



St Mary's Church Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509168
Inspection date	08 February 2007
Inspector	Sue Davey
Setting Address	St Mary's Church, Church Road, Yatton, Bristol, Avon, BS49 4HH
Telephone number	01934 832184 or 01934 838229
E-mail	
Registered person	St mary's Church Playgroup 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 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 Church Pre-school opened in 1980. The group operates from the Chapter House, adjacent to the church. It is based in the rural community of Yatton in North Somerset and is supported by a voluntary management committee. Children have access to a large room, reception area, entrance hall and toilet facilities. The group opens Monday to Friday from 09.15 to 11.45 during term time.

The pre-school provides care and nursery education for children aged from two to five years. Currently there are 26 children on roll. Of these, 21 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend on a full or part-time basis. The group supports children with additional needs and if necessary, those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six members of staff to work directly with the children. Of these, four hold childcare qualifications to level 3, and one is working towards a qualification. The group receives support from a local authority advisory teacher and the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is well promoted as effective procedures help minimise the spread of infection. For example, staff do not admit children who are sick or infectious; they have high standards of cleanliness and operate a regular and systematic cleaning programme of the toys and equipment. Children understand the need to wash their hands after visiting the toilet and use an antibacterial hand cleaner before eating. Sufficient staff are trained in paediatric first aid and know what to do if accidents occur. Records show that all accidents are recorded and countersigned by parents, in line with regulations. Staff follow correct procedures if children require medication and if necessary, seek additional training to carry out specific procedures, such as using an EpiPen. They obtain information from parents about children's dietary needs, which helps to ensure those with food allergies are safeguarded. At snack time, children enjoy a variety of fresh fruit and choose from milk or water to drink. They have access to drinking water throughout the session.

Children have limited access to outside play but this is well compensated by the daily inclusion of a good range of indoor physical activities. For instance, children bend and stretch in parachute games; they practice a range of movements as instructed, during music sessions; they gain balance and coordination on the climbing frame and demonstrate good spatial awareness as they scoot around on wheeled toys. Staff include warm up and cool down routines, and draw children's attention to the effects of exercise on their bodies, such as getting hot or tired. During tidy-up time, one child proudly announced, "I can carry it, I'm very strong!"

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are safe because staff supervise them well and take action to minimise risks. However, there is scope to improve security arrangements, as access to the building is not always closely monitored. The light and airy building provides a warm and welcoming environment for parents and children, although there is limited space in which to display children's work. Children have easy access to the resources provided but these are pre-selected by staff due to storage arrangements. All toys and equipment are safe and appropriate to the children's stage of development including the child-sized tables and chairs. Records show that staff carry out risk assessments on the building and day to day provision, but some aspects are not included. Additional assessments are made prior to outings.

Children learn to take care of their own personal safety as they handle scissors appropriately; take turns to climb and slide; and avoid bumping into each other during physical play. From time to time, they are introduced to the concept of road safety. They set up a zebra crossing and practice crossing the road with the help of the local lollipop lady. Children's welfare is

further safeguarded as staff know how and when to seek advice regarding child protection issues. Some attend regular training to update their knowledge and understanding of this subject.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time in pre-school and settle quickly to activities of their choice. The routine of the day provides structure, which gives children a sense of security and helps them to predict what happens next. When called to sit down together, one child explained, "We sit on the mat to do the numbers and then we have milk and fruit". However, there are many occasions when children are required to sit still and wait for the next part of the session. Staffing levels are high so positive relationships are established and children receive support in their chosen activities. Overall, they are confident and have an enthusiastic approach to learning.

Nursery education

The quality and standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory. At the start of each session, staff set out resources to make sure children have the opportunity to explore all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They talk to children about what they are doing and often join in with their play. Staff observe children throughout the session to assess progress and plan the next steps in their learning. One member of staff has overall responsibility for planning small-group activities, which target children's individual developmental needs. However, not all staff have a thorough understanding of the stepping stones and expected learning outcomes to effectively carry out these planned activities. Staff use observations to complete children's assessment records, but in some cases, there is not enough evidence to support their claims. Staff use a topic-based curriculum and include seasonal events throughout the year. This approach covers a range of activities but does not take advantage of children's own interests to extend their learning across all areas.

Most children are confident speakers. They describe what they are doing and give meaning to their work. They are learning that print has a purpose as for example, staff encourage them to make shopping lists during role-play. Some can form recognisable letters associated with their name. The self-registration system and use of place names at snack time, means that most children can read their own name. During group activities, they often practise the phonetic sounds of words and identify those with the same initial letter. Children enjoy listening to stories but the size of the group or choice of book does not always elicit their full attention. Regular trips to the local library are very popular and each child chooses a book to borrow until their next visit. Children learn to recognise numerals through daily discussion about the date and display boards. They make simple calculations by counting each other at snack time and work out, for instance, how many children need milk. Through shop-play, children pretend to weigh vegetables; they talk about the cost of items and take it in turns to operate the cash till. They experience volume and capacity through sand play and by pouring their own drinks.

