



## St Marys Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	253100
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 January 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Gill Ogden
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<b>Registered person</b>	St Marys Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 1976 and is run by a volunteer committee. It operates from a building in the grounds of St Mary's Church and has a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school is open five days a week during term time only. The sessions are 09:00-12:00, lunch club 12:00-12:45 and an afternoon session 12:45-15:15.

The group is registered to care for a maximum of 25 children, aged from two to under five years, at any one time. There are currently 42 children on roll of whom 19 receive funding for nursery education. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who do not have English as a first language are provided for.

Of the eight staff who work with the children, seven have appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by staff who have a solid knowledge of the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment and promoting healthy lifestyles. There are clear hygiene routines in place which assist in minimising the opportunities for cross-infection. For example, staff wear gloves when preparing food and a colour-coded cloth system is used to ensure optimum hygiene when cleaning. There are careful nappy changing procedures in place which protect children's privacy. Children learn good personal hygiene habits through, for example, regular and appropriate hand washing routines. Clear information is given to parents regarding the incubation periods of illnesses and the expectation that sick children are not brought to the group.

Children have plenty of fresh air and exercise each day by using the outdoor play space. They learn the importance of keeping themselves appropriately attired according to the weather by staff talking to them about what they need to put on before they go outdoors. For example, children are clear about having warm coats and gloves on when the weather is cold. A range of outdoor activities that include climbing, balancing and riding and manoeuvring tricycles ensure that children make good progress in their physical development. Appropriate rest facilities are available for those children who need to nap during the session and all children can sit comfortably to listen to stories and cuddle up to staff if they wish.

Children enjoy nutritious snacks such as fruit pieces and vegetable chunks as well as toast or crumpets at an appropriate time during the session to meet their needs. Parents provide packed lunches which are stored appropriately. Staff are keenly aware of the importance of encouraging healthy eating habits and support parents to provide well-balanced meals for their children. Children know that water is always available for them and parents are being encouraged to provide children with their own drink bottle each day.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in secure premises that are made as attractive as possible. Although the building is old and shabby in places every effort is made to ensure a safe environment is maintained for the children. Ongoing risk assessments and prioritising of the most urgent maintenance, such as proactive awareness of the need for new floor coverings, helps keep children safe. Close working relationships are maintained with the landlord to monitor long term issues such as the puddle in the middle of the outdoor area. Children are prompted regularly by staff about the need to keep away from potential hazards and support each other by reminding their peers to 'be careful' when they are, for example, riding tricycles. They also learn to keep themselves safe by taking part in regular evacuation procedures. All the necessary safety equipment is in place and checked regularly. Toys and play equipment are kept in good condition.

Children are further safeguarded because the staff have an excellent understanding of their child protection responsibilities. Most staff have been on recent training in this area and close

work with other agencies ensures that any children who have been identified as being at risk are monitored closely.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the group. Staff pay particular attention to children who have just started, allowing them the freedom to watch or take part in activities as they wish, whilst always being alert to any signs that they may be feeling distressed or confused. Children enjoy a variety of activities which they take part in at their own level. For example, the youngest children have plenty of time to explore paint and glue, dripping it and spreading it slowly over paper. They quickly become confident to join in at carpet time, saying hello or smiling and waving. Children soon feel that they belong in the group because staff give them lots of attention and make them feel part of it, for example, by encouraging them to paint self-portraits on the windows and then labelling them with their names. They get to know the routines easily and are well-supported by staff to become independent in following them, such as making sure that they know the procedure for using the toilet. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is used appropriately to monitor and plan for the youngest children's development.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most of the staff have a solid understanding of how children learn and the Foundation Stage. This enables them to provide a broad range of practical activities that capture children's imaginations. For example, the theme of traditional stories including 'Jack and the Beanstalk' is linked to activities such as weighing and counting dried beans, playing a 'climbing the beanstalk' board game and creating images of beanstalks with play dough, chalk and collage. All areas of learning are planned for and link closely to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Ongoing observations of what children can do are used to assess children's progress. However, apart from children with learning difficulties, these do not yet sufficiently influence planning for individual children's next steps which can limit more able children in particular from being effectively challenged. Staff use a variety of teaching methods and develop some useful strategies, such as the use of puppets and dolls, to encourage children to become involved with activities that they may show less interest in. The environment and resources are well organised and positive steps are being taken so that the outdoor environment can be used more effectively.

