



St Marys Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	253938
Inspection date	09 November 2006
Inspector	Rebecca Hadley
Setting Address	Church Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 2HQ
Telephone number	01384375751 Pre school
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Registered person	Elaine Pritchard
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Mary's Playgroup has been registered for over 20 years. The present owner took over in 1989. It is sited in the main hall of the centre adjacent to St Mary's Church in the Oldswinford area of Stourbridge. There are local shops within easy walking distance. There is a fully enclosed area for outdoor play.

The group is registered to provide care for 26 children between two and five years. There are currently 60 children on roll. This includes 14 funded three-year-olds and 32 funded four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The group opens Monday to Friday, 09:15 to 11:45 and Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 13:00 to 15:30. It operates during term time only.

There are nine members of staff working directly with the children, seven of whom hold relevant early years qualifications. The group receives support from the teacher mentor service of the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is effectively promoted as the setting takes positive steps to promote the children's good health, and encourages them to begin to take responsibility for meeting their own health needs. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection, and appropriate measures are taken when children are ill so that health needs are met. For example, the sick children policy states that the setting does not take children if they are contagious. The children are learning about their own personal hygiene and how to keep healthy. They know that they have to go to the toilet before they wash their hands, and that they wash their hands to get rid of germs. However, children's health is potentially compromised as, although the children washed their hands after playing outside, they then continued playing inside for about 15 minutes and did not wash their hands again before they had their snack.

The children are adequately nourished. However, they have limited opportunities to learn about healthy eating because snacks they are provided with are not nutritious. Snacks and drinks consist of juice, milk, or water and a biscuit. Children are not given choices with regard to their drinks as parents have already been consulted and have made that choice. Children could become dehydrated as they are not able to access drinks at all times throughout the day and their independence is not promoted as staff do not encourage them to pour their own drinks at snack time.

The children enjoy opportunities to experience physical activities and develop their skills both inside and in the fresh air. They have access to bikes, scooters, trampolines, tunnels and a climbing frame. They run and kick the leaves when outside, play hide and seek and roll down the bank. However, when children have access to physical activities inside such as riding bikes, the organisation of the session does not allow for all children to join in, impinges on other children's play and causes some children to become very noisy and boisterous.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are safe as a result of the adult's satisfactory awareness of health and safety and of supporting policies and procedures. The provider ensures that precautions are taken to prevent accidents and minimise identified risks to children such as staff taking a mobile phone when outside. The premises are secure and there is a safe procedure in place for the collection of children.

Premises are welcoming and child centred because staff welcome children individually as they arrive and spend time talking to them. Children's pictures, and numbers and letters are displayed around the room. The outdoor space is secure, safe and well maintained. Children can safely

enjoy using the fully enclosed garden area for outdoor play due to staff's vigilance in checking the area before children access it.

Children are beginning to understand the importance of staying safe. They regularly practise fire drills, and staff explain to children why certain activities such as riding their bikes into areas where other children are playing on the floor are dangerous. There is a range of suitable toys and equipment available for children which are regularly checked for safety. However, poor management of space does not allow children to play freely, or to be quiet or rest in accordance with their individual needs. For example, the books are not set out in a quiet area and children are not able to select activities unless they have been put out by staff.

Children's welfare is acceptably promoted and safeguarded due to the staff's reasonable knowledge and understanding of signs and symptoms of abuse and their awareness of local safeguarding children procedures. However, this is potentially compromised as the child protection policy is not in-depth, only covers the collection of children, does not state what would happen if an allegation is made against a member of staff and does not inform parents of staff's responsibility in protecting the children in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children are confident, well settled, happy and comfortable in their environment. They benefit from the knowledge of child development held by the staff who take time to find out what interests each child and what they can do. Positive interactions can be seen between children and adults, however, activities are not always fully extended and children do not have opportunities to fully develop their independence as most of them are adult led. Younger children's needs are met as they are given time to settle into the setting at a pace suitable to their individual needs.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have an adequate knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage but are not implementing this knowledge in the organisation of activities to ensure that children move forward at a pace suitable to their individual needs. Planning is in place to cover all areas of learning. However, the planned activities are adult led and do not allow children to access them independently. The organisation of space does not ensure that children are gaining the most from activities. Staff do not refer to the planning on a daily basis except for the adult led activities. At times they are unsure about what they are doing, and discuss what to do throughout the session. Therefore at times the group does not run smoothly. For example, one member of staff told children to sit down after they had come in from outside to have a drink and then another came in and told them it was not drinks time and to go and play. Assessment of the children's learning is being developed. All staff are involved in observing children and passing the information on to the child's key worker. The group are working with a teacher mentor from the local authority to improve and implement this.

