

St Marys Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101569
Inspection date	10 September 2007
Inspector	Jenny Read
Setting Address	Cheltenham Road East, Churchdown, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL3 1HU
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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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Mary's Playgroup opened in 1986 and is run by a voluntary committee of parents and volunteers. The playgroup operates from one room in the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the grounds of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary school in Churchdown, situated on the outskirts of Gloucester. They share use of the room with an out of school club and other community groups. The playgroup share use of the school reception class outside play area and have use of the main school playing field for additional outside play. The playgroup serves the local area.

A maximum of 24 children from two to five years may attend at any one time. There are currently 30 children on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for nursery education. The play group is open each week day during school terms. Pre-school sessions operate on a Monday and Wednesday from 09.00 to 12.30 where children bring a packed lunch. Family sessions operate on a Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 09.00 to 12.00. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties and a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs four staff. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 2 and 3. One member of staff is working towards the City and Guilds Children's Care Learning and Development qualification. The playgroup is a member of Gloucester Parent and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children are nurtured and supported well, because staff implement the sick child policy generally well. However, children's health is at risk because regulatory procedures are not adhered to or in place. For example, there is no medication record in place, the accident record does not contain all the required information and the first aid box is not regularly checked. As a result, a number of contents are out of date and, therefore, not sterile or suitable to provide appropriate treatment for minor injuries.

Children benefit from a clean environment. They know hand-washing routines generally well because pictorial eye-level posters and sensitive reminders from staff helps reinforce children's awareness. For instance, they understand they need to wash their hands because germs will make them poorly. Children readily use the water bowl to rinse their hands following painting activities; although this is not sufficiently monitored by staff as, the floor becomes quite wet, creating a safety hazard for children. Staff wear gloves and use a changing mat on the toilet room floor to prevent cross contamination during nappy changing routines adequately.

Children enjoy a rolling snack bar with healthy, nutritious fruits, vegetables and breads to promote their healthy well-being and choices. Staff record useful information in the register about children's dietary needs, although systems for sharing dietary information with parent helpers who are preparing daily snacks are not secure. Children have a choice of milk or water at snack time to quench their thirst. They help themselves to cups and drinking water independently during pre-school sessions but there is no access during family sessions to ensure children are well hydrated.

Children enjoy daily physical activities to support and challenge their large and small muscle control most of the time. They confidently jump on the trampoline, for instance, 'I can jump really high' a child exclaims excitedly and use the climbing apparatus with control and good co-ordination. They enjoy organised games and assault courses and improve their balance as they walk along beams and boxes with control. Although, there is no discussion, warming up, or cooling down to help children gain awareness of the importance physical exercise has on their healthy well-being. Children have generally good opportunities to access tools and equipment; the more able children hold scissors correctly and use a variety of combs, pencils and paintbrushes confidently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children play in a secure environment where their security is given suitable priority. Daily risk assessments, effective collection procedures and a secure and closely monitored entrance effectively minimises hazards to the children. However, not all health and safety policies and records are in place or contain sufficient detail to inform the staff, parents and committee about the procedures to keep children safe. For example, the times of arrival and departure of

the children, staff and any visitors are not recorded in line with the requirements of registration to show clearly, who is on the premises at any one time in the event of a fire or child protection concern. There is no outings policy and the fire logbook does not inform staff of how the procedure went to make appropriate improvements.

The committee have a weak knowledge and understanding of the National Standards and insecure awareness of the playgroups policies and procedures to safeguard the children. As a result, robust systems to ensure children are cared for by suitable, cleared staff with relevant knowledge and skills are not in place.

Children gain generally good awareness of safety issues and learn how to keep themselves safe through practical experiences and clear and regular explanations about safe play. These include discussion about and monthly practise of the emergency escape plan. They are learning how to use the climbing apparatus safely and know to put their chairs under the table after use to prevent tripping. However, safe rules when washing their hands in the water bowl are not encouraged, resulting in the floor becoming wet and children slipping over.

Staff present the adequate space generally well. They decorate the walls with posters, notices and children's pictures to create a welcoming environment and provide areas for both quiet and active play. For instance, role-play, graphics, creative and computer areas, tabletop and floor play activities. Children move around the room confidently, freely choosing their activities. Although access to the shared outdoor play area is currently restricted, limiting children's outside play. Staff change activities throughout the session to provide different experiences and activities, such as, sand, water, play dough and large physical equipment for the children. However, due to the very compact space and no storage of toys and resources within the room, children have little opportunity to select resources for themselves and an area to talk privately and confidentially with parents or staff is not available.

Children are generally well protected from abuse or neglect because staff have experience and sound understanding of child protection issues. All staff have attended training and an adequate policy has recently been extended to ensure parents are sufficiently informed of the procedures staff follow to safeguard their children. However, the committee are unclear of their role to support the staff, parents and children sufficiently.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children experience a broad range of interesting and fun activities over the week that stimulate and encourage exploration of their senses. For example, experimenting with shaving foam, exploring bubbles in the water and investigating different forms of painting and printing. Although, the limited space compounds planning issues as children are not able to have sand, water, painting and malleable activities out every day. Staff have not received training on the Birth to three matters and, therefore, do not use the framework to assess children's individual development or use it to support and compliment existing planning.

