



St Mary's Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	108463
Inspection date	02 November 2006
Inspector	Rosemary Davies
Setting Address	St Mary's School, Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7EG
Telephone number	01628 410538
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Registered person	St Mary's Pre-school
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 opened in 1990. It operates from a terrapin building in the grounds of St Mary's Roman Catholic School, Maidenhead, Berkshire. There is a secure area for outdoor play, separate from that of the school. The pre-school is run by a voluntary committee. Children come from Maidenhead and the surrounding area, representing its cultural mix. Priority is given to baptised Catholic children but children from all faiths are accepted.

The group opens each week day during school terms. Morning sessions run from 09.00 to 11.45. Afternoon ones run from 12.30 to 15.00 each weekday, apart from Wednesdays. The pre-school offers a Breakfast Club for children attending either the school or the pre-school. It runs from 07.45 to 09.00, again on weekdays, during school terms.

There are currently 51 children from three to five years on roll. This includes 49 children who receive funding for nursery education. The majority of children move on to St. Mary's School the term after their fifth birthday. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school currently employs seven staff to work with the children, four of whom have relevant early years qualifications at level three or above. The setting receives support from the Local Authority and has close links with St Mary's school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is maintained well in this setting. Staff follow stated procedures carefully to make sure children use a clean and hygienic environment. Children learn the fundamentals of how to keep themselves healthy. They are encouraged to place their hands over their mouths if coughing and wash their hands thoroughly before meal times. These routines are followed in both the Breakfast Club and the pre-school. Children begin to recognise their own needs, such as wearing coats on chilly days. They enjoy going outside for fresh air in both morning and afternoon sessions. There they develop physical skills in ball control and learn to control their bodies. The more athletic children do not progress their climbing skills, owing to a lack of suitably challenging equipment.

Children gain a good understanding of healthy eating. Those in the Breakfast Club enjoy hot, wholemeal toast and pure orange juice. The pre-school offers a wide range of fresh fruit for snack time. This is provided by parents, with whom staff work closely, promoting a consistent approach to a good diet between home and pre-school. Older children who take lunch, either bring healthy packed lunches from home to sustain them, or choose to eat a freshly cooked, healthy meal from the school canteen. Staff liaise closely with parents to cater for individual children's needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in an extremely welcoming and child-friendly environment. They use high quality resources, which are maintained at an excellent standard, staff readily discarding any that become unsuitable for use. Children benefit from use of the school's resources too, such as the playground and borrowing books. Children use a particularly excellent range of information and communications technology resources to support their learning. Staff choose computer programs thoughtfully, so that children use those that are both suitable and which stimulate their learning.

Children are secure and well supervised at all times. They use a safe environment both indoors and outside because staff understand risk assessment principles and follow stipulated procedures meticulously. They employ extremely thorough procedures for maintaining children's safety

on outings. Children learn to keep themselves safe through suitable support from staff, such as gentle reminders not to run down the slope onto the playground. Those children with particular needs receive close supervision, so they are not accidentally hurt or injured.

Staff safeguard children who attend the Breakfast Club by overseeing them until time for school. Staff protect children's welfare. They update their knowledge of child protection procedures regularly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter both the pre-school and the Breakfast Club eagerly and happily, keen to see what is on offer for the session. Children get on very well together with the older ones greeting their friends. Relationships with staff are relaxed but respectful; children show they trust staff and approach them readily. Children enjoy their play-based activities, learning through hands-on experiences, although learning opportunities outside are limited. Those in the Breakfast Club quickly find something of interest, choosing from a good variety suited to their ages and interests. During the pre-school session, children also move around freely, choosing what they wish to do, although they cannot make their own decisions about when to go outside to play or when to take refreshment. Children develop their self esteem very well because staff clearly value what they say and do.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make very good progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. This is because staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage and, consequently, provide appropriate challenges for the funded children. They adapt resources well to meet children's different stages of development, providing pictorial prompts for the younger children, for example. These also support those learning English as an additional language.

