

St Michaels Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Catherine Greenwood
Setting address	258 Lower Farnham Road, Aldershot, Hampshire, GU11 3RB
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

St. Michael's Pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee and opened in 1996. It operates from within a church hall in Aldershot and children from the local community attend. There is an enclosed outside play area. The pre-school is open term time only. Morning sessions are from 9.00am to 12.00 noon, Monday to Friday and from 12.45pm until 3.45pm, Tuesdays and Fridays. Children attend a variety of sessions. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register, to care for a maximum of 28 children aged from two years to the end of the early years age range. There are currently 56 children on roll in this age group. It is the pre-school's policy to accept children aged from two years nine months. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school employs eight staff, including the manager, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and the local Sure Start centre advisory teacher.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Key strengths of the provision are; the managers ability to drive new initiatives that improve outcomes for children and the excellent partnerships that are established with other agencies, such as the local authority. Effective communication and parental involvement means children's individual needs are well met. Most aspects of good practice guidance are implemented within everyday practice. The manager has clear plans in place to develop staff awareness of good practice, to inform their personal development and confidence in sharing information about the work within the pre-school.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop sustained shared thinking by offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions which support and extend children's thinking and help them make connections in learning
- improve the opportunities for children to hear and say the initial sound in words and know which letters represent some of the sounds.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare is fully safeguarded because staff have a good knowledge of child protection procedures. The lead child protection officer attends training and cascades this knowledge to all staff. There are effective systems in place to ensure staff suitability. Risk assessments are used effectively in practice to reduce hazards and keep children safe. The pre-school works with the local authority and complete self-evaluation joint annual reviews, reflecting on the provision and implementing recommendations for improvement. All recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. In addition, the quality of the outdoor play area has been improved, the snack bar routine has been changed so it does not disrupt children's play and systems for planning have been reviewed, changed and improved. All staff are included in planning through weekly meetings where key persons share information about their children's progress and the activities they want to provide, promoting individual learning.

The organisation and variety of play equipment is good. Staff work well as team to ensure the inside and outside areas are well supervised at all times and encourage children to include others in their play, for example, when playing 'races' on bikes. Children's understanding of equality and diversity is promoted through the use of resources and activities that celebrate cultural events in children's home lives, as well as those within the wider world, such as, Diwali and Australia Day. The provisions for children with special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language are excellent.

Partnerships are outstanding. The pre-school works closely with parents and other agencies to meet children's individual needs, for example, with local authority speech and language therapists. Children's transition to school is fully supported, particularly where they need extra support. For example, key persons act on suggestions to take photographs of teachers within the school, which children can look at over the Summer holidays and enable them to feel more secure when they start. All staff have the opportunity to attend local cluster meetings where information is shared between different provision. Information is sought from parents about other early years provision that children attend and the pre-school have a very receptive and pro-active approach to sharing information about children's individual needs and the next steps for their learning. This successfully provides children with continuity of care and learning and helps with transition processes when children move onto school. Input from a teaching mentor and the local authority help to improve the quality of the provision. Communication with parents is good and they are fully included in discussions and the identification of future aims for their children. Their comments show they are happy with the provision.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are provided with a good variety of activities and experiences that are driven by their individual interests. Staff offer lots of support and join in children's play in a fun way. Consequently, children are very happy to be at the pre-school and show motivation and enthusiasm. They have a strong exploratory approach and show excellent self-confidence as they choose resources and create their own games. Children are well behaved and are encouraged to share. They form close friendships, talk confidently about what they like doing and openly show their affection towards staff. Children negotiate with each other about their intentions during play and most have a good range of vocabulary. However, staff do not always ask open ended questions that help children make connections in learning, particularly during free play, which restricts their ability to develop sustained shared thinking. Children make marks and some can write their name with most letters correctly formed, for example, on treasure maps they have made. However, there are limited opportunities for children to hear and say the initial sound in words and know which letters represent some of the sounds, which restricts their progress in this area of development. Staff encourage children to look at books as they read to them in small groups. Pictures on boxes in the outside play area, promote children's understanding of the sequence of events within familiar stories.

Children can count confidently in numerical order, for example, as they choose to identify the number of pegs on a painting drying rack. They show interest in size, as they talk with staff and ask questions about their garden's and the trampolines they have at home. Staff act on the choices that children make to promote their understanding of numbers, for example, when they choose to explore items in a story sack, they encourage children to count the number of objects. Children learn about the features of living things, as they plant spring bulbs, walnut trees and courgettes in grow boxes in the outside play area. They develop their understanding of diversity through resources and activities. Staff and children bring animals from home such as chicks, dogs and guinea pigs, to share their observations of the features of living things. Photographs show children constructing and experimenting with large scale equipment the pre-school has obtained using supermarket vouchers, such as, bamboo shoots and stands. They have opportunities to explore the local community, for example, through outings to the local shops and farms. They show an understanding of how to operate programmes using information, communication and technology resources, use the computer independently and enjoy sharing what they see with others.

Children show excellent control of their movements and balancing skills, as they use low level indoor climbing apparatus where they jump off, leap into the air and land with both feet together. They develop an awareness of space as they crawl through play tunnels and develop their hand and eye co-ordination as they make constructions, for example, using train sets. Children show great excitement and a sense of achievement as they work with their friends to build constructions using small wooden bricks and small pieces of tree branches, in a covered area in the outside play area. Photographs show children taking part in a sports day, where they demonstrate their physical skills to parents and staff as they crawl under nets,

ride scooters and participate in egg and spoon races. Children develop creative skills, for example, as they make telescopes from collage resources and paint freely at an easel. They enjoy handling pretend treasure in a box, which they use to stick onto 'maps' they have made using wet tea bags. They play imaginatively in the home corner and enter into role play as they use first aid boxes, bandages and dolls, dress up as princesses and pretend to be 'pet dogs'. Staff inspire children to engage in imaginative play, for example, as they hide a pirate teddy bear in different areas of the pre-school. Children decorate ceramic tiles and mugs, manipulate play dough and develop an enjoyment of music, as they listen to CD's and sing songs. They are very familiar with the words and actions, which can be seen as they take part in an animated way.

Children learn about road safety, for example, as they use the outside play area which is set up with road markings and signs. The involvement of a local lollypop person and police officers, who visit the pre-school and talk to the children about their own safety, promote this area of learning. Children are very good at remembering the safety rules within the pre-school, which can be seen as they recall; 'tell the teacher if you want to play outside or use the toilet' and 'do not take dressing up clothes and toys on the climbing apparatus'. Children are provided with very healthy snacks, which include a good variety of fresh fruit. Their health is fully promoted as they choose to play outside throughout each session and use a range of equipment that encourages their involvement in being active. Good implementation of hand washing procedures means children are protected from the risk of cross infection.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met