

St Mary's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	251657
Inspection date	04 May 2007
Inspector	Deirdra Keating
Setting Address	Burkitt Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4JJ
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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 is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of the parents of children at the playgroup. It opened in 1979 and operates from one room in Horsa's Hut at St Mary's County Primary School in Woodbridge. The playgroup opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45. The playgroup is registered for a maximum of 24 children. There are currently 32 children from three to five years on roll, all of whom receive funding for early education.

The playgroup serves the local and surrounding area. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup employ seven part-time staff, of these six staff have recognised early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well as the setting follows careful and thorough procedures that are documented and shared with parents. An exclusion policy ensures children are protected from cross-infection and cared for appropriately should they become ill. Good information regarding illness and exclusion periods is shared with parents in order to best promote children's health. Positive steps are taken to encourage children to manage their own personal needs with support from staff. A bright and child-friendly bathroom with low-level sinks and brightly painted walls enables children to wash their hands and use the toilet independently. Children are protected well from accidents as a fully stocked first aid box is available and a current first aid certificate is held by three members of staff.

Positive steps are taken by all members of staff to ensure that the kitchen is maintained to a high standard. Several members of staff have undertaken food hygiene training. Healthy snacks are prepared in the kitchen by parent helpers. Clear written guidelines ensure that food is prepared carefully and properly using correct procedures. Individual dietary requirements are clearly recorded in written agreements from parents and respected. Allergies are recorded and staff have attended specific food allergy awareness training in order to cater for any individual needs that arise. Fresh drinking water is available throughout the session and ensures that children remain well hydrated. The children enjoy a relaxed and social snack time where food is attractively laid out to look appealing. Children gain good skills as they pour milk and offer fruit to one another. Staff sit with children role modelling good table manners and explaining the benefit of healthy and nutritious food. This reinforces children's understanding of healthy eating and provides a relaxed and pleasant snack time that the children clearly enjoy.

Children have access to fresh air at some point during every session. They exercise as they use a range of equipment such as the climbing frame, and ride-on toys. In colder months staff plan action songs and obstacle courses inside to ensure that children gain some exercise. Children enjoy a range of planned trips out including walks and picnics.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, welcoming environment that is safe and well maintained. Large colourful hand painted murals welcome children into the cloakroom area. The hall is bright and airy with creative use made of the space, giving defined areas in which the children can comfortably learn and play. Resources are laid out before the children arrive and look inviting and fun. Other equipment is stored well in colourful cupboards and labelled with words and pictures encouraging children's decision making and independence. A good range of equipment is available in order to provide children with a balance of varied activities. Toys are stimulating, fun and provide challenge. Children are clearly interested in what is on offer and are animated as they make choices about how to spend their time.

Staff are vigilant in their daily risk assessments and maintain equipment well through good procedures to ensure that hazards to children are minimised. Children are kept safe on regular outings with good adult to child ratios and forward planning. Written consents are obtained from parents for all outings. The premises are secure and arrival and collection times are managed safely and effectively with one member of staff operating the door. Regular fire drills that are

documented ensure that children know what to do in the event of a fire. Fire prevention equipment is all in place and checked regularly. Children are protected well from harm as staff have a good understanding of their role in safeguarding children. Relevant documentation is all readily available which ensures correct procedures can be put into place should a concern arise. Staff have good knowledge of safeguarding issues, this is underpinned by relevant training and ensures children's welfare is paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are interested to learn through a wide selection of stimulating resources that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. Sessions are fun and varied with a good balance of activities that help them progress in all areas of development. Children make choices and move between the good range of activities available, however there are not enough opportunities for children to be active. Younger children form warm and secure relationships with staff who are intuitive of their needs and encourage children to feel settled and secure.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff provide many opportunities for interesting and well planned activities using their good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Good effective use of time incorporates a balance of child-led and adult-led activities. The accommodation has been creatively adapted to provide a rich learning environment, however this has not been extended to the outside area. Staff all contribute to the comprehensive planning which clearly identifies learning intentions for children. Clear focused activity plans outline intentions and evaluate the children's learning during the activity. An effective key worker system enables staff to assess and monitor individual children's progress. Detailed information collected prior to admission enables staff to determine children's starting points and ensure they make good progress towards the early learning goals. Step by step records built on written observations show children's progress and provide a basis for assessment. Staff support children well during activities providing challenge with open-ended questions, and extending children's learning. Varied and interesting activities are planned to capture children's interest and meet different learning styles.

Children are motivated to learn through exciting and challenging activities which capture their interest. They are warmly welcomed into the colourful and child-friendly environment by caring staff. Named pegs give children a good sense of belonging and encourage them to feel at home. Staff encourage children to manage developmentally appropriate tasks for themselves which promotes their personal independence. During circle time staff go over the ground rules of the setting. Children clearly know the behavioural expectations and enthusiastically join in the group discussion. Children's behaviour is consistently good, they show care for each other and the environment as they tidy up together. Cultural days and traditional days are planned for and children are encouraged to respect the views and beliefs of others.

