



# St Mary The Virgin Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY335272
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 January 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Carole Argles
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Mary The Virgin Primary School, Pheasant Way, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4LP
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<b>Registered person</b>	Governing Body of St Mary the Virgin CEVA 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 the Virgin Nursery which is part of St Mary the Virgin CE VA School, in Gillingham, Dorset, opened in September 2006. The nursery is run by the school's governing body and operates from a room within the school building. The children have use of many school facilities including the cloakrooms, outdoor areas, library and hall. The nursery is open between 09.15 and 15.15, during school term times. It is registered to care for 20 children aged between two and four years and usually accepts children who are aged over two and a half years. Children can attend all day, or for morning or afternoon sessions.

There are currently 51 children on roll of whom 36 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Four staff work with the children, of whom three hold an appropriate early years qualification and one is undertaking training.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

The children's good health is well supported by the effective action taken by the staff. The premises and equipment are clean and hygienic and there are rigorous procedures in place to minimise the risk of infection spreading between the children. For example, there is an appropriate policy of excluding any children who are ill or infectious. The staff wear a pouch containing items they may need to ensure good hygiene and this includes protective gloves, paper towels and tissues. The staff frequently wipe surfaces with antibacterial spray and implement sound nappy changing procedures. The children use paper towels and electric hand dryers and separate bedding is provided for any child who has a sleep. The children learn good hygiene routines and through discussion with staff learn why this is important to prevent them from becoming ill. They always wash their hands before they eat and after handling animals, for example, when they have been looking at their African snails. Suitable procedures are in place to support the children's first aid needs and staff are currently renewing their first aid certificates.

There is a healthy eating policy at the school and this extends to the lunches provided by the parents of the nursery children and wholesome meals are provided for the children. They receive additional healthy snacks provided by the school which always include fresh fruit or vegetables, as well as foods such as savoury crackers or breadsticks. The children drink cartons of milk or some choose to have water. Drinking water is always readily available and they serve themselves from jugs if they are thirsty. The children's dietary requirements are well respected by staff who keep clear details of their individual needs and allergies readily available for reference. There are many discussions between the children and staff to help them begin to think about how they can keep themselves fit and well and there are activities and visitors so that they learn about health issues such as dental care.

The children have daily opportunities for exercise either in the school hall or in the partially covered outdoor area that leads directly from their classroom. They use a variety of apparatus and equipment including wheeled toys and bats and balls. The children move with confidence and control. They enjoy the activities, for example, negotiating an obstacle course made of soft play equipment, crawling through tunnels and jumping with enthusiasm. They show an awareness of each other's personal space as they play parachute games or when they sit on the mat at with their peers at circle times. The children have boots and coats at the nursery and go outside to play regardless of weather, sometimes splashing in the puddles or watching objects blown by the wind. They go for walks in the large school grounds which gives them the opportunity to observe the natural world around them. These activities contribute effectively towards the children adopting a healthy and active lifestyle.

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

The provision is good.

The new school premises and the classroom provide a welcoming and friendly environment for the children and their parents. The room is bright and cheerfully decorated with many posters

and items of interest. The children's artwork and achievements are celebrated by being displayed on the walls. The staff ensure a range of activities are set out before the children arrive and this encourages them to part readily from their parents and to settle quickly. Many resources and toys are kept in low units so the children are able to see and select items independently. Space in the classroom is well planned, with areas dedicated to pretend play, number, creative art activities and reading. Additional play space is available throughout much of the session because the children have supervised access to the adjoining outdoor area and the reception classroom as well as their own room. This widens the play opportunities for the children and helps to create a smooth transition for those children who later attend the main school.

The children benefit from the extensive range of high quality toys and equipment which is available within the school. Folding beds and bedding are available for any child who requires a sleep during the nursery session. The children use other school facilities including the library and the hall which includes large play physical equipment. Sometimes the staff use toy libraries to borrow additional resources, for example, for a planned multicultural topic.

The risk of accidental injury to the children is minimised because the premises, equipment and furniture are safe and suitable for them to use. The staff carry out regular risk assessments and check the premises daily. The premises are kept secure. If a child sustains a minor injury, a further risk assessment is carried out and action taken to address any hazards. For example, some children helped look at why a child had bumped her head on the corner of a work surface. Protective corners were obtained and fitted and the children explained to the others what had happened and what they had done to reduce the likelihood of it happening again. This approach is both effective in reducing accidents and in helping the children learn how to keep themselves safe. The children are well supervised at all times and sleeping children checked regularly. There are effective procedures to ensure that children are only collected by authorised persons.

