



St Mary's Pre-school Shortlands

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	137356
Inspection date	22 September 2006
Inspector	Jane Wakelen
Setting Address	St Mary's Church Hall, St Mary's Avenue, Bromley BR2 0PU
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Registered person	St Marys Church Pre-school Management Committee
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 Mary's Pre-school Shortlands has been registered since 1992. The pre-school operates in a church hall and has use of a large hall, an additional room for small group work and access to an outdoor play area, a kitchen and toilets. A maximum of 32 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday 09:30 to 12:00 and 12:30 to 15:00 Monday to Thursday, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 84 children aged from two and half to under five years on roll. Of these, 67 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight staff. Of these, six staff hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from hygiene measures implemented by the staff, such as ensuring tables are cleaned adequately before children eat their snack. Children learn the importance of personal care routines, such as washing their hands before they eat and after using the toilet, together with using tissues for their noses and disposing of these in the bin. Children's health is maintained because several staff hold a first aid certificate and implement effective procedures to deal with accidents.

Children are familiar with the routine of the session and readily choose a book to sit at the table, ready for snack time. In small groups children visit the toilet, learning to be independent and washing their hands, whilst the rest of the group wait their turns at their tables, which sometimes results in children sitting for lengths of time with little to occupy them. Snack time is a social time for children to chat to their friends, but not all tables benefit from a staff member sitting with them, so learning opportunities are missed, such as talking about the letter of the week, or having a conversation about the snack. Children have limited opportunities to learn about healthy eating as they are not involved with the preparation of the snacks or conversations about what they are eating and therefore not all children are able to name healthy options. Children are offered milk or water to drink, which has already been poured into the cups, which prevents children becoming independent in self-help skills. Drinking water is available throughout the session, although children are unable to independently pour their drinks, because they cannot reach the jug from the serving hatch in the hall.

Children have regular opportunities to use large play equipment, such as the climbing frame, indoors, developing their skills in balance and co-ordination. They show enjoyment, weaving their bodies through the frame and enjoy finding different ways to slide down the slide. Children rush outside to the parachutes and giggle when the wind keeps blowing the parachute out of their hands. They have opportunities to use balancing beams, follow obstacle courses and play with balls on occasions, but the irregular use prevents children not being able to practise new skills and develop their existing skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are protected from harm, because the staff have a good understanding of safety issues, such as keeping the front door locked and recording visitors in the book. Staff accompany children to the toilet, because of the distance from the main room, but allow them to be independent. Effective risk assessments have been put in place to safeguard children's well-being and staff ensure procedures are implemented, to minimise hazards within the environment. Children learn how to keep themselves safe, such as taking turns when climbing on the frame and sitting down on the slide. Secure procedures for the arrival and collection of children promote their safety and welfare.

Children move around the room freely and safely, enabling them to develop their independence, such as choosing where they would like to play, inside or outside on the veranda. They select resources from those made available by the staff, but are unable to self-select activities due to the lack of accessible storage facilities. However, children have a wide range of resources to choose from, in a bright, welcoming environment, that are suitable for their age and stage of development to support all areas of their development.

Children are protected from harm because staff have a sound knowledge of child protection issues and know how to implement the procedures put in place by the Area Safeguarding Children Committee. Some staff will soon be undertaking a distance learning course with NSPCC, the National Society for Protection of Cruelty to Children, and all staff cover child protection at their induction into the setting. This knowledge ensures children are safe and well protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children access an interesting range of activities that are offered indoors and outdoors to engage and maintain their interest. Children make choices about where they want to play and move freely from one activity to another, playing independently or co-operatively with their friends. Children show enthusiasm when adults become involved in their play, such as in the role play area as the 'clinic' and enjoy putting bandages on the adult and using the stethoscope. Children build good relationships with the adults and each other, which is promoted through good relationships with the parents and regular communication. Staff have a knowledge of Birth to three and the Foundation Stage curriculum, which benefits children's learning and development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing well due to an effective routine and well planned activities, that promote children's learning, provide new experiences, such as growing tomato plants, and help children gain good social skills. Staff have a planning system in place with many interesting topics listed in the long term plans. The short term plan provides information on the weekly activities, with two being chosen to be focus activities, where staff work towards an aspect or stepping stone. Staff make regular observations on children's achievements and record these on development sheets to keep an on-going record. However, the observations carried out by the staff are not used to identify children's next steps, although some staff were able to identify children's individual needs. This results in the observations not informing the future plans and therefore some children will not be developing to their maximum potential, either finding activities too advanced, or not providing a challenge. Staff have a good understanding of their roles within the setting and provide good support to the children in adult led-activities or providing good resources for child-initiated play. Staff are aware of each child's needs and children with special educational needs are fully integrated into the setting.

Children are confident individuals and build good relationships with the staff and their peer group. They learn to take turns, such as rolling the 'dough' dice or to climb on the climbing frame. Children are familiar with the routine and understand the need to pack the toys away

before snack time, often to get their table cleared first. They show good concentration in large and small group sessions, such as story time, contributing to the session by answering questions or pointing out something in the picture. Children handle books well and are encouraged to take books home to read from the lending library. Children have opportunities to learn frequent, familiar words such as their name cards, when they self register and labels around the room indicating the toy or the area, in several languages. Some children are able to write their names independently, and are beginning to recognise and name some letters, although children do not always receive support from staff to label their work.

