

St Mary's Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	206873
Inspection date	31 October 2007
Inspector	Tara Street
Setting Address	St Mary's School, Gladstone Street, Glossop, Derbyshire, SK13 8NB
Telephone number	01457 855412
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Registered person	Margaret Cockin
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 Pre-school Playgroup opened in 1985. It operates from premises within St. Mary's School situated in the centre of Glossop and it serves families from the local community. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday during term time from 08:45 to 11:45 and from Monday to Thursdays between 12:25 and 15:25. Children attend for a variety of sessions. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 17 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 10 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs three members of staff all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and hygiene is effectively protected and promoted. They are developing a clear awareness of their own personal hygiene as they follow daily routines and are encouraged by the staff to be independent. They know it is important to wash their hands before snack time, after toileting and messy activities. For example, children use wipes to clean their hands before snack and enthusiastically sing the 'This is the way we wash our hands' song. Their understanding of maintaining healthy practices is supported by the staff, who offer timely reminders and role model good practice which minimises the risk of cross-infection. The premises are clean and well maintained. Children are encouraged to help with daily tasks such as wiping table tops which helps to develop their understanding of hygiene. Children are appropriately cared for in an emergency as all staff hold first aid certificates and all relevant documentation is in place with regard to children's health and welfare. Accident records contain parental signatures ensuring they are fully informed of any injuries. Written permission for seeking treatment in an emergency also supports children's welfare. A clear sickness policy offers parents information about exclusion periods for children who are unwell, ensuring children are not placed at risk of infection and illness.

Children benefit from the opportunity to try a variety of foods at snack time. Each day they are offered a different snack, sometimes related to a time of year or topic being covered. They enjoy trying a variety of fresh fruits and savoury snacks such as sliced kiwi, melon, pita bread, fortune cookies and vegetable sticks. Children's awareness of healthy eating is effectively promoted as children have regular opportunities to help prepare and taste a range of different foods which they have grown from seed in their vegetable garden such as green beans, pumpkin and strawberries. Their individual dietary needs and requirements are well catered for as staff are pro-active in ensuring their needs are met. They record information from parents about children's dietary requirements and work with them to ensure diets are adhered to. Children sit in small family groups at snack time, making it a pleasant and social occasion. They are encouraged and supported to be independent at snack times as they confidently choose and pour their own drinks.

Children's physical development and learning about their bodies is strongly supported through an effective programme which promotes challenge and assists in maintaining their health and emotional well-being. Opportunities to play indoors and outdoors with equipment that develops their skills such as obstacle courses are provided both in planned and free-choice activities. They are well supported to experiment with equipment such as parachute games, stepping stones, bats and balls and trampoline activities. Children enthusiastically join in with group games such as pretending to be a train as they move around the play ground. Staff encourage children to be active and develops their understanding of how exercise helps to keep their bodies strong through discussion, planned activities and topics such as 'our bodies'. The indoor space, both within pre-school and the school hall, is used well to allow children opportunities to sing, dance, move to music to develop locomotion and balance skills. Staff make good use of the local area to take children on walks to see the local wildlife which helps to raise their awareness of the local surroundings and providing them with the opportunity to explore their environment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from warm and welcoming premises where the rooms are decorated attractively to stimulate their learning. They have access to a good range of appropriate toys and resources that meet their developmental needs, are clean and safe to use. Daily activities are suitably organised to enable children to make individual choices about their play. Children's sense of belonging is promoted as they are encouraged to hang up their coats and bags on the pegs provided and use name cards to self register at the start of the session and at snack time.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Children experience effective levels of supervision and appropriate safety equipment is in place to ensure hazards are reduced. Staff are well deployed within the setting. Security, particularly as children arrive and depart, is carefully maintained. Children are constantly under the staff's supervision. Thorough risk assessments are completed daily through staff checking toys and equipment and recording any action they have taken. A clear policy and procedure is in place and understood by all staff in the event of any children being lost or uncollected and all necessary permissions are in place for regular outings. However, staff do not have immediate access to relevant documentation in the event of an emergency, potentially impacting on children's safety on outings. The children are developing a good awareness of what to do in an emergency as they practise the evacuation procedure with staff on a regular basis.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities with regard to child protection procedures and have undertaken appropriate training. They are fully aware of possible signs and symptoms of children who may be at risk and of their responsibility to ensure the designated person is informed of any concerns. There is a clear child protection statement which is made available to parents. However, the policy does not fully reflect the changes to the local authority procedures from April 2006 with regard to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled within the environment. They have a warm, secure and caring relationship with the staff. The children are confident and keen to access the wide range of play activities on offer such as construction, painting, sand tray, puzzles and collage activities. The setting clearly incorporates the 'Birth to three matters' framework within their planning and as a result staff have a good understanding of what younger children are expected to learn through their play. Regular assessments of children's progress are carried out and future learning identified, although not regularly carried through to their individual development records. Children freely move from one area to another and are spontaneous in their play and interactions with other children and adults. They enthusiastically play together in the Halloween tent, turning the lights on and off and trying a variety of masks, gloves and glasses on. They proudly show their chosen costumes to others, saying 'It's an orange pumpkin' and 'look at my scary bony fingers!'. Staff participate in children's play and learning and their comments are listened to and valued. They encourage children to be confident, independent and develop their self-esteem. For example, a small group of children confidently set up the wooden train set and inform staff that they do not need any help. Staff generally use positive questioning and provide many opportunities for the children to express themselves. They actively promote learning well through encouraging the children to participate and support them when required. For example, while listening to a story they are encouraged to follow the actions such as curl