Some children are interested, excited, and motivated to learn and to try new activities. For example, shouting "yeh" when asked if they wanted to see if a rubbing would work in the same way with paint as it did with the crayons. Most children sit quietly and listen during circle or story times. However, some children are noisy and do not join in. This disrupts the session for others. The children form good relationships with other children and adults. They work as part of a group, take turns and share. Some children understand shared rules and codes of behaviour although at times the organisation of activities impinges on other children's enjoyment and participation. For example, children riding bikes where others were playing with cars. They are developing an awareness of their own needs and are becoming sensitive to the needs of others. For example, when a younger child started to get upset because she had spilt some glue on the table, an older child said "Never mind it doesn't matter". The children are developing good personal independence skills such as recognising the need to wash their hands at appropriate times. After gluing, one child said "My hands are sticky" and went to wash them.

The children are beginning to use speech to organise and explore real and imagined experiences, ideas, feelings and for fun. For example, one child said "It's a cow" and laughed when a member of staff asked her what the straw was. Children are able to recall characters from familiar stories. For example, a child playing with the castle found a spinning wheel. When asked "Do you think that's Sleeping Beauty's?" he replied "No, It's Rumpelstiltskin's". Most children listened to the bear hunt story and joined in with excitement shouting "Again, again" when the story had finished. However, due to the organisation of the setting, younger children who attend the afternoon session do not have a regular story time. Books are not displayed where children can easily access them or sit quietly while looking at them. The older children are beginning to write names, and use phonic knowledge for spelling. For example, writing letters such h, i, g, h, c, h, a, i, r as a member of staff says the letters to them to make a shopping list. Younger children have opportunities to mark make regularly. However, there are missed opportunities for children to write and recognise their names on a daily basis.

Children say and use numbers in familiar contexts. They recognise numerals, and can pick out a number spoken verbally from written numbers 1-9. All children can count to 10 and some to 49. For example, when playing hide and seek children counted the number of steps it takes them to walk across the garden. Older children are beginning to recognise simple addition and subtraction. For example, when talking about the numbers of people that live in their house they added together, mummy, daddy, me, sister and a dog and a cat. That makes six. However, there are missed opportunities to extend younger children's understanding of simple subtraction when singing simple songs such as five men in a flying saucer. Children are beginning to understand opposites, such as up, down, in and out. When one child painted over her name she told a member of staff "You'll have to write the name on the back of the paper not the front".

Some children are beginning use Information Communication Technology and programmable toys to support their learning. For example, when using the computer some children are able to use the mouse to move objects on the screen. However this activity is very adult led and children are not able to access the computer independently. The children observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live and the natural world. For example, they look at the squirrel in the garden and talk about cows and how they are milked. They are beginning

to recognise the days of the week, and identify the weather, however the session was disrupted with children shouting and others not joining in.

The children move confidently, imaginatively and safely, with control and co-ordination. They travel around, under, over and through objects and can use balancing and climbing equipment. They can run forwards and backwards, pedal cars and bikes, stand on tiptoes and run on the spot. They show an awareness of space, both for themselves and others, and can move with control and co-ordination. However, at times the organisation of the physical play session especially the bikes impacted on other children's activities. The children are beginning to recognise the importance of staying healthy and the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. For example, one child who was pretending to be a footballer had been running around kicking the ball. When he sat down he said "Footballers have to have a rest". The children use a range of small and large equipment such as pencils, glue sticks, art rollers, sewing and threading. However, there are missed opportunities for children to pour their own drinks at snack time.

