



St Marys Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127606
Inspection date	09 March 2007
Inspector	Tracy Larnach
Setting Address	Orchard Place, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8AP
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Registered person	St Marys 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 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 opened in 1985. It operates from three rooms in a detached porta-cabin on the grounds of St Mary's of Chantry Primary School in Faversham, Kent. A maximum of 30 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 12.30 to 15.00, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and have use of the school playing field.

The playgroup serves the people of the local area and surrounding towns. There are currently 73 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 52 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup supports children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs seven staff to work with children and an administration officer. All staff who work with the children have appropriate early years qualifications.

The playgroup receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have the opportunity to learn about health and hygiene through the daily routine; for example, staff give them gentle reminders so they remember to wash their hands after they go to the toilet and they know why they wash their hands. There is liquid soap and paper towels to help prevent the spread of infection. Staff use appropriate practices to promote hygiene; for example, they clean the building after each session and have a rota to ensure it is done to an acceptable level. There is a sick child policy, all staff are trained in first aid and parental permission for emergency medical advice and treatment. As a result, staff are able to act in the children's best interest should they have an accident or become ill. Accident records are kept appropriately; however, the medication records are not kept for the required length of time. In addition, parents do not always acknowledge the administration of medication and the policy does not clearly state that staff will only administer emergency medication.

Children enjoy a variety of fruit and vegetables for snack and are learning about healthy eating through a range of activities. Crackers and plain biscuits are also served with milk or water. However, there are missed opportunities to develop the children's independence at snack time; for example, staff serve the children and do not sit with them as good role models. Information about the children's dietary requirements is posted and staff know the signs and symptoms should a child have an reaction so they can act quickly. Water is available so children do not become thirsty; however, as children can not reach it easily they have to ask the staff for assistance. Children have a scheduled time for physical play and enjoy outside activities in the nice weather. There is a range of equipment such as bats, balls, bikes and a large space to run on the school field. Although, staff talk to the children about exercise being good for them, physical activities are not planned. In addition, there is not always enough time left at the end of the session for children to participate in rigorous physical activities for their physical well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe as the playgroup is secure and there are systems in place to ensure they are collected safely; for example, a password system is used. Visitors to the playgroup are monitored; for example, the inspector's identity was checked with a telephone call to Ofsted, and a visitors book is in place. Staff have all had health and safety training to ensure they are conducting risk assessments appropriately to ensure the children's safety. Staff have parental permissions on file; for example, for outings. An outings policy is in place to ensure that any outings are conducted safely. The staff have a good knowledge of child protection to ensure children are safeguarded, although the policy does not detail all requirements; for example, the telephone

numbers. However, staff are aware of where to access them. A fire drill is conducted every term over several days to ensure all children are familiar with the procedure. A system is in place to remind the staff of the week this is due and a log is kept. Children learn about safety through the daily routine; for example, staff talk to them about walking inside and why.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are greeted warmly as they arrive making them feel welcome and part of the group. Staff are kind and caring in their interactions; for example, parents are able to stay to help settle their children. Children are able to independently select from the variety of toys and equipment set up in the room. However, other opportunities for developing the children's independence are missed; for example, at snack time and during the 'one to one' activity. Staff support children in their play, they question them to make them think and encourage them in turn taking with reminders that the toys are to share. There are some opportunities to experiment, explore and create with different mediums but not enough to enable the children to freely explore using their senses; for example, paint, play dough, water and sand are out on different days. Staff are using the Birth to three matters framework to promote young children's development. However, the observations they record are not being used to plan to ensure children's individual needs are being met.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals. They assess what the children know when they begin nursery by observing over a period of two weeks and by taking account of what parents tell them about their child. However, they have not yet developed a formal system to assess the children's starting points. Children enjoy the activities available and the staff are skilled at using questioning effectively to extend the children's thinking. They observe the children and assess their next steps; however, these observations are not used for planning. Instead they are used by the key workers who at times involve 'their' children in activities to extend their learning. As the planning is limited to the staff deployment in each area and there is no evaluation of the activities, records do not indicate if the children are making progress because of the activities or if the activities are adequately challenging the more able children. The majority of teaching is incidental; for example, a measuring activity was completed as there was time but not with specific children's interests in mind.

Children are developing relationships and are learning to share and take turns. They show an awareness of others as they play. They interact well together and speak clearly to each other; for example, two children discussed their birthdays as they set up a picnic. Children are learning about letters as staff talk to them about words and print; for example, a child spotted the word 'Lego' on a brick. Many children are able to recognise their names as they find them to self-register. Children enjoy stories as staff read regularly to them. In addition, they visit the book area learning how a book works and developing an enjoyment of stories and consequently an interest in reading. However, during each session books are also used as a 'time filler' while children wait to go outside, devaluing their importance. Pictures on the wall show that some

children are able to write recognisable letters; however, children are not encouraged to write often enough; for example, during the measuring activity and in the role play area. Children count well and are learning to match numbers and amounts; for example, they play games where they roll dice, looking at the amount. Children are very good at puzzles and complete them competently and a range of puzzles are available to challenge them. Children learn about space and shape as they use peg boards discussing fitting the shapes together and making patterns. A tape measure is available and children are encouraged to measure items in the room; for example, the plants they have grown. However, staff miss opportunities to extend activities; for example, by allowing children to compare and record their findings. There is little opportunity for the children to calculate during practical activities.