Children are generally happy and content because staff are welcoming, sensitive and give them lots of cuddles and attention when necessary. They are forming good relationships with familiar staff and although some children need recognition and comfort, children that are more confident are beginning to seek out familiar friends to share experiences. This increases their sense of trust. Children are developing an understanding of being part of a bigger social group as they play together in the role-play, have a laugh as they excitedly name the characters on the jigsaw

puzzles and negotiate use of the resources when making patterns in the paint with large toothcombs, toothbrushes and a range of paintbrushes.

Children are gaining confidence and self-assurance through appropriate staff support and regular praise for co-operation and achievements. The freedom of daily choice from activities already set out by the staff allows the children to instigate their own play, although the opportunity to extend is restricted as they are unable to select additional resources.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is inadequate. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is hindered by a few significant weaknesses in teaching. For example, children are not effectively challenged because the planning does not link securely to the children's individual next steps and there is no differentiation to meet individual learning needs. Plans cover all areas of learning adequately but are not innovative, expansive or provide sufficient detail. As a result, there are some gaps in children's learning, for instance, linking sounds and letters, writing for a purpose, calculating, space and measure and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Observations of children's play are not completed routinely to successfully help guide the planning and children's assessments. Staff mark off most children's achievements each term however, there is no formalised system in place to show how and when achievements have been made and some assessments are not consistently up-dated to give a clear indication of individual progress. Subsequently, the gaps in children's learning are not monitored successfully and there are no next steps to help children build on what they already know and can do. As a result, staff are not secure in their knowledge of children's attainment against the stepping stones to challenge and support their learning purposefully.

Staff are responsible for key children, although this is only in relation to completing their assessment records. The grouping of children at key times, such as, story or circle times is not planned. As a result, extension for children that are more able is reduced. Staff present the activities well to enable some children to show increasing confidence in selecting and carrying out activities independently. For instance, providing wool, paper plates, different materials and all necessary tools in the centre of the table allows children to make decisions about what they use to make paper plate faces.

Children are beginning to manage developmentally appropriate tasks to promote their personal care needs. They are developing a strong sense of themselves as a member of the playgroup by wearing the playgroup logo tee shirt and joining in the pre-school prayer at lunchtime. They show care and concern for others, offering support during activities, for instance, 'shall I hold it for you so you can cut it?' a child asks while they draw and design pictures at the graphics table accessing and using scissors, rulers, Sellotape and glue sticks with growing control.

Children are confident communicators and readily share their ideas or talk about what they are doing, such as, 'this is my lorry, its big, lots of wheels', a child shares. Children enjoy looking at and sharing books. However, they are not making sufficient progress in elements of writing and there is no systematic development or understanding of letter sounds. There is little print in the environment and few children make an attempt or make marks to represent their name because staff have low expectations and do not encourage children to write their names on their pictures. Writing materials are not available in the role-play or construction areas to challenge children within their own initiated play.

Children use basic mathematical language spontaneously in their play. They are beginning to recognise numerals and number names through number games on the computer and through a broad range of group games, puzzles and resources. However, children are not consistently challenged to count for a purpose during daily routines, to calculate, such as, comparing how many boys, girls and adults are present each day, measure and problem solve. Children create patterns with coloured straws, Octons and pegboards but a number of children are unable to recognise and name basic shapes in the environment.

Children confidently use a range of everyday technology in their play, for example, using the mouse to negotiate programmes on the computer to support their learning. They are starting to understand about the passing of time as they begin to identify the day of the week, use sand timers to indicate a change in routine and observe how Papier Mache balloons change as they add more paper and let them dry. Children enjoy daily opportunities to investigate and join construction pieces together to build and balance, although access to recyclable materials is rare.

Staff supervise and sometimes join in children's play to help develop their interest in different media but they do not follow up children's ideas to actively encourage and develop their creativity. For example, children explore what happens to the paint when placing it directly onto the easel. Staff do not challenge children's thinking or show interest in their experiment placing paper directly over their creation. Children readily explore the properties of play dough, earth and clay carefully creating hedgehogs and growing plants in the reception class garden. Children enjoy singing familiar songs and use sufficient resources in the role-play to support their imagination. For example, dressing up to act out the Little Red Riding Hood story, use parcels and tills in the post office and create a puppet show with finger puppets.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual care needs are generally well met because staff liaise sufficiently with parents and identify and record useful information about any dietary or medical needs. The 'All about me' leaflet helps staff gain suitable information about the children's family, their likes, dislikes and interests to support their care. However, these are rarely completed to enable staff to use effectively. Staff provide an inclusive environment through their satisfactory knowledge and experience of the care of children who speak English as an additional language or with learning difficulties. The use of individual educational plans, close working with other agencies and learning a few words in a child's native language helps encourage children's sense of belonging.

