



St Margarets Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109088
Inspection date	05 July 2006
Inspector	Rachel Edwards
Setting Address	St Margaret's Centre, Kenwin Close, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 4NY
Telephone number	07816 547752
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Registered person	St Margarets 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 Margaret's Pre-School opened in 1988. It is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the pre-school and members of the local community. It operates from St Margaret's Centre in Stratton, Swindon. There is a main play room with kitchen and toilets. The setting serves the local area.

The group is registered to care for no more than 26 children from two to under five years, at any one time. There are currently 51 children on roll. This includes 36 funded three and four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The group operates five mornings per week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.00 to 11.30 with an extended session to 12.30 on Mondays and Wednesdays; also two afternoons from 12.45 to 14.45 for two to three year olds. Four part-time and two full-time staff work

with the children. Five hold appropriate early years qualifications, including the supervisor who is a qualified teacher. One member of staff is currently on a training programme. The setting receives support from an early years advisory teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene and become highly independent in managing this themselves. For example, they wash their hands before eating their snack and after wash up cups and plates without any prompting from staff. This is made possible by the clear and consistent help and explanations staff give to the children and by the well organised environment. For example, a step allows children to safely reach the sink and soap and towels are readily to hand, pictures and signs remind children and the snack area is placed alongside the washing area. An effective sickness policy reduces the risk of illness and cross-infection.

Children learn about the benefits of a healthy diet. They take turns in preparing a range of healthy and nutritious snacks for the rest of the group. A four year old is very clear that bananas are better for him than sweet biscuits. Children are free to come for their snack whenever they are hungry and sit and chat with friends whilst they eat. This is a relaxed, social occasion which helps children become interested in food and willing to try new tastes. Older children may bring packed lunches, which they eat sitting together at tables. There is much lively conversation and discussion about what they have brought, "I've got lovely juicy grapes", one child announces. Children help themselves to drinking water throughout the session. They recognise the importance of drinking plenty in the hot weather, for example, a child offers to get the inspector a drink because it is so warm.

Children develop physical control as they enthusiastically use a range of equipment such as soft play blocks, a parachute and occasionally a climbing frame. The lack of an outdoor play area or enough space indoors, means children have limited opportunities to run, climb or use tricycles and scooters. There are good planned sessions of physical exercise for children going onto school but this is not routinely planned for all children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for within premises that are secure, clean, well maintained, warm and welcoming to children and parents. Safety is given a very high priority in the setting. Regular risk assessments are carried out and prompt action taken to reduce any hazards. There are a range of safety measures in place, for example, the procedures for taking children to the toilets elsewhere in the building, ensure that children cannot be left behind. In addition, children share responsibility for their own safety, including taking part in emergency evacuation drills, tidying away toys to prevent falls and learning to cross the road safely whilst out on walks. Children move around the provision safely and confidently. Children benefit from the staff's good understanding of safety issues concerning the purchase and maintenance of equipment.

Children's well being is supported by staff that have a good understanding of child protection issues and the correct procedures to follow if there are concerns about a child. There are appropriate arrangements for making parents aware of the providers' responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the pre-school confidently and most separate happily from their parents or carers. They settle quickly to their chosen activities and there is soon a lively buzz of conversation. Children develop their social skills well and form good relationships with the staff and each other. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and give clear explanations so that children understand what is expected of them. Children are able to work co-operatively, for example, when washing the toys and frequently resolve their own conflicts in a very mature manner. They show concern for others, for example, when another child is unwell. They are polite, considerate and extremely well behaved.

Children demonstrate good self control and are able to sit and listen attentively for long periods, for example, during an enjoyable visit to the church. Children are becoming increasingly independent in their learning and self care skills. For example, they independently choose the materials they need to make a collage, name their own work and put the picture to dry in the rack. Older children need little help to change into and out of their PE kit, in preparation for starting school later in the year.

Younger children in the setting, who have not started on the Foundation Stage curriculum, take part in planned activities, using the Birth to three matters framework. Staff have recently started completing observations and assessments of children's achievements to help support the children's development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The supervisor and her staff have a thorough understanding of the Foundation Stage. They plan and provide a variety of practical activities to help children progress well across all areas of the curriculum. Children are able to choose from the range of activities that staff put out each day. Whilst this gives them some choice, it does limit children's freedom to explore and choose from a wide range of play materials to allow them to follow their own interests and fully develop their ideas. The group have begun to address this problem by purchasing a mobile storage unit for craft materials that can be easily packed away each day.

Children recognise their own and other written names, for example, as they self register or find their name for snack time. They are encouraged to attempt to write their name on their pieces of art and many manage this well. They have other opportunities to develop early writing skills by making marks, for example, in wet sand or with paint. Children's listening skills are well developed through many sound and rhyming games and some are beginning to hear the initial sounds in words. More able children are not sufficiently challenged, for example, by encouraging them to link some letters with sounds. They are developing a love of books and particularly

enjoy playing the main characters as a member of staff encourages them to retell the story of Goldilocks.