The programmes offered for children's personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and for their mathematical development, are particularly good. The extremely favourable adult to child ratio benefits children. As a result, they receive much one to one attention. This helps all children, including those with learning difficulties or learning English as an additional language, in developing their vocabularies and conversation skills. Staff plan an interesting range of topics which spark children's enthusiasm, motivating them to want to join in the activities and experiences offered. This helps them find out about the world around them. They delve into straw, for example, commenting on its smell and feel, as they hunt for plastic insects and then look at them carefully with magnifying glasses. Children do not make full use of the outdoor area to support their learning.

Children benefit from being able to make connections across their learning, exploring themes from a variety of starting points. They learn about the colour 'black' as they handle different fabrics, create witches' hats or play 'Incy Wincey Spider', for example. Staff support children's play very well. They help them develop scenarios in the pretend play corner, as it becomes a 'Witches' Cave'. They reinforce children's learning by repeating activities in different ways.

Staff assess children's progress through careful and regular observation. They use the knowledge gained to plan appropriate challenges for children. An exception is where some children are encouraged to 'join up' their writing well before they are ready for this step. Overall, however, children thoroughly enjoy the experiences offered and concentrate extremely well.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children receive a warm welcome in this Breakfast Club and pre-school. Children's diverse family backgrounds are recognised and celebrated. Children are very much treated as individuals and staff know them all very well. Those with learning difficulties, physical disabilities or learning English as an additional language, receive appropriate support.

There is a strong sense of being part of the wider school community, particularly amongst the older children. They benefit from being on the school site, which eases their transition to school. Children's behaviour is excellent. They know precisely what is expected of them because staff give clear instructions and often demonstrate what they mean; this helps the youngest children and those learning English as an additional language. Children thoroughly enjoy the activities offered and this too, supports appropriate behaviour. Older children take part in games, taking turns and sticking to 'rules' without the support of adults. They give thanks for the food they eat. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents receive a suitable range of information about the club and pre-school and what is offered to their children. They do not have full up to date details of how to contact the regulator, Ofsted, should they wish to do so. The complaints procedure does not fully reflect latest legislation. Parents receive regular information about their children's progress in the Foundation Stage.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by well qualified staff who are cleared to work with children because robust appointment procedures are in place. The registered person and manager have clearly defined roles. The manager oversees a suitable induction system so that new staff and students on work placements know what they can and cannot do. Extremely effective staffing levels are maintained, which support children's care well. Time is used effectively so that children experience suitable routines to meet their needs. All required documentation is in place with policies that support the efficient running of both the Breakfast Club and the pre-school. Some policies require updating, however, to reflect most recent legislation. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of nursery education are good. The manager provides clear leadership to the staff team, all of whom are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Regular staff meetings aid staff in working together effectively. They plan a suitable range of resources and experiences to help children progress in their learning. Staff clearly enjoy the children's company and the favourable ratio allows them to provide much good quality individual support.

The group uses its Self Evaluation Form to identify its strengths and weaknesses and has a clear vision for the pre-school's future.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education and care inspections, the pre-school was required to address four recommendations. These related to the policy for child protection, the programme for mathematics, the planning of the nursery education and the development of staff questioning techniques.

The nursery has extended its child protection policy. It includes procedures to be followed in the event of allegations being made against a member of staff, so that children are further safeguarded. The staff have developed their questioning techniques so that children are challenged more effectively in their learning. The planning of the nursery education programme, including that for mathematics, is guided by objective observation of the children's learning with planning centred on what they need to learn next and resources provided which suit a range of abilities. The staff have developed their questioning techniques so that children are challenged effectively in their learning. All these measures have enhanced the care and education offered to the children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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

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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):

- update policies to reflect the October 2005 legislation

- plan regular outdoor learning opportunities to support children's all round development and consider allowing them to make their own decisions about when to play outside and when to take refreshment (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):

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