The school has robust policies in place to help safeguard children from harm or neglect and this includes the nursery provision. The staff regularly update their knowledge and understanding of these issues and have a clear understanding of the action they should take if they have any concerns about a child in their care. This contributes effectively towards keeping the children safe.

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

The provision is good.

The children are happy and settled and have established warm relationships with the staff who are genuinely concerned about their care and welfare. Each child and their parents are greeted individually as they arrive and most children come very readily into the nursery and settle quickly at self-chosen activities. They understand the routines of the day and know that there are times when they should sit quietly, for example, at circle and snack times. They are encouraged to act independently. They find and put on their coats before they go outside, and they peel their own satsumas at snack time. Staff plan and provide an interesting and varied curriculum for the children who show enjoyment and good concentration on the activities. Staff give consideration to the Birth to three matters framework when planning for the younger children and generally adapt activities well to provide appropriate challenges for the children and to enable all to take part. They work directly with the children and there is a very good level of

conversation between them. They ask the children about themselves and about what they are doing thus encouraging and supporting their communication skills. The children receive frequent praise and encouragement, promoting their self-esteem and giving the confidence to attempt new tasks.

The quality of the teaching and children's learning is good. The staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation stage curriculum. This allows them to plan a wide range of activities to support the children's development well across all areas of their learning. They frequently observe the children and assess what they can do. They have begun to record the children's progress towards the early learning goals and have recently introduced targets sheets to identifying the next step in each child's learning. The assessment information is used at the weekly planning meetings so that staff can adapt the short term plans to take account of the children's individual needs. Generally this is effective in helping the children make good progress. However, on occasions, some activities, for example, number problems, do not extend some more able children and move them forward in their learning. Where possible, the children's ideas are incorporated into the planning. For example, alongside the theme of 'people who help us', the children are also discussing their superheroes and why they admire them.

Effective use is made of time and the routine of the each session is a balance of adult-led small and large group activities, and times when the children choose from a range of activities set out for them. The staff work directly with the children giving them help when required but also allowing them time to play independently or in small groups with their peers if they wish. The classroom is well planned and resourced and is a stimulating environment. However, although the room is arranged so that the children can select activities and resources independently, they take few opportunities initiate their own play.

The children are interested in the activities provided and are motivated to learn. They are curious; for example, they eagerly look at a beetle found on the floor and they are keen to find out about the newly acquired snails. Most children are confident speakers, happily talking with others and readily offering their ideas at group discussion times. Many children use their imaginations well. For example, one child decides to make a bus using two lines of chairs; others join in his game and they talk together about what they are doing. The children enjoy group stories and listen attentively, sometimes making predictions about what might happen next. Many activities help children develop good hand-eye coordination. They complete puzzles, thread objects, pour water and use scissors and simple tools with playdough. There are many mark making activities and children were experimenting applying paint to paper using a variety of brushes and other objects, such as the wheels of toy cars. Some children showed sustained concentration drawing pictures with marker on whiteboards. As a result, many children are developing good hand-eye coordination and some children can form recognisable letters and their names.

The children sort, match and compare objects such as small coloured bears and are beginning to use comparative language to describe what they see. They are interested in numbers and many use them readily. They count along with staff to find out how many children present at registration time, and link the numeral on the base of a duck with the number of dots on its head. Staff make good use of spontaneous and practical situations to extend the children's learning. For example, they ask children to count the number of legs on the beetle they have

found; at snack time the helpers count how many children are sitting at the table and find the correct number of cartons of milk and satsumas for them.

There are many planned activities to help the children learn about the world around them and there are many opportunities to find out about their local and the wider community. They talk about nature and the changing weather. They find out how things work, for instance, talking with staff about stethoscopes and other equipment in the role play hospital, examining objects with a magnifying glass, and investigating how the jack-in-a-box works. The children use technology to support their learning and this includes electronic toys, taped music and stories. At times they have access to a computer and a digital camera. Planned activities support the children's physical development well. The children talk with staff about the effect and benefits of exercise on their bodies, and often have a relaxation time following exertion, lying quietly listening to music. The children enjoy singing and sometimes begin to sing spontaneously. For example, a child starts singing 'the wheels on the bus' song during his imaginative play. The children are well occupied and enjoy their time at the nursery.