Children count well and they spontaneously use mathematical language to count and compare during play. Numbers are used in meaningful ways, for example, children know that only four may play at the water bath. They begin to understand addition and subtraction through singing number rhymes but more able children are not always encouraged to use their mathematical knowledge to solve simple problems.

Children use technology to support other areas of their learning, for example by using the computer, torches, cameras and CD players. They take part in activities that encourage them to question why things happen, for example, melting ice or drying washing on the line. They sometimes go for walks in the local environment but have limited opportunities to look closely at and study things from the natural world, such as by growing plants or collecting minibeasts. Children enjoy designing and building with a variety of construction materials and become absorbed as they develop their own ideas through art, craft or imaginary play.

Staff know the children very well. They generally take account of children's interest and abilities to plan activities that will interest and engage them. Effective systems are used to observe, monitor and record children's progress. However, this information is not always effectively used to plan experiences that will sufficiently challenge the older and more able children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and fully involved in the setting. They demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to the group as they confidently enter the setting, cheerfully greet the staff and their friends, find their name to put on the register board and settle quickly to their chosen activities. They enthusiastically help with routine tasks, such as tidying up or preparing the snack. They are helpful and considerate towards others, for example in offering to hold another child's hand on the walk to church. Staff are quick to recognise and praise any acts of kindness and achievements and this builds children's confidence and self esteem. Currently no children with additional or special needs attend the group. However, a member of staff is the designated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and has attended training for this role.

Children have good opportunities to learn about their local community. They have close links with the neighbouring church, which they enjoy regularly visiting. They also have visitors to the pre-school, such as from a dental nurse and a parent bringing in his diving equipment to show the children. They sometimes learn about other cultures through planned activities but only have a limited range of resources to help children appreciate diversity. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is very good. Notice boards, newsletters, meetings and daily discussions keep parents well informed of activities and their children's progress. Each member of staff has particular responsibility for a small group of children and to share information with their parents or carers. This is highly effective in ensuring that parents are very involved in their child's learning. They are encouraged to share what they know about

their child and to contribute to the written records of children's achievements. They are welcome to visit the group at any time, to share their interests with the children and to serve on the management committee. Their comments are valued and a bi-annual parents' questionnaire is sent out.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The pre-school recruits and employs suitably experienced and well qualified staff. They are encouraged and supported in further training to enhance their skills and so continually improve the provision for all the children. They receive valuable support from the Local Authority advisory teacher. The high staff to child ratio allows children to receive plenty of individual attention. The highly effective key worker system means that staff know the children and their families very well and are thus better able to meet children's individual needs, taking account of their interests and family circumstances. The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides

Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Staff work well as a team. They meet regularly to discuss children's progress. However this information is not consistently used to make sure that children of different abilities, especially the more able, are sufficiently challenged. There are very good arrangements to ease children's transition into school. Teachers from local schools visit the pre-school to meet the children and discuss individual children's needs with the staff. The pre-school make special efforts to allay children's fears. For example, they have made a booklet of photographs from school to show different activities and rooms. Children enjoy looking at this and talk together about what it will be like at 'big school'.

All the required documentation is in place to promote children's well-being. Records are stored confidentially on the premises. However, parents are not fully informed of the complaints procedure. The staff are clearly led by the play leader and all work closely with the supportive committee and parents. The pre-school continually reviews its practice and seeks ways to improve. For example, it is currently trying to obtain an outdoor play area, which would significantly benefit children's enjoyment and development.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, the pre-school was asked to improve staff's knowledge of child protection issues. All staff have now attended training and are confident in recognising possible signs of abuse and neglect. They have a good knowledge of the agreed procedures to follow and would be able to act in the children's best interests if they were concerned.

They were also asked to obtain written parental permission to seek emergency medical treatment if necessary. This is now in place, which benefits children's welfare.

They were asked to ensure children had access to resources that reflected positive images of disability and gender roles. Although some new resources have been bought, there are still insufficient resources and planned activities to help children understand and appreciate diversity.

Complaints since the last inspection

The provider contacted Ofsted regarding an incident that occurred on 15/11/2005. The concern related to an incident where a member of staff left a child unattended in a toilet away from the main room. This concern related to National Standards 1 and 6. The provider was asked to investigate the incident and report their findings to Ofsted. From the information that was provided and the actions that the provider took, there was no evidence to suggest that the National Standards are not being met and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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):

- ensure that parents are fully informed of the complaints procedure
- ensure all children have routine opportunities to take part in activities that develop large muscle control, preferably including the use of outdoor play
- provide children with a range of resources and activities that positively promote differences in ethnicity, culture, ability and gender roles

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):

- make use of children's assessments to inform plans so that the more able children are sufficiently challenged to develop reading and problem solving skills
- explore ways of allowing children greater independence in the selection of resources and activities

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