.00 .

Saturday it is open from 10.00 to 12.30 and 13: 30 to 16.00

There is a core group of six staff who work directly with the children. Most of the staff are working at any time hold a suitable childcare qualification and have experience working with children. Play workers have a general duty of care but parents retain responsibility at all times.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are positively encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through various activities. They have good opportunities to use a wide range of regular physical activities which help develop their physical skills. For example, they play games outside in the play area such as skipping, cricket, football and they also have the opportunity to use a variety of play equipment in the playroom as they play with snooker table, pool table, football table and use computers. Children also use the fixed play equipment in the local play area, all this contributes to developing the children's physical skills.

The setting promotes children's knowledge and understanding of nutritional issues through discussion, activities and posters on display. Children have taken part in a topic about healthy eating and have produced interesting fun posters 'Tea time'. They have fun cooking healthy food and organised the tea party to invite the people from the local community including the Mayor to share their experience and knowledge of healthy food. Children usually have a good choice of healthy snacks to buy from the tuck shop but sometimes the setting runs out of fresh fruit, which limits their choice of healthy snacks options. Children's specific dietary needs are met and parental wishes and preferences are respected when serving snacks. Children have access to drinking water all the time and understand the need to replenish their fluid levels in order to stay healthy, particularly after physical activities.

Children develop their understanding of good hygiene procedures through planned activities. The setting invited the local environmental officer to give a talk on developing good hygiene procedures. Children had fun becoming junior environmental officers as they inspected the setting using clipboards to ensure it meets the hygiene standards. Although the setting provides good activities to promote children's understanding of good hygiene practices, children are not encouraged to wash hands before snacks as washing hands is not included in the daily routine as a result of which, some young children forget to wash their hands before eating snacks. Children's understanding of promoting a healthy environment is developed thorough good project work on recycling everyday waste.

Children stay healthy as the setting ensures health and a good hygiene policy is in place and implemented appropriately. The staff are vigilant in keeping the premises clean and ensuring that the children are protected in the hot weather. Most of the staff hold an up to date first aid certificate so that they can give appropriate first aid if the need arises. They keep records of accidents and send one copy of the accident record to the parents via the children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the setting as they feel very safe and secure. The staff carry out a daily risk assessment of the premises to ensure the children's safety. They ensure all play equipment and play resources are safe. Furniture and equipment are organised effectively so that the children can move around safely, freely and independently. The staff adhere to the

setting's health and safety policy to keep the environment safe at all times. For example, a water pipe started to leak and the staff took immediate action to ensure the children's safety.

Staff ensure children have a good understanding of keeping themselves safe and free from harm inside and outside. The staff organise good practical activities to develop children's understanding of safety and keeping themselves safe from harm. For example, children have fun cooking food on a BBQ. After cooking the food, the staff light the fire on the barbeque to demonstrate what action not to take if the fire breaks out in the home. Children dial for emergency help and the local fire-brigade, ambulance and police officers come to help them. They have all given a talk on safety issues such as not speaking to strangers, how to keep themselves safe if there is fire in the home and how to cross the road safely. Children also practise fire drills with the staff and fire drills notices are displayed in the building by the fire exit door and in the playroom.

A broad range of safe, developmentally appropriate resources are stored around the room at child height for easy access. This enables the children to select their play and activities safely. Children are also made aware of safety of the activities provided. Children are protected well while they are attending the setting as staff ensure policies and procedures are implemented to promote children's safety. For example, all staff have training in child protection and have a good understanding of child protection issues and procedures in line with local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Information is also displayed for parents to ensure they understand the adult's duty to protect children. Children's rights poster is also displayed with Child line telephone number, to take immediate action to protect themselves.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive in a highly stimulating environment due to activities and play experiences provided to children, which are exceptionally well matched to children's needs and interests. The qualified staff are experts in providing varied rich play opportunities as they ensure children develop their social, physical, intellectual, creative skills and recognise their own emotional needs while they engross in their play. Children are highly confident and feel secure as they independently plan their own activities and select their play resources. Staff plan activities with the children's interests in mind and consequently these are vibrant, fun, challenging and interesting. For example, children play various challenging sports such as the great egg challenge, rounders, loopy and curling in the outside play area. They develop their confidence as they take part in competitions. Their confidence is boosted as they win the big competition by taking part in competitions involving play schemes situated in the whole of the Stevenage area.

Children of all ages and abilities use a superb range of art-craft materials to develop their creative skills and make junk modelling to express themselves. They take part in activities and topics learning about keeping themselves healthy and safe, and promoting the healthy environment as staff invite various professionals to give a talk in their chosen field so the activity can have a greater impact on the children's learning. Children learn a great deal through their play experiences and are directly involved and interested in their play. They learn about responsibilities and have gained a strong sense of ownership for their group, resources and own activities. Through this children are allowed to make errors, decisions and choices as they select activities and share their play with others.

