

# St Marks Christian Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	305325
<b>Inspection date</b>	04 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Ron Goldsmith
<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Marks Church, St. Marks Road, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 8DE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244 675372
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St Marks Under 5's Playgroup Committee
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 Marks Playgroup has been registered to provide childcare since February 1974. The group is run by a committee of parents and the day to day running of the pre-school is the responsibility of the leader. It operates from the church hall of St Marks Christian Centre, situated in the Saltney-cum-Lache area of Chester where facilities include a large hall and a fully enclosed outdoor play area. It serves the local area. The provision operates from Monday to Friday term time only from 09.30 to 12.00 offering sessional care.

There are currently 31 children from two and a half to four years on roll, of whom, 17 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The provision currently supports children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as a second language. There are five members of staff, of whom, four hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The provision is satisfactory. Children learn about the importance of personal hygiene through consistent daily routines and they are developing suitable self care skills. Staff implement suitable hygiene procedures, to ensure the pre-school is a clean and healthy environment, such as cleaning table tops before snack. Children are well protected and receive effective treatment in the event of an accident because all staff are qualified in first aid. Accident records have sufficient detail and parents are asked to sign to acknowledge that they have been informed that medicine has been given to their children. Procedures are in place regarding the administration of medication and staff give medication in accordance with parents written instructions, obtaining their prior written consent to administering prescribed medication.

Children choose when they want snack and enjoy sitting with others to enjoy a varied range of snacks including fruit, sausages or crackers with a choice of water or juice. Children's special dietary requirements and allergies are discussed and recorded, so staff are aware of their individual needs and can respect them when providing snacks. Children enjoy vigorous, energetic physical activity, which contributes to their good health and physical development. They use the outside play area to enjoy the benefits of fresh air and exercise on a regular basis, riding bikes, chasing bubbles or throwing, catching and kicking balls and they have access to a suitable range of equipment, such as a climbing frame, slide and play tunnel.

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

The provision is good.

The premises are spacious, well decorated and provide good facilities for a range of activities indoors and out. Children are eager to enter the hall to play as the resources are organised in a way that creates a welcoming and stimulating environment. Children use a wide range of equipment and materials which they can access with ease and which support their learning and development but there are few positive images or resources which reflect the diversity of society.

Good procedures are followed for checking on the safety of the premises and equipment each day as staff carry out a risk assessment. Additional security measures, such as locks on the doors contribute to children's security and staff are particularly vigilant in children's supervision at arrival and departure times, ensuring people in the building are asked to sign the visitors book. Children learn to negotiate their way around each other and equipment in a safe manner and generally remember when it is not safe to run. They contribute to maintaining a safe environment by helping to tidy away after activities.

The staff assess risks well on the spot as they plan activities and they take good account of children's individual capabilities. There is a comprehensive health and safety document, which includes risk assessments to address all areas. Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding issues and understand procedures to follow should there be an allegation of abuse made against staff, which is reflected in policy documents.

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

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled at the playgroup because staff foster good communication with parents over children's welfare, a flexible settling in process and quickly establish secure and friendly relationships with the children. Children are eager to explore their environment and maintain good concentration on self chosen activities. They take part in a good range of activities throughout the session. They are gaining confidence as they build relationships with each other and the staff. Children are becoming more confident communicators as they initiate conversations and join in discussions at registration and circle time. They learn to share and take turns as they use puzzles, games and small world toys.

Young children are becoming competent learners as they play independently, in small groups or with staff. They enjoy using their imagination in role play by pretending to be pirates and putting on pirate costumes and boarding the pirate boat. They have great fun exploring and experimenting with dough. They roll out the dough, pushing and pulling to make it larger or roll the dough into balls to place in the saucepan to cook. All children develop their interest in books and stories as staff read with the children and encourage them to repeat familiar parts of the story. They delight in repeating familiar text within the story. This encourages children's imagination and develops their listening skills and concentration.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards all early learning goals given their different capabilities and starting points. Staff organise the learning environment very effectively with designated areas for different learning activities, all well resourced and accessible to children for making their own choices. There is a good balance of indoor activities, quiet and busy times, small and whole group activities, through a routine inspired by the High Scope methods of teaching. Children respond very positively to selecting what they do themselves and gaining good levels of independence. Staff plan activities partly along the lines of a theme and partly in response to children's interests so that children make connections in their learning and are motivated to take part.

Children's individual developmental check lists are clearly linked to the stepping stones and staff use this information to ensure that all the children are challenged appropriately. Staff use good observational and questioning techniques to encourage children to show what they know and understand, without interfering with children's concentration or involvement in what they are doing. Children are encouraged to describe what they have been doing or intend to do to in order to organise their thoughts. For example, as they take construction blocks and lay them in a straight line to form a balancing beam, on which they walk with control and a sense of achievement.

