



St Marys Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	315245
Inspection date	29 January 2007
Inspector	Joan Isabel Madden / Susan Patricia Birkenhead
Setting Address	St Mary's Church Hall, Crouchley Lane, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0AS
Telephone number	07947 692 003
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Registered person	St Mary's Playgroup
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 playgroup opened in 1976. It operates from two rooms in the church hall of St. Mary's, Lymm. The playgroup serves the local community and is managed by a committee. A maximum of 28 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 45 children on roll from two years to four years, and of these 32 children are receiving nursery funding. The playgroup supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. On Monday, Tuesday and Friday the group operates from 09.15 until 13.00, and on Wednesday and Thursday the sessions are from 09.15 until 12.00. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are seven members of staff, two of whom are full time and the remainder are part time. Over half the staff have early years qualifications. The setting receives support from Warrington Sure Start Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

In the main, sensible procedures are followed by staff to protect the children from illness and infection. The premises receives regular visits from Environmental Health. The kitchen has recently been re-vamped making it easier to clean and maintain to a reasonable standard. Staff follow sensible hygiene routines, such as wiping down the tables before snacks and cleaning the floor. Generally, children are learning to follow simple good health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands with soap and water as part of the toileting routine and before handling food, however, they dry hands on a communal towel. Children are treated appropriately for minor injuries, as staff are appropriately qualified in first aid and there is a fully stocked first aid box. Documentation relating to accidents and medication is well-maintained, helping to underpin sensible procedures that are followed in the event of an incident.

In general, nutritious food and discussion promotes the children's good health. They are provided with snacks, such as bananas and toast. At snack time children have water, milk or juice to drink depending on their parents' wishes, however, fresh drinking water is not available to children at all times thereby limiting their appreciation of the healthy way to remain hydrated. Children have their health and dietary needs met because the staff work well with parents. The dietary requirements of the children are recorded onto their personal records and all staff are made aware of these.

Some daily routines include activities to help children develop physical skills, widen their boundaries, and develop a healthy life style. Children are developing self-care skills by taking themselves to the toilet, however, there is little evidence of the children developing their independence and decision making skills during snack time. Indoors children practise their balancing and climbing skills by rocking on the large horse, climbing up ladders and walking across a raised beam. Staff support and encourage those who are unsure, however, the children are unable to make regular use of the outside area and this limits their opportunities for vigorous exercise in fresh air, to move freely and to develop physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Despite the dilapidated outward appearance of the building the children feel welcome once inside the door. Their work is displayed around the playgroup and inviting activities are available to them. The large hall is used effectively to meet the children's needs and to ensure they experience a wide range of activities. As a result, they are able to take part in group, quiet and messy activities. The playgroup is well equipped with toys and materials to assist the children's learning and acquisition of skills. The furniture, toys and equipment are well maintained, safe and clean, helping to protect the children's well-being. Children easily access the resources, thereby promoting their independence and decision making skills.

Generally, there are good processes in place to keep the children safe and secure indoors. The heaters are securely guarded, children are monitored as they enter and leave the building and

there are safety mats around the physical development equipment. However, the outdoor play area is not secure. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they take part in fire drills and are reminded of sensible rules, such as going up the slide ladders with both hands free of toys.

Children are well-protected because staff understand their role in safeguarding and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. They have recently attended courses and are confident in identifying abuse and the procedures to follow.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff know the children and their families well and there is a real sense of community in the playgroup. Children happily come into group making it a smooth transition from home. They are confident, settled and quickly become engrossed in activities that enable them to acquire new knowledge and skills. They independently choose from a wide range and balance of activities that promotes decision making skills. The majority of children who attend playgroup are over three years and only a small proportion are rising three years. Staff cater well for the very young children. They adapt activities to make them manageable for them and offer them extra support. Staff ensure the young children have plenty of opportunity to talk about their experiences helping them to feel a sense of belonging and develop their language skills.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are positive, calm and conscientious. They have a secure understanding and knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Staff use excellent reference materials for planning to ensure it comprehensively covers the six learning areas and relates directly to the stepping stones. Additionally, assessments and the activities provided link directly to the Foundation Stage. However, there are no formal evaluations of activities, and as a result, planning does not include differentiation in activities for the older more able children. As a result, they are not always appropriately challenged. Children experience a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Staff support the children well in child initiated play. They capitalise on opportunities to promote children's learning by asking good opened-ended questions and teaching the children new concepts and vocabulary. Observations of the children are transferred onto individual assessment records giving an overview of the children's achievements and progress. Parents receive a written report at the end of year based on the assessments.