The children are able to be creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through role play. They use their senses and imaginations to communicate their feelings. However, music and creative sessions are very adult orientated and the organisation of the setting does not allow children to fully develop their creative skills. The children are beginning to understand and explore colour, texture, and shape. For example, when making a collage out of shiny paper, felt, feathers, tinsel, pasta spirals, wool and pipe cleaners. They can name their favourite colours and mix colours together. For example, one child said "I like purple and indigo" and another said "I'm putting red and orange and green and yellow". However, children do not have access to free painting at any time and the art activities are very adult led. The children recognise sounds and sing simple songs from memory. They have a regular music session when a lady comes to play the piano and the children sing. During the session the children can recognise a tune from the first few notes. However, the normal singing and rhyme session is disrupted as not all children join in. It also coincides with children going home so not all of them are able to take part. The children are beginning use their imagination in play. For example, two children took the tools under the table to mend it and a child playing with the pirate ship and the castle, said "The king is sitting on the horse" and "The pirate is looking out for somebody". However the organisation of space and resources does not allow children to fully extend their imagination during role play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are valued and respected and their individual needs recognised and met. Staff spend time with new children and offer them support to ensure that they settle at a pace suitable to their individual needs. Children with disabilities are welcomed into the group and there are procedures in place to liaise with outside agencies for support. Children celebrate festivals such as Diwali and Eid, and have access to some resources which reflect positive images of culture and disability to help to develop their understanding of a wider world. However, these opportunities are limited due to the organisation of resources. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Most children's behaviour is good. They are learning to share the toys and enjoy playing together. However, the organisation of the activities does not ensure that all children are able to fully participate and this reflects in children's behaviour at times. Children are encouraged to develop caring and co-operative relationships through age-appropriate behaviour management strategies such as setting boundaries, using praise rather than criticism, and talking to children about their behaviour.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Relationships with parents are friendly and they are welcomed into the group where staff spend time chatting to them and sharing information about their child. There is a flexible settling-in procedure to ensure children are happy and comfortable in the setting and develop a sense of trust in the adults that care for them. All relevant information such as policies relating to the setting are available for parents to see. Parents are informed of, and encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, through parents meetings which inform them what topics will be covered the following term and key worker meetings where they can discuss their child's progress and development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The registered provider demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of the need to inform Ofsted of any significant changes. Most staff are qualified and they attend short courses such as 'Birth to three matters' and 'Playing out' to ensure that they are up to date with information. There are systems in place to monitor staff performance and to ensure that training needs are met. This means the children should benefit from staff's knowledge in their all-round development and learning. However, staff do not always implement what they have learnt. For example, in the organisation of children's activities.

Most documentation which contributes to the children's health, safety and welfare is in place and is regularly reviewed, although the attendance register does not show actual times of arrival and departure of children if it is different from the session times, and the registration certificate is not displayed. Documentation is safely stored whilst still being accessible in an emergency. Information is regularly shared with parents to ensure continuity in the children's care and there are effective procedures in place for maintaining confidentiality.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. Staff are appropriately managed and there are systems in place to provide direction, support and leadership. For example, regular staff meetings take place, and staff appraisals and induction are effective. The leadership and management of nursery education adequately monitors and develops the provision to ensure that most children make sufficient progress towards the early learning goals. Most children are developing positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning. However, their learning and enjoyment is often hindered by the organisation of resources and adult led activities. 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 explore possibilities for outdoor play, ensure that parents sign incident records, improve staff's knowledge of behaviour management strategies and inform parents of staff responsibilities with regard to child protection issues.

The children now have access to an enclosed outdoor play area which promotes their physical development, and parents sign all records to ensure children's safety and well-being. Staff have attended behaviour management training although at times some children's behaviour still impacts on the enjoyment of others. However this is due to organisation within the setting. The child protection policy is in place but is not in depth and does not inform parents about the setting's role in protecting children. Therefore this is a recommendation from this inspection.

At the education inspection the provider was asked to increase opportunities for children to develop problem solving skills, and extend more able children's concept of numbers beyond 10. The provider was also asked to extend opportunities for more free access to some resources to increase the level of child initiated learning particularly in areas such as creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children are able to count to 10 and some up to 49 in organised activities. However, children do not always have free access to resources and some activities are still adult led. Therefore this is also as recommendation from this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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 children have access to fresh drinking water at all times and especially after physical play

- consider different ways of introducing healthy food to children, and help them to learn about the importance of a healthy diet
- develop the child protection policy in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, include procedures to be taken if an allegation is made against a member of staff and ensure that parents are made aware of the group's responsibility in protection the children in their care
- implement the new Ofsted complaints procedure and ensure that it is shared with parents
- ensure that the attendance register clearly shows children's arrival and departure times if different from session times and also includes staff
- ensure that the registration certificate is displayed.

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):

- provide children with opportunities to pour their own drinks, and extend activities to ensure that children develop their learning through all play situations
- organise space to allow children to independently access all activities and ensure that children's play does not impinge on the enjoyment of others.

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