Children are given the freedom to experiment with materials under guidance rather than instruction and thus their creativity is fostered very well. Their use of different media and attempts at mark making reflect their own perception of shape colour and space. They are skilled in handling tools and equipment and in circle time they reflect on personal experiences.

Children are self motivated and develop enquiring minds through the many practical experiences they participate in. For example, they are enthusiastic and vocal as they create their own play dough, mixing the ingredients in a large bowl. Children delight in the effect the mixture has as they squeeze the dough through their fingers. Children practise counting as they hop on a

large number board on the ground number by number to ten, asking staff to join in. Children begin to understand simple calculation as they sing simple songs in which they count down the number of sausages left in the pan when one is removed or sing about five speckled frogs.

Staff record their observations to monitor what children are learning and use these to make assessments of progress at key points in the year. Staff are linking this to the next steps for individuals' development. This means children are making good progress and staff have high expectations for the achievements of individual children.

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

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate a sound awareness of equal opportunities and how to cater for children who have learning difficulties or disabilities. There is a very good staff to child ratio enabling staff to meet the children's needs more effectively. Children are very well supported in their chosen activities, enabling them to extend their learning and acquisition of skills. They are comforted if upset, helping them to feel valued. At the beginning of the session, children are warmly greeted by staff who are interested in what they have to say, thereby boosting their self-esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children have equal access to resources through their easy accessibility and staff ensure all have their fair share through teaching children how to give, take and develop negotiation skills. There is good communication with parents over meeting children's individual needs and acquiring support from other agencies, when it is identified that children have learning difficulties.

Children develop good social skills. They learn to work cooperatively on joint tasks, such as building a construction or making play dough. Children are well behaved and contribute to the cleanliness and safety of their environment by helping to tidy the toys and equipment away. Staff welcome children with learning difficulties and disabilities. They are aware of how to access support and guidance from relevant professionals. If staff have concerns about a child they monitor closely and work in partnership with parents to determine a correct course of action.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Very good relationships are fostered due to the staff having a number of year experience and knowledge of the community. Parents give very positive feedback about the way staff communicate with them about their child and make them feel welcome. The parents handbook is clearly written and includes a good outline of the playgroup's operational plan. Parents are informed that there are further policy documents and articles for them to read about the service, should they wish to do so.

Parents are involved in children's learning through going on trips out and bringing in resources. They attend regular sessions when they can see what the children are doing and be updated on the progress their children are making. There is, however, no structure for inviting parents to contribute towards children's records of progress.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Induction training, policies and procedures are in place to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. The playgroup maintains good continuity of provision within the community as senior staff members have worked at the setting for many years. There are effective systems

for checking on the suitability of new staff and students for children's protection. Most regulatory records are maintained but policy documents are not completely updated. For example, the lost/uncollected child policy has insufficient detail of the steps to be followed should a child not be collected. Not all of the information held is well organised or readily accessible. Whilst professional development helps meet identified needs within the staff group and supports improvements within the setting, staff training is not yet linked to appraisals.

Leadership and management are good. Staff have a thorough knowledge of the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage' and implement this in their practice. The key worker system works effectively both for the benefit of the children and communication with parents. Children engage in purposeful activities which are further enhanced by the staff's knowledge of child development and the developing needs of individual children, which contributes to their quality of care.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend.

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

At the last care inspection there were four recommendations raised that required the staff to conduct a risk assessment, improve documentation, record the hours of attendance for children and staff and keep Ofsted informed of any changes. There is now a comprehensive risk assessment process in place. This enables staff to minimise hazards. Documentation has been reviewed and updated with the exception of the incident record book which is carried forward from this inspection. The attendance of children and staff is recorded to ensure accurate details are maintained of who is on the premises. The setting has also ensured that any changes have been notified to Ofsted.

At the last nursery education inspection five key issues were raised that required the setting to improve the staff's knowledge and understanding of early learning goals, improve the emphasis given to literacy, develop practical opportunities for mathematics, the frequency of sharing assessments with parents and lastly, the opportunities for children to be independent at snack time and make choices about the resources they use. Staff have developed a good understanding of the learning outcomes for children in order to promote the continuity and progression of the children's learning. In the main the recommendation relating to literacy and mathematics has been met through routines and activities in which the children have opportunities to recognise and learn numbers, shapes and familiar words and letters. Assessments are shared with parents routinely throughout the year and a specific time is set aside to talk to parents about children's progress. Children are encouraged to have snack at a time of their own choosing and select resources and activities for themselves.

### **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 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):

- improve the range of resources that reflect positive images of diversity and plan their use

#### **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):

- develop systems for monitoring the strengths and weaknesses of the educational provision for the purposes of self evaluation and making improvements (also applies to care).

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)