Children are interested and well motivated to learn. They rush to become involved in activities when they arrive and quickly and efficiently tidy up so they can get on with the next stage of the session. They work co-operatively together carrying boxes and rolled up mats and confidently ask for help if they need it. They listen attentively to stories, often predicting the next stage and enjoy acting out the story with home made puppets. Children respond positively to the resources that are available for them to write and relate sounds to letters. They are exposed to lots of mathematical language as part of everyday activities and as a result have many opportunities to reflect on and learn, for example, what 'high' and 'low' mean. They count regularly and older children count confidently to ten and beyond. Children have free access to the computer and are becoming very skilled at using the mouse and adjusting the volume. They are gaining an understanding of the natural world through growing seeds, feeding the birds

and having a butterfly bush outside the window. The prospect of snow excited them and they were keen that snow should be added to the wall collage that they had done of Hansel and Gretel. Children freely express their imagination with paint at each session as well as taking part in more structured creative activities. They use their sense of touch and relate it to their experiences by describing what the 'beans' feel like in the book, saying they are rough, bumpy and feel like stones. All children are developing good small hand skills through, for example, manipulating dough, holding scissors and pencils, doing puzzles and playing with small world toys.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

All children are made welcome and included well in the group. Staff gather plenty of information from parents to enable children's care needs to be met and to provide a foundation for their future development. Daily activities such as carpet time and meal times are used well to reinforce children's self-esteem and identity by staff relating to them as individuals such as commenting on how nice it is to have them back after they have been ill and talking about their home lives. Children use resources that help them develop positive attitudes towards all members of the community as part of their everyday play. They celebrate festivals such as Hannukah and Diwali which help them learn about the wider world and differing cultures from their own. Trips out and visitors to the group help children understand and become comfortable with their local community. Children with learning difficulties, disabilities and who speak English as an additional language have their needs met well through staff working effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure they are doing all they can for them. A good range of resources are in place that facilitate children's inclusion. Most children behave well, responding to staff acting as good role models and being consistent in their approach to dealing with any undesirable behaviour. Children are monitored closely if there are any concerns about their behaviour and staff are open to trying different methods and strategies to help them learn to behave appropriately. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents express great satisfaction with the provision. Staff have friendly and informative chats with them each day and parents know that written information and examples of their children's work are put in a labelled drawer for them to look at or take home whenever they wish. Parents receive some useful general information about the group when their children first start to attend and full policies and procedures are displayed for them to access freely. However, parents may not be able to contact Ofsted easily if they wish to because details have not been updated recently. The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Parents receive some information about the Foundation Stage and attend meetings to discuss their children's progress. They are encouraged to take part in sessions if they wish when they are then able to find out more about how children learn. However, they are not fully involved in a formal way in contributing to the assessment of their children's progress and they are not given enough ideas about what they could do at home to support their children's learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Competent organisation ensures a secure framework is in place for the care of children. Thorough employment procedures are in place and the committee are very clear about their role as are the staff. Both groups work well as individual teams and come together positively as a whole team in the best interests of the children. Everyone is keen to make the most of all the skills and experiences that exist between them to secure the future of the group and provide a stimulating and caring environment for the children. The available space both indoors and outdoors is used well and the team continue to review it to make it better. For example, a canopy is shortly to be erected outdoors so that children can continue to enjoy outdoor play in inclement weather. All the necessary documents are in place and records are kept well.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Clear induction and supervision systems are in place for the staff which quickly help to identify weaknesses and training needs. The manager has recently done training to help make her a more effective leader and the development of a team approach ensures that all the staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of what is going on in the group and all their contributions and suggestions are welcomed. Staff and committee work closely with external advisers to improve the educational provision for the children by reviewing what is currently available and making clear plans for future improvements. Overall, children's needs are met.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

All recommendations made at the previous inspections have been addressed competently. Children's safety has been improved because there is a clear risk assessment procedure in place and enough detail is recorded in the evacuation drill record. The framework for children's learning is better because plans clearly link to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals and so ensure that children have the necessary opportunities to make progress in all the learning areas. There is particular improvement in children's opportunities to regularly practice using the computer, become more independent learners, understand how sounds link to letters and learn to write their own names.

## **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.

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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 Ofsted's details in the complaint procedure.

#### 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):

- ensure planning reflects individual children's needs so that they are challenged appropriately
- increase the opportunities for parents to contribute towards identifying their children's progress and support their learning at home.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)