Although there is little access to outside play, children develop some understanding of the natural world as they watch through the window, the wild life and changing seasons in the church grounds. They plant seeds; use magnifying glasses; experiment with cornflour and water,

and take part in cooking activities. They gain an understanding of technology as they play with battery operated toys, pretend to use a keyboard and use a swipe card to 'pay' for goods. They design and build with construction toys and create imaginary worlds with train layouts. Children play out familiar experiences as they dress up and take on characters of their choice. For example, one child, shopping basket in hand, announced, "Ding dong, I'm home, I've been shopping and I'm going to make a cake". In large-group time, children identify various buildings on a simplified map of their town. They show great delight when it is their turn to choose which building 'teddy' will visit next. One child chose the school as that is where his big sister goes. Children have regular access to a range of art and craft materials. They paint and draw freely and enjoy creating collage pictures. They enjoy music and movement sessions and follow instructions to act out a sequence. For instance, children pretended to get into a rocket and fly to the moon where they proceeded to walk slowly and exaggeratedly as if weightless. In a follow-up discussion, children explained they could only see the moon at night when the stars come out. One child added with conviction, "Moon dust melts your shoes".

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There is a fair admissions policy which is inclusive of all children and families in the local community. Staff provide non-stereotypical activities and encourage full participation by girls and boys alike. There is a selection of resources showing positive images of our diverse society and various cultural events are explored throughout the year. Staff have a positive attitude towards children with additional needs and liaise with parents and other professionals as required. Children learn to consider the needs of others and appreciate not everyone can do the same things. They play independently as well as in small or large groups and behave well in response to staff's positive approach. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The setting's partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff are friendly and approachable. They obtain detailed information from parents so that children are cared for according to their wishes. They greet parents individually and talk to them about their child's achievements and wellbeing. Parents appreciate the opportunity to view their children's progress records at any time and add their own comments. Staff welcome parents' involvement in the setting and encourage them to share any skills or interests with the children. Parents are fully informed of weekly activities and they receive regular newsletters. Some parents are members of the voluntary management committee and help make decisions on operational procedures.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The established and experienced staff team work effectively to maintain children's good health and wellbeing. They provide continuity of care and are committed to giving children positive experiences that prepare them well for school. Ratios of staff to children exceed minimum standards so children are well supervised and supported, although the current routine means children spend too long sitting still. All staff and committee members have been vetted by the criminal records bureau to ensure their suitability. However, the registered body has failed to

inform Ofsted of changes to committee, which is a breach of regulations. Staff maintain records in line with statutory requirements and periodically review policies and procedures. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The play manager and deputy take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the group. The manager carries out annual staff appraisals and identifies any training needs. She observes staff's interactions with children and offers guidance and support when necessary but there is still scope to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. The deputy has a lead role in planning the curriculum but all staff meet regularly to discuss individual children and appropriate activities. However, their knowledge of children's progress is not clearly evidenced in their assessment profiles and planned activities do not reflect children's interests.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, there were a number of recommendations and key issues raised to improve the standards of care and nursery education. The recommendations related to behaviour management; parent's access to appropriate policies and procedures; staff deployment; and the presentation of equipment. Staff have now addressed these issues. Through discussion and training, they provide a consistent approach to behaviour management and children respond positively. The key points of conflict resolution strategies are displayed to remind staff and assist volunteers. The operational plan is always available for parents to view and copies of policies and procedures are included on the parents' notice board. All policies comply with the requirements of the National Standards. Staff support children as they play, often joining in with their games. This means that they talk to children about what they are doing and ask questions to make them think and support their learning. Child-sized tables and chairs have been purchased since the last inspection and the room is set out so that children can choose from a range of toys and materials. Staff make sure all equipment is regularly cleaned and the first aid box is also well stocked.

Key issues regarding nursery education included: staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage; assessment and planning to meet individual children's needs; and monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum. Staff have received guidance and support from the local authority's advisory teacher and there has been much progress with these issues. However, there is still scope for further improvement. Staff are familiar with the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage but do not always understand the learning potential behind activities. They support children's learning across all areas and record their observations. This forms a good basis for planning future activities and charting each child's progress. However, not all areas of learning are given equal attention and in some cases, there is little evidence to support the assessments. Even so, staff do know the children well and considerable effort has been made to plot each child's level of progress on a grid specifically designed for the purpose. This helps the deputy to group children according to their need and then plan appropriate activities. The manager observes staff and children throughout the session and provides feedback as necessary. Activity plans are evaluated and this information is used to help further planning.

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 complaint 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 Ofsted are informed of significant changes to the setting - especially where this relates to committee members
- make sure security arrangements are closely monitored
- reduce the amount of time children are required to sit still and wait

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 sure there is sufficient evidence to support the assessment of children's progress across all areas of learning
- continue to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones to support children's learning through appropriate activities
- focus on children's interests to develop and extend their progress across all areas of learning

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