Children attend regular church services and readily join in the pre-school and playgroup prayer. This helps children feel a strong sense of identity. Staff are helping nurture children's caring attitude, introducing the new children and asking the older children to help them during play. Children are becoming aware of the wider society through access to a few resources, which reflect positive images of other cultures and occasional planned festivals relevant to the backgrounds and cultures of the children attending. Regular visits to the library and joining in stories with the reception class children in the school helps children begin to feel a part of their local community. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Younger children benefit from a relaxed atmosphere where they are gaining self-assurance because staff are sensitive, positive and enthusiastic. Children respond well to frequent praise to value their achievements and promote their self-esteem. Children are not involved in helping

to devise the playgroups rules to give them ownership and a sound awareness of how to manage their own behaviour. However, the implementation of consistent strategies, such as, timers and clear explanations is resulting in children's generally good behaviour and co-operation.

Children benefit from a friendly relationship and occasional informal communication between their parent and the staff. Parents are generally happy, value the welcoming atmosphere, and feel confident to approach staff. Many parents enjoy supporting the group through parent helper duty, which enables them to feel involved in the playgroup and their child's care. They receive satisfactory information about the setting through the colourful welcome pack and notice board articles. However, a number of policies, procedures and information are out-of-date or do not reflect new legislation to accurately inform them.

The partnership with parents and carers is inadequate. Parents receive no information about the education provision and useful ways to encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning has not been devised. They receive no useful information about their children's achievements and progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Staff's weak knowledge about children's individual attainment means parents gain little worthwhile knowledge about their children's progress until they receive the transfer record at the end of their pre-school year. This hinders parents from being able to take an active part in supporting their children's learning at home and at the playgroup.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The Leadership and Management of the setting are inadequate. The committee has insecure knowledge of the National Standards and the requirements of registration because the operational plan is not complete or contain all the necessary records and information. Therefore, a number of regulatory procedures, such as, informing Ofsted of changes in staff and committee have been delayed. Robust recruitment and induction procedures are not in place and the monitoring of staff and committee members clearance checks are not complete. This is resulting in ineffective support for the staff and is not safeguarding the children's welfare sufficiently. The setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children's information is clear and sufficiently maintained. Staff store most confidential information securely, for example, each child has an individual sleeve kept in alphabetical order in a folder. Additional information is stored in named sections in a lockable filing cabinet to allow easy access. However, children's health and safety is compromised because not all the required records are in place, such as, medication and attendance records.

Staff are appropriately qualified, positive and work well as a team. They are very caring and supportive of the children and nurture their well-being appropriately. They are committed to the playgroup and the children and are keen to attend additional training. Systems for monitoring staff's training needs and their continuing suitability through yearly appraisals are currently being devised, as these have not been carried out for a number of years. Staff are eager to work more effectively with the committee to develop and implement an action plan to promote the efficient and safe management of the group.

The education provision has a number of weaknesses resulting in children making little progress from their individual starting points because there is ineffective monitoring and little awareness of the weaknesses within the nursery education. Consequently, there are a number of gaps in the planning, resources and several areas of learning. Staff organise the room generally well,

making good use of the limited space. For example, rotating activities throughout the session enables children to have different experiences. However, the storage of toys and resources is affecting children's ability to select items for themselves to promote their independent learning more effectively. Good links with the school and church enhances children's experiences and helps to prepare them for the transition to school.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last care inspection recommended, the provider improved good hygiene practices regarding hand washing and ensured all necessary policies were in place, regularly reviewed and reflected current legislation.

Children know hand washing routines generally well and use the hand washing bowl independently following creative activities. Staff actively encourage hand washing at appropriate times to promote hygiene practices. Not all the required policies are in place or contain all the required detail to effectively inform staff, parents and the committee to promote the health, safety and welfare of the children.

The last nursery education inspection recommended, the provider developed the planning to include all areas of learning, achievable learning intentions and ensured there was sufficient challenge for more able children. Although planning covers all areas of learning, they do not radiate from children's next steps because these are not in place. Therefore, planning is not effective to help children build on what they already know and can do and to provide sufficient challenge for the more able children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made that required Ofsted or the provider 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:

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve knowledge and understanding of the National Standards and requirements set out in regulations and set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of relevant matters at the appropriate time.

- extend the operational plan to ensure that all records, policies and procedures required for the efficient and safe management of the playgroup are in place, reflect current legislation and are well known and implemented.
- keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children.
- devise and implement robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures and extend the health and safety policies to include procedures to follow to safeguard children on outings.
- maintain an accurate daily record of the childrens, staffs and visitors times of arrival and departure.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop the information to parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum and children's on-going progress so that they may fully understand and contribute to their children's learning.
- improve systems for monitoring the quality of the nursery education provision and evaluating its impact.
- provide opportunities for children to plan and organise their play to ensure they are purposefully engaged and able to initiate and extend their ideas.
- improve the observation and assessment systems to ensure these link securely to the planning and children's next steps so that they are appropriately challenged and able to reach their full potential.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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