Children have good opportunities to develop their communication and language skills. On arrival children take part in a self-registration scheme that involves them recognising their own names and posting them through the letter box. This helps them learn that print carries meaning. They are encouraged to talk about events in their lives, both at registration time and as they play. Children listen and respond to the register and help to complete the 'weather bear'. In doing so they are expanding their vocabulary. They record their observations of the weather and learn that there are different reasons for writing. Children listen well to stories in whole groups and throughout the morning. Staff share story books with the children, helping them to handle books and develop reading skills. They enjoy listening to a story about elephants

that is connected with the 'Colour' theme. Children make independent use of the inviting range of books that are easily accessible.

Children complete puzzles that promote their counting and number recognition, and their understanding of how shapes fit together. As children play they are heard counting. The older, more able children are very competent in mathematics, but lack sufficient challenge to move forward. Children develop their understanding of shapes and designing skills by building with construction kits and join pieces together to construct a train track. They become involved in role play and small world scenes, such as the cars/mats, puppets and dolls house, and this helps them to make sense of the wider world. Members of the community visit the playgroup to promote the children's knowledge of the community. Themes promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world, such as the present complimentary themes of 'Winter' and 'Colour'. In connection with this theme children have walked around the dam and made observations on the characteristics of winter, including ice and snow. They are learning the colours that make up a rainbow and the conditions needed for a rainbow to appear. They experiment and learn how to mix colours to make new colours. Other creative experiences include the children exploring a good range of creative materials including using papers of different texture, colour and size. They enjoy painting, printing and modelling with play dough. A permanent mark making area enables children to discover writing and drawing as a means of communication. Children enjoy taking part in role play and dressing-up, helping to develop their imaginative and language skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate a sound awareness of equal opportunities and how to cater for children with learning difficulties or disabilities. There is a very good adult to child ratio and a key-worker system in operation, enabling staff to meet the children's needs more effectively. Children are warmly greeted by staff who know them well and are interested in what they have to say giving them a sense of belonging. Children happily and efficiently help to tidy up, learning responsible behaviour and how to care for their environment. They gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others as they celebrate different festivals, such as Chinese New Year Festival when they enjoy a food banquet. Children play with resources that reflect equal opportunities, helping them to gain a wider view of the world. Staff welcome children with learning difficulties or disabilities and would receive support and guidance from the local authority if required. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The positive behaviour policy is effectively implemented with good strategies to promote acceptable behaviour. The children are very well-behaved and are learning appropriate behaviour for different situations. They sit appropriately for snacks, stories and at registration time. There are good relationships throughout the provision and children enjoy a very sociable time as they eat their snacks.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. They are very happy with the provision and find the staff approachable and welcoming. Staff provide them with good quality information about the setting and its provision through newsletters, display boards and the information booklet that includes information on the curriculum. Parents are involved in the running of the

pre-school through the committee and volunteering at sessions. Parents are well informed about their children's achievements and progress through informal discussions, children's work-books and written reports.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is good. The result is that the staff are very good role models and set a professional tone. They have regular team meetings that include planning activities. The staff receive regular support visits from Sure Start and attend training sessions. The manager works directly with the children and as part of the team. She is therefore able to monitor provision and activities on a daily basis. Staff have identified the need to develop a formal system for monitoring the provision.

Organisation is good, resulting in positive outcomes for children. Staff have a good understanding of the conditions of their registration and how to meet the standards. They have a secure knowledge of how to vet staff to ensure that children are well protected. Group sizes, a key-worker system and staff deployment contribute to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Records, policies and procedures work in practice to underpin the good care of the children. Children follow a sensible routine that includes a free-play session, snacks, adult-led activity, registration time, singing and story time. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection staff were required to record the actual times of attendance of children and staff. There is a system for registering children and staff attendance on a daily basis, showing hours of attendance. A record of visitors is maintained. These practices underpin the safety of the children in the playgroup.

At the last education inspection, the staff were requested to improve the provision for music and to track the balance of planned activities. They were also required to further develop the involvement of parents in the assessments of their children. Written plans demonstrate that the children receive a balance of activities, and included in this is provision for music. The children play musical instruments and join in with songs and rhymes. Through regular discussions, parents contribute to the assessments of their children, ensuring the staff have a comprehensive overview of the children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 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.

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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 fresh drinking water is available to children at all times
- ensure the outdoor area is safe and secure.

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):

- further develop children's opportunities to take part in activities and routines that will promote their physical development and self-help skills
- through evaluation of activities and assessments of the children, differentiate activities to challenge the more able children, particularly in maths.

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