up small, stretch up tall and touch their toes because staff demonstrate the actions themselves. Good opportunities are provided for children to relax and have quiet times. There is a well presented and comfortable story corner for children to sit and look at books independently and listen to stories. Children enjoy stories read by enthusiastic staff who make them fun for children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and ensure that all areas of learning are covered over a period of time. Staff know which aspect of learning the activities are related to and record children's achievements on an ongoing basis. Detailed planning is in place, which focuses on learning through play and ensures the children are purposefully occupied. All staff are involved in assessing children's progress and share this information with the appropriate key worker. Regular assessments record children's achievements and staff use this information well to identify their next steps in learning. However, children's individual development records are not regularly updated with this information, potentially impacting on children's progress through the stepping stones. Staff regularly talk to the children and engage in their play and learning. However, their knowledge and understanding of how to promote children's individual choices and appropriate questioning techniques to extend children's learning is not always consistent during structured activities and group story time.

Children are very responsive and are able to reason, readily question and have a positive approach to new experiences. They are enjoying a range of resources and equipment to develop their interests and play well alongside each other. They are confident and eagerly get involved in the activities on offer. Children concentrate well at individual activities such as making Halloween witch pictures and within group activities. They behave very well throughout the session, showing a caring attitude towards others as they invite them to join in with their play. For example, when a child wishes to join in with the wooden train set other children pass them a selection of track to help build the train track. Most children are confident to speak in small groups and use language to express themselves. For example, children confidently take turns to stand up at group time and say what they have come dressed as to the Halloween party, enthusiastically making scary noises to scare the staff. Children are beginning to recognise their name through the name labels as they self register in the morning and at snack time. They are developing their mark making skills through a range of resources which they have independent access to. For example, children confidently use stencils to draw around and develop their pencil control and hand eye co-ordination skills. Children's writing and letter recognition are further developed as the setting has started to use the 'Jolly phonics' system, in conjunction with the school, and they are supported to write their name on any work they produce.

Children use mathematical language during play and often practise their counting skills. They sing songs to count on and back and hold up the correct number of fingers accordingly. Children develop an understanding of positional language such as in front of and behind or over and under. They learn about time as they take turns to position the hands of the clock to show the time of day. For example at snack time they discuss the little hand on the two and the long hand on the six to show half past two. Children compare, sort and match using a variety of resources such as bobbins, empty bottles and number lines. Staff have a good knowledge of each child's stage of development and adapt activities to ensure they are appropriately challenged. For example, children are asked to count up to five or twenty depending on their level of understanding. They enjoy counting with staff and eagerly participate in games where

extra objects are added or removed to develop their understanding of addition and subtraction. Children are beginning to develop a sense of the wider world as they examine a range of objects and materials. They explore their senses and a variety of materials in their sensory garden. Children listen to the sounds their feet make in the gravel and bark, listen to the wind in the wind chimes, look at the insects in their mini beast garden and experiment with water in the play waterfall. Children are developing an understanding and sense of place through outings in the community such as local allotments and post office, and are learning about growing and caring for plants and vegetables in their garden. Their technology skills are enhanced as they have a good range of opportunities to use computer programmes, calculators, and battery operated toys.

Children's physical development is strongly promoted through a balanced programme of activities. Children's fine manipulative skills are enhanced with the use of small resources such as using scissors during craft activities. As well as planned outdoor activities, free play sessions provide opportunities to run freely, balance on stepping stones, catch, throw and kick balls. Children are fully supported to develop their potential and activities are adapted to ensure all can participate and experience success. Children use their imagination and creative skills through a variety of activities. They enjoy playing with dough, which they cut, roll and make shapes using a variety of tools. Children confidently name colours and shapes when painting and drawing and use a range of materials to express their ideas such as chalks and sand. They enjoy a good range of music and singing encouraged by the variety of music available including CDs and cultural instruments which they freely express themselves with and enjoy choosing their own songs at group time. Their imagination is further promoted as they use the role play area, which is changed regularly to offer stimulation. Staff support ensures children understand how to use this area and the varied range of resources available.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are treated with equal concern and staff value their individuality, responding in a positive way to their individual needs. Children's self-esteem and confidence are raised as staff talk to them in a positive way and use clear explanation. Children's work is attractively displayed, giving them a sense of belonging. Their knowledge and understanding of the wider world is developing well. They engage in topics which promote various worldwide celebrations. For example, children enjoy participating in creating mobiles for Eid and making candles and rangoli designs during Diwali. They have daily access to resources such as books, dressing up clothes and small world toys, which promote positive images of diversity. Increased support is available for children with specific needs and staff work effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure the child's needs are met appropriately. They are very effective in assessing individual needs and successfully adapt activities to offer suitable levels of challenge without identifying children.