Children have opportunities to use natural materials to gain an understanding about volume and capacity and test their accuracy skills pouring water through the funnel to make the water wheel work. They show wonder with the magnifying glasses looking at bark and leaves and learn new words to describe what they are seeing, making comparisons, using their senses. Children enjoy opportunities to plant flowers and tomato plants, taking them home to see who could grow the most tomatoes. They show perseverance with the construction toys, adapting and designing new shapes and structures and sharing this experience with their friend. The use of technology is limited within the setting and when children have the opportunity to use the computer, they are a little hesitant, although become excited when they print out their picture. This prevents children gaining an understanding about everyday technology to support their learning. They use tools confidently, such as scissors, pencils and stencils, and enjoy using the rolling pins to flatten the dough and then reshaping it with their hands. Children's imagination is well developed as they act out familiar roles, such as the baby clinic, weighing their babies and measuring their length or washing clothes and airing them in the laundry.

Children are becoming confident counting objects one to one and can recognise the numbers on the number line, some children, up to 10. They are able to name most 2D shapes and are gaining an understanding these are flat, counting their sides and corners. They learn about solid shapes and are beginning to name some, such as pyramid, prism and cube. Children are encouraged to count each other when lining up and learn ordinal numbers. They are able to sort by colour and shape and use mathematical language in their play, such as 'biggest', 'smallest' and 'longer than' when measuring the tower of duplo.

The majority of children are very well settled in the setting and are enthusiastic learners. They benefit from staff who promote their welfare, and ensure the environment and activities are welcoming to children, allowing children to gain confidence and gain a sense of well-being, seeing their pictures displayed on the wall, knowing their keyworker and becoming familiar with the routine of the session.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children settle well into the pre-school and the implementation of a key worker system enables staff to gain a good understanding of each child's individual needs. An inclusive and welcoming environment is promoted with secure systems in place to support each child with additional needs, using individual educational plans and liaising with the area SENCO, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. Children learn about diversity in society, using a range of different resources and through planned topic work, learning to accept and show sensitivity

to each other. They make friends with children from different religions and backgrounds enriching their knowledge about the world around them. This positive approach means children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are developing into independent and confident learners and are gaining an understanding about following routines and instructions. They recognise rules and talk about why it is kind to share, learning to take turns and negotiate without constant support from staff. Consequently, children's behaviour is good, with only gentle reminders needed from staff, such as not to run indoors. Children receive praise and recognition for helping or good behaviour, promoting children's self esteem.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are well informed about their child's care and the practice offered through a good range of written policies, the noticeboard and a prospectus. Parents have access to written information regarding the Foundation Stage and how this affects their child, and are informed their child's progress records are available at all times. However, many parents rely on the verbal, daily feedback from staff. Parents are encouraged to become involved with the pre-school, by serving on the committee, bringing in items from home linking with the topic or sharing a skill or knowledge with the group. Parents are requested to give consent for aspects of care, which helps to promote children's safety and well-being.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the staff team who hold relevant qualifications in childcare and early years education. They are encouraged to attend additional courses and training to up-date their skills and knowledge to promote children's care and education. All staff hold appropriate checks and no children are left unattended by unvetted visitors. All staff have a sound understanding of the policies and procedures and implement these effectively to promote good outcomes for children.

The leadership and management of the group is good. Children's well-being is supported and fostered because of the well organised setting and the motivation and enthusiasm of the management. This is reflected in the committed staff team who work well together, understanding their roles and responsibilities. Procedures are in place to monitor the curriculum and evaluate the educational programme, but these need to be more robust to make effective and ensure all children are developing to their full potential. An appraisal system is due to be implemented to support staff performance and development and identify particular training needs amongst the staff team. The management recognise the importance of working alongside parents in partnership to benefit the children's welfare and is reflected in the strong support from the parents with regards to their view of the setting. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The group agreed to five recommendations from their previous inspection. These were to extend opportunities for children to develop a sense of community and understanding about culture and beliefs, extend range of opportunities to practise writing skills, linking sounds and letters

and gain a better understanding of mathematical ideas and concepts. Also to extend range of activities to explore and investigate and opportunities to develop children's imagination and creative skills.

Children now have chance to take the groups doll and teddy on outings and share their experiences with the group, they are encouraged to talk about their home life and continue to celebrate different festivals. Children have many opportunities to practise their writing skills using different mediums and look at 'letter of the week' and identify objects that begin with that letter. Older children are taken into another room to concentrate on different maths skills and staff are increasing the use of everyday maths in routine, such as when lining up. The role play corner is changed every day or few days depending on how much children are using it and are given a range of resources to create their own pictures. Staff provide children with different materials for them to explore and experiment with, such as coir (husk off a coconut) and a laptop has been purchased with a printer, but this is not available to children on a regular basis, and remains a recommendation from 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.

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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 the 'snack time' routine, to make it a meaningful, learning experience for all children allowing them to be involved and gain personal independence
- ensure the planning includes regular opportunities for children to develop and extend their large physical skills using a good range of large equipment in a variety of ways (also applies to nursery education)

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):

- adapt the planning to ensure that observations are used to record children's next steps in their development, which can then be used to inform future planning, to provide activities to extend and meet children's individual needs
- provide regular opportunities for children to develop their skills with technology, such as using the computer, to gain an understanding of cause and effect

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