Children have some opportunities to explore and investigate; for example, they enjoy shells and stones in the water table and they become treasures and words such as flat and smooth are used. Children make discoveries in the sand; for example, a child pushing hard on a funnel found a worm appeared. There is a range of construction toys so that children can develop their design skills; for example, cogs have to be linked together carefully to enable them to turn. Children have a sense of self as they talk about their families; for example, a child introduced herself and talked about two people; she said, 'one is my brother and one is my friend.' They find out about the environment as they plant seeds and watch them grow. Instruments are freely available for children to explore sound and be creative as they make their own music; for example, children playing instruments in a small group enjoyed a song time together and other children danced. Children enjoy role play and use their imaginations; for example, a large box became a house and a picnic was set up on the floor, complete with a cloth. Displays on the walls show activities are often adult directed; for example, the duck displays and the fruit on the 'healthy eating' display. As a result children do not get the opportunity to represent their unique perception of the world unrestricted by adults. Children practice their small muscle skills as they use equipment with control; for example, winding the tape measure in and out. However, malleable materials such as play dough are not always available to further develop these skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled in the playgroup. They cooperate well together enjoying the activities provided. They are confident and will speak in groups. They can concentrate and sit quietly when needed; however, there is too much waiting due to the organisation of the session which sometimes results in fidgety children as they wait for turns and during transitions. Staff use positive methods of behaviour management with the children and the children behave well; for example, two children were running and a staff member asked them why it was not safe to run, explaining running is safe in an open space. Children's birthdays are acknowledged and they are praised for their work which develops their self esteem. Children are encouraged to take care of their needs; for example, putting an apron on, using the toilet independently and sweeping the floor; however, other opportunities to promote independence are missed. Positive images are reflected in the environment and holidays and traditions are acknowledged through discussion, displays and celebrations. Staff are positive role models, treating each child as an individual. Children with English as an additional language are supported by the staff to meet

their needs. A special educational needs coordinator works with outside agencies to develop individual educational plans which are reviewed regularly. Children show wonder as they notice new things; for example, a metal pan from the role play reflected on the ceiling making a light which moved as the pan moved. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

Parents are greeted warmly and are welcomed into the setting. They are happy with the care and education and feel their children are progressing in the playgroup. The prospectus contains information about the Foundation Stage; however, no information about the policies. Parents are mostly aware that developmental records are kept on their children; however, not all have chosen to review them yet and there is no space for parents to contribute to the records. Although parents share their children's interests to settle them into the playgroup, there has not yet been a procedure developed to assess the children's starting points. Parents surveys indicate their satisfaction and newsletters keep the parents informed. A poster details the numbers to call to make a complaint and a log is kept to record any complaints made by parents.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The routine is organised to include a variety of activities; for example, choosing, adult directed activities, snack and outside play; however, there are lots of changes in the routine and consequently waiting at transition times. Policies and procedures are in place and understood by staff, however, the parents are not fully informed of all policies; for example, child protection. Most of the required documentation for the safe and effective management of the setting and for the welfare and care of children is maintained and stored securely in locked filing cabinets. However, the medicine records are not kept appropriately. All staff have had checks to show they are suitable to work with children. Staff deploy well to ensure children are supported in their play, there is policy for deployment and a daily plan. Systems are in place to ensure safety. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

Staff work well as a team, they meet together every two weeks and regularly discuss the playgroup before and after the session. Staff appraisals are undertaken annually by the committee to evaluate staff needs. A diary for daily communication ensures continuity as there are three managers who alternate the responsibility of the playgroup. This is especially important as they are not there everyday. Staff have regular opportunities to organise their observations. However, planning does not derive from the observations to ensure objectives are set to support and progress the children. There are no formal systems in place to review, monitor or evaluate the setting and the nursery education programme to show its effectiveness and ensure the curriculum is broad and balanced.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were four recommendations made for care and three key issues identified for education. These were to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection, to ensure that access to food and drink reflects policy and promotes independence and choice for children, to obtain information on disability legislation and to retain the record of attendance for a minimum period of two years. Key issues identified included increasing children's awareness of print and the different purpose of writing, provide frequent and regular opportunities to explore and investigate and to review the organisation of the group.

Since the last inspection the staff have all had training on child protection, as a result, they are aware of how to safeguard the children in their care. The staff provide a range of fruits and vegetables for snack; however, there are still weaknesses around promoting independence at snack time, this is included in the recommendations made as a result of this inspection. A special needs coordinator is in place and works with the parents and other staff to ensure children with learning difficulties/disabilities are appropriately supported. The record of attendance is retained for the required time frame for the welfare of the children. There has been some progress made in the education programme in promoting communication, language and literacy and providing opportunities for children to explore and investigate. However, some activities are done as a large group thus limiting the children's involvement. In addition, there are not enough opportunities for children to record their findings. Staff have reviewed the organisation of the session and made some changes. However, because of the many transitions the children spend too much time waiting, this remains a recommendation of this inspection.

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 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 the medication policy is revised to reflect current practice, retained for the required time scale and parents acknowledge when medication is given
- provide children with more opportunities to develop their senses through experimenting, exploring and creating with different mediums and materials
- ensure parents are informed of all policies and procedures
- re-organise the sessions so that all children are suitably challenged, their independence is promoted and the routine meets their needs according to their age and stage of development (this also applies to 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):

- make effective use of observations in order to identify individual children's next steps in learning and use the information gained to inform the planning of activities
- develop planning, ensuring it covers the breadth of the Foundation Stage curriculum including the outdoor area
- improve partnership with parents by developing systems to assess children's starting points and for parents to contribute to their children's developmental records
- develop effective systems to regularly review, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the setting and the educational programme.

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