They have a very good rapport with the staff and feel confident enough to ask them for their required play resources or activity. For example, children wanted to face paint and asked the

staff if they could organise that activity for them. Staff immediately set-up the tables and organised the face painting activity. All children lined up to have their face painted. Children are learning to communicate their needs and they confidently use language to discuss items at group time, take part in imaginative play and relate personal events. For example, children develop their self-esteem through expressing themselves using puppet theatre, singing songs by using a karaoke machine and dressing-up clothes to express their feelings and thoughts. Children happily sit down to listen to stories from story telling professionals. They exhibit high levels of confidence and security and this has been achieved by the consistent support and direction of staff. Staff help children resolve their differences when any conflicts arise. They are encouraged to talk about it and find their own solutions. This provides children with tools to become aware of others and negotiate differences. For example, they write names in the waiting list to wait for turns to play on the pool table, snooker or play station. Younger children often seek out staff to share experiences with or to gain support for an activity. Staff remain cheerful, versatile and enthusiastic as they deal with different challenges.

Children present attractive displays all around the walls this give children pride in their work and involve them in information gathering and sharing. The friendly staff, throughout the play scheme, make the experiences enjoyable and meaningful for the children, which in turn aids their concentration and confidence, often teaching new skills and resources within themselves. All children are accepted in this inclusive environment and through this they feel well supported and learn acceptable standards of behaviour. Excellent deployment of staff throughout the group aids children's fun and play. Staff know the children well, know when to step back and let a child take over an activity. A realistic balance has been created between adult-led and child-initiated play giving children tools to succeed in most given tasks. Children respond imaginatively to new challenges as they tackle activities with zeal and enthusiasm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are valued and respected as individuals, as discrimination is eliminated through the caring approach fostered in the group. Children thrive in their environment where they are engaged and nurtured free from any type of stereotyping. Children are receptive to the constant praise and encouragement that is provided by staff. This has a clear impact on their self-esteem and encourages them to try new tasks and participate in activities. Staff are proactive and meet the needs of children with learning difficulties or/disabilities, as they all have induction training to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties. The setting ensures premises and play resources are suitable and easily accessible to cater for all children with differing needs. Additional help is given by staff and children to help children with disability.

Children have access to a meaningful range of activities to promote a positive view of the local community and increase their awareness of diversity. For example, children organise a 'Tea party' to invite the local community to enjoy their fun cooking. Children visit the elderly people and enjoy sponsored car washing to raise money for elderly people, this helps children relate to others in the community and gain a secure understanding of the needs of others. Children enjoy tasting foods and dressing up clothes representing different cultures. Children also play an active role in keeping their environment clean and tidy.

Children are friendly and behave well as they have a good understanding of the boundaries within the play scheme. The rules of the setting are kept on the board and are reinforced by the staff if required. Children respond to direction from adults in a positive fashion. They share in the responsibility for their own behaviour, make their own behaviour choices and accept the

consequences of their actions. Children develop good levels of self-esteem as they are able to resolve differences and gain an understanding between right and wrong. This also has the effect of building their managing skills and self-reliance. Effective behaviour management diffuses situations and engages children in worthwhile activities. Children learn to listen to others, share and wait turns and are kind to their friends. Staff are sensitive role models for the children, creating a calm, positive, fun and interesting environment in which they thrive.

The successful partnership with parents contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. The play scheme ensures parents are fully informed about their practice and parents understand they still have a responsibility for their children's safety and welfare while children attend the setting. Parents are informed about the policies and procedures and what activities are available for children. They can give their views and discuss their concerns with staff at any time or through making a phone call or e-mails. The setting also asks children to give their feedback and views about what they would like to do in the play scheme or in after school care and how much they enjoy the session. This helps children and parents to build a trusting relationship with staff.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and well-settled due to the good organisation. Daily routines are well-organised to ensure all of the children have the time and the opportunity to take part in all activities. The group actively promotes an inclusive environment for children of all abilities to attend. Children can take advantage of the full programme events as the qualified and experienced staff ensure children can take part in their preferred activities at any time. Indoor and outdoor space is effectively arranged to maximize the play opportunities for children. The well-planned activities and resources contribute to children's enjoyment and achievements.

Children benefit from qualified and experienced staff who continually enhance their own knowledge through extensive training programmes. The management team is responsible for all aspects of the group including staff supervision and employment, ratios and deployment, operational plan, staff training and qualifications and a robust system is in place to successfully implement this. All staff have useful knowledge of the National Standards, which they are committed to applying throughout the group. Most policies and procedures are in place and are updated regularly. The setting also ensures most required documentation is kept and available to inspect. However, the staff do not have procedures to identify children under eight and to know how many under eight are present which may impact on the care of children.

The play scheme leader works hard and has built a positive, motivated, and dedicated team. Staff and children contribute towards the organisation of the imaginative and safe environment they enjoy. Staff deployment is good as each member of staff is highly motivated and aware of their role and responsibilities to the children. They are very friendly, keen to work extensively with the children and successfully manage and organise their play. This impacts on their excellent team work and ability to make this a vibrant, happy group for children to attend. Overall, all children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the play scheme had two recommendations; to ensure complaints procedure contains the regulators details and display the public liability insurance certificate at the setting.

The setting have implemented both recommendations. The complaint procedure is displayed on the notice board with updated Ofsted's address and contact details. This enables the parents to take appropriate action immediately and a valid public liability insurance certificate is displayed on the notice board. All this have positive impact on children.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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):

- provide more healthy choices for snacks
- encourage children to practice good hygiene procedure through daily routine
- ensure there are procedures to identify children under eight and to know how many under eights are present.

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