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

The provision is good.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The children are helped to make an effective contribution to the life of the nursery class, school and the wider community. They benefit from working with older children in the school and are often included in their activities. There are visitors from the local community, such as police officers and dental nurses, who explain their roles to them. Local visits are planned, to the garden centre and fire station, to widen the children's experiences. There is a wide variety of resources in use which show positive images of diversity. This includes many photographs, books, small figures and other pretend play resources. Through discussions, activities and stories, the children begin to find out about different cultures and traditions. Recently this has included celebrating Diwali as well as Christmas. This contributes well to promoting an ethos of acceptance of differences in society.

The children are learning to show care and consideration for others. They discuss how it is important to look after animals and help to care for their giant snails. They are proud when they are made one of the day's special helpers and have the responsibility for choosing and serving the snack.

Generally the children's behaviour is good and they play cooperatively together, sharing fairly and taking turns. Staff are good role models for the children and treat them with kindness and courtesy, and they learn to follow this example. There are consistent age-appropriate boundaries for their behaviour and the children have contributed their ideas when drawing up the guidelines. The children begin to learn to manage their own behaviour as staff help them understand what is expected of them, for instance, explaining that they need to be quiet because others in the school are working at their lessons. Frequent praise, positive comments and sometimes receiving stickers when they are behaving well reinforces these messages about good behaviour and promotes the children's self-esteem. However, at times, for example, when the children are

together as a whole group, some display unwanted behaviour and the strategies used by the staff are not always fully effective in resolving the situation.

Effective communication is established between the staff and parents and this contributes well towards providing continuity in the children's care and ensuring that they are comfortable and settled. An effective key-worker system ensures that a member of staff know each child well and their individuality is respected and valued. Parents are encouraged to provide details about their child's likes, fears and personal circumstances so that their needs can be met. There are clear systems in place to identify and support children who have any additional needs, learning difficulties or disabilities. The nursery staff can call on the expertise of other school staff to give them support and advice. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals to ensure that children's needs are met and that they are well supported. Identified additional staff support is given to individual children where this is appropriate. The premises are designed to make them accessible to all.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and this supports the children's learning effectively. High priority is given to establishing a good two-way exchange of information with parents. This includes providing them with a detailed prospectus and access to information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. There are regular newsletters and notice boards which give them information about what the children will be learning. A white board is displayed showing details of the day's activities. This allows parents to talk with their children about what they have been doing and support their learning at home. Staff talk with the parents daily, keeping them informed of their child's progress and achievements. More formal opportunities for parents to see and discuss their child's developmental records are currently being arranged. The children benefit from their parents being encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and nursery, for example, by spending time in the sessions, attending social events, or by sharing any special knowledge or skills.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The children benefit from the good organisational skills of the head teacher and her staff. The nursery has been open for one term but already good team work has been established. The staff are enthusiastic and work well together. Daily briefings before the start of the session and effective planning ensure that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and consequently all runs smoothly for the children. Most staff hold an appropriate early years qualification and all are committed to their personal development and frequently undertake training. The children receive good levels of support and attention because a good ratio of staff to children is maintained and the staff are deployed effectively. There is a clear key-worker system in place and, at times through the session, the children work in a small group with their key person and they sit with her at meal times. This ensures that the children build a strong relationship with a consistent person and that their individual needs are well known to her so that they can be met.

The policies, procedures and records required to support the children's welfare and safety are in place. This includes robust recruitment procedures to ensure that only people who are suitable

to be with children have unsupervised access to them. Copies of many of the policy documents are given to parents so that they understand what is on offer for their child.

The leadership and management is good and this supports the children's learning effectively. The good practices operating in the school are being extended to the nursery. Procedures to monitor the staff's performance are in place, and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the nursery education are being established. The staff work closely with the school's Foundation Stage coordinator to ensure there is a consistent approach to learning for the children in these early years. There are clear lines of responsibility and the staff understand what is expected of them. They have allocated time to meet to plan the activities and to monitor the children's learning and progress. Effective systems to allow them to do this are being established.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration, 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 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 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):

- review the strategies the staff use to promote the children's good behaviour, giving particular attention to some large group situations.

#### **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):



- continue to establish the systems for monitoring the children's development to ensure that they are making good progress and to assist staff when planning the next steps in their 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)