Children learn right from wrong and show concern for others through the use of effective strategies. Staff regularly praise and encourage children to behave well. For example, children are told 'that is very good sitting and listening' and are reminded to use 'walking feet' when indoors. Children are learning effective strategies to manage their own behaviour such as being reminded about pre-school rules. Children remind each other that it is tidy up time and staff refer to the rules when talking to children about inappropriate behaviour. They are encouraged to share at all times and disputes are dealt with sensitively such as using distraction and explaining how their actions may cause upset to others. Children learn to work co-operatively during group games and often spontaneously tidy-up during play. For example, while playing

with Halloween masks children pick up play spiders from the floor and put them back on the table. A thorough behaviour management policy is in place and is shared with parents to ensure the care offered is appropriate. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's ongoing care needs are well met. All parents and carers receive detailed information about the services provided and how their child will be cared for. They receive a range of information leaflets and have access to a portfolio of policies and procedures. Settling-in periods are offered to all new children and the staff work closely with the parents to ensure these settling-in times are individual to them and their children. Parents receive regular letters about any upcoming events, topics or changes to pre-school practices such as invitations to outings and parents events. The ongoing sharing of information ensures continuity of care and gives parents a clear picture of the opportunities for children to learn and develop. A clear complaints procedure is in place, which is effectively shared with parents. However, the setting's policy is not up to date with the regulator's correct contact details. Parents and carers are very happy with and value the friendly relationship they have with the staff and feel welcome and supported in the setting.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Newsletters and notice boards provide information for parents regarding the Foundation Stage, detailing current topics and themes. Parents are appropriately informed about what children are expected to learn through daily discussions with their children's key worker and a detailed end of year report outlines their achievements within the early learning goals. Key workers work closely with parents to discuss children's progress and agree strategies to assist them to develop further. This promotes the continuity of children's learning and encourages them to continue some learning activities at home. Parents are actively encouraged to participate in their child's learning. For example, parents fill in a 'liaison book', which explains each child's individual learning target for the term and contains activities for parents to complete with their children. Parents are also invited to participate in the 'story sack library', which children very much enjoy taking home and sharing the stories and activities with their families. Preparation for school activities and gaining parental permission to pass on children's development files aid children's transfer to full-time education.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Space is used well and children are happy, relaxed and settled within the setting. They have sufficient space to move around in comfort and safety. Staff are well deployed and supervise all the children appropriately. There is a sound recruitment policy in place which ensures all staff who are employed are vetted for their suitability and undergo a clear induction process. Annual appraisals are held for each staff member, which enables them and the management to highlight their skills and to discuss any further training they may benefit from. This ensures their knowledge and understanding of childcare practice is kept up to date and their skills and interests are developed further. Staff have a good awareness and understanding of the setting's policies and follow procedures to ensure consistency of care for all children. All relevant documentation is generally well maintained and most policies and procedures are up to date with current guidelines.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The manager is pro-active in acknowledging areas for improvement to nursery education and is working closely with staff to ensure they continue to develop these areas. For example, the manager is working hard to

build strong links with the school to enable regular visits to take place such as joining the reception class for outside play time, snack and story sessions, which helps prepare the children for the transfer to school. All members of staff are included in the planning process and they work well to ensure activities and experiences are positive for children and offer appropriate levels of challenge and support. Regular meetings allow management and staff to discuss their ideas and suggestions to ensure consistency of care and practice is maintained. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care and nursery inspection the setting agreed to; provide more opportunities for children to freely access a choice of creative materials so they may create artwork independently and to provide training for staff to enhance their knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs to enable these to be incorporated into the planned curriculum. Since the inspection staff have developed the planning of creative activities to allow children a wider range of free choice activities throughout each session, as a result children have regular opportunities to design, be creative and develop their imagination in a spontaneous and fun way. Staff have attended appropriate diversity awareness training and have worked hard to develop a wide range of resources. They have incorporated a good variety of world wide festivals and celebrations within their planning, which effectively stimulates children's interest and learning about the world around them.

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 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):

- ensure children's safety on outings by having immediate access to relevant documentation in the event of an emergency
- review the policies and procedures to ensure they meet the current guidance and contain the regulator's correct contact details

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 develop staff's knowledge and understanding of how to consistently promote children's individual choices and use appropriate questioning techniques to extend children's learning (also applies to care)
- ensure children's individual assessment records are regularly updated with their progress and identified next steps in learning (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