Children's language development is good; they take turns to speak and listen as they play an imaginary game recreating roles and experiences. They have good opportunities to learn new words through topics and discussion. Children learn to distinguish one sound from another as they post their names into a post box at circle time, where they come together as a group. The room has many labels encouraging children to know that text has a meaning. The room has a good range of mark making equipment in all areas which encourages children to develop their early writing skills. Children enjoy looking at books in the comfortable and inviting book corner

where staff are readily available to read stories. They have good opportunities to use language for thinking and speaking as they recall the stories they have shared and discuss the characters.

Children are making good progress in their mathematical development. They enjoy a broad range of colourful equipment and activities which enable them to learn about shape, space and weight. Children count regularly as part of their daily routine. They count each other at circle time and staff support with praise and encouragement. Children count puppies as they share stories with staff who encourage them to use simple addition that is relevant to their stage of development. Children have good opportunities to explore through messy play experiences such as play dough, bubble painting and hand painting. Wet and dry sand, water and soil gives children tactile and hands on experiences where they note contrast in textures. Children are beginning to learn about other countries and travel through well thought out topics and themes. They show an interest in the world in which they live as they enjoy learning about transport. They enthusiastically talk about trains as they assemble large floor puzzles and enjoy looking at maps of the world that are displayed on the wall. Children have opportunities to develop their IT skills well as they operate the mouse with skill and precision.

Children roll and manipulate dough with care, making specific shapes using careful and thoughtful movements. They enjoy a range of physical activities that help them develop their confidence and skills. Children use small stilts and balance skilfully as they carefully move around. They develop their climbing skills on a small climbing frame and move in a number of ways as they negotiate an indoor obstacle course. Children have many opportunities to be creative. They engage well in imaginary play where they have time to become engrossed in their camping expedition. Children use the easel freely as they paint using their own preferred style and method. They explore colour and texture as they paint using their hands.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The children in this setting are valued and have an excellent sense of belonging. Staff actively seek detailed information in a detailed profile to ensure they can best meet children's individual needs. All children are included as knowledgeable and experienced staff support and adapt activities extremely well to promote full inclusion. Children are able to make choices about how to spend their time, for example, a cosy book corner enables children to quietly look at books. Different sized groups encourage children to socialise and build relationships with each other. Children learn about other cultures and beliefs through exciting hands on experiences where they are encouraged to express their individual ideas. They celebrate many festivals including Chinese New Year, Holi and Hindu festivals. A broad range of resources such as posters, figures and games are used to reflect positive images of wider society and help children understand their differences and similarities.

The setting has an extremely positive approach to caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Knowledgeable staff have undertaken extensive training to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This enables them to meet individual needs extremely well complying with the required code of practice. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to best support children, working closely with parents and other professionals. Staff utilise support and additional resources very well in order to meet the needs of each child. Staff are extremely good role-models and model calm and polite behaviour. They use positive reinforcement and give good explanations about the need for rules. The staff reinforce the ground rules during circle time giving extremely good explanations and allowing children to discuss possible outcomes. Children are supported well in managing their own

disputes using excellent strategies such as a timer. Comprehensive policies and a written statement on behaviour underpin all aspects of practice. Behavioural incidents are noted and shared with parents at the end of the session. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents are warmly welcomed into a colourful hallway where there is a large and informative well kept notice board. This keeps them up to date on all aspects of the group's practice. New parents are welcomed in by extremely friendly staff where sessions are adapted to suit the needs of the children. A parent rota involves parents and enables them to see their children having fun during the sessions. Staff facilitate a parents' evening for parents and carers to look at children's records and discuss individual's progress. A written agreement states how the group encourage parent participation in their child's development through the Foundation Stage. Excellent practical guides give support to parents in order to best support children's early reading and writing skills. Newsletters detailing topics and learning intentions are regularly distributed. Parents are given comprehensive information regarding the Foundation Stage. Relevant contact numbers for Ofsted and management committee details are clearly displayed and policies are proactively shared. Detailed and informative written agreements provide details of children's needs in order that they can be looked after according to their parents' wishes. Parents speak very highly of the setting and are extremely happy with their children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for well by suitable adults who are motivated, dedicated and have had all the necessary checks to ensure children's safety. Good and effective policies that are shared well with parents are in place to support staff and ensure their well-being. Children are settled and secure as ratios are sufficiently maintained and the environment is organised and welcoming. Children's care, learning and play are supported well by the policies and procedures within the operational plan. All documents are in place to support the smooth running of the playgroup and these are regularly reviewed and stored securely. Staff are well qualified and work closely with the management committee to form a strong cohesive team.

The leadership and management is good. The aims of the setting are reflected in all aspects of practice. Job descriptions and an effective appraisal process ensure staff are all aware of their roles and responsibilities and training needs are identified. Staff files reflect the setting's commitment to ongoing training and ensures children are well cared for by qualified and knowledgeable staff. Regular meetings enable staff to review the effectiveness of the curriculum planning. This ensures that the quality of nursery education is monitored and adapted accordingly to meet the individual needs of the children. Staff work closely with an early years advisory teacher to ensure that teaching methods are effective and inclusive. Excellent links with the primary school reception teacher enables children to have a smooth transition into school. Overall the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to update the policies to reflect the good practice. This has been done and clear policies that are up to date underpin all aspects of practice.

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.

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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 that children have more opportunities to be physically active

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 that children are engaged in purposeful activity that reflects all six areas of learning whilst using the outside area.

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