

St Marks & Hesters Way Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101605
Inspection date	04 October 2007
Inspector	Ruth Tharme
Setting Address	Community Centre, Brooklyn Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 8DZ
Telephone number	01242 690025
E-mail	
Registered person	St Marks & Hesters Way Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Marks and Hesters Way Playgroup first opened in 1961 and is situated in a community centre to the north of Cheltenham town centre. The group is managed by a committee of parents who also help on a rota basis within the group.

The group serves the local community and is open from Monday to Friday, 09.30 to 15.30 during the school term. The group is registered for 30 children and accepts those from two-years-five months to five years of age. They currently care for 17 children, seven of whom are in receipt of funding for nursery education.

Children use one room of the centre as the main playroom and also have the use of the hall and two other rooms. They have a secure outdoor play area.

All staff have first aid and child protection training. The leader, deputy and 50 per cent of the other staff hold relevant qualifications in childcare. The playgroup are working towards the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership quality assurance award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's good health is generally well promoted. They have daily access to fresh air and exercise as good use is made of outdoor areas which are accessed freely from the play room. They implement hand-washing routines before meals and after using the toilet, but children make use of the same part of a roller towel to dry their hands, which means there is an opportunity for cross infection. Staff are vigilant about clearing up mess or spills promptly which helps to provide a generally hygienic environment for the children. But, at rest time, children use pillows which do not have covers and are not washed between use which means that they are at risk of infection. Documentation is suitably organised so clear records are kept when children have accidents or need medication.

Children help themselves to readily available bottles of water, so they are able to get a drink whenever they need to. They enjoy eating fruit at snack times, but healthy eating is not well promoted at lunch times which means that some children do not receive a well-balanced midday meal.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy the generally warm and welcoming environment. The main play room is brightly decorated and there are a few examples of children's work on display. Children mostly have ample space to play as the use of space is reasonably well planned. However, the organisation of the sleep area means that it is sometimes difficult for children to rest undisturbed.

Children have access to a solid range of resources and equipment. Staff make sure toys are well maintained and suitable for children to use. Toys and activities are presented on low-level tables and storage units, which means that children can access them for themselves.

Children are appropriately supervised as staff are carefully deployed throughout the setting. A basic risk-assessment programme helps to identify and address any possible danger to children. Care is taken over security so children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and unauthorised visitors cannot gain access.

Staff are familiar with the possible indicators of abuse which means that they are able to identify a child who may be at risk. They have up-to-date information readily available so they know what action to take to protect such a child, should the need arise. The policy statement has not been updated, which means that it does not reflect current practice, so parents and staff do not have access to clear information about the procedures that will be applied if concerns are raised about a child's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are engaged in a sound range of activities throughout the session. They enjoy a variety of play experiences both in and out of doors, including baking, gardening and outings to a nearby park. Children's interests are taken into account as practitioners notice what children say and do, often amending short-term plans to accommodate and build on specific interests.

But, as the observation and assessment of children's progress is not yet used as the starting point for future planning, activities do not always fulfil children's needs and challenge them appropriately.

Children make decisions for themselves, making choices from a balance of free-play and adult directed activities. They enjoy play involving cornflower, shaving foam and jelly, which provides opportunities for exploration and investigation.

Children are generally well supported by their key workers, who know them well and successfully provide reassurance. But the youngest children often have their nappies changed by other practitioners which means that they do not always benefit from consistency of contact with their key worker.

Funded Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making sound progress in their learning and achievements.

Staff have a sound knowledge of the stepping stones. They provide a range of activities and experiences which cover all areas of learning and generally meet the needs of the children. However, staff do not use their knowledge of individuals as a firm starting point for future planning, but instead focus on ensuring that all stepping stones are covered over time. This means that activities and experiences are not yet sufficiently well organised to consistently recognise individual needs and promote children's progress.

The use of time is generally well considered. Practitioners ensure that children have sufficient time to complete their work, giving a five-minute warning before it is time to tidy up. Activities are suitably resourced, allowing all children to take part fully.

Key workers take time to observe and assess children's progress, using the information gained to establish what children have achieved, and to inform parents and other settings of their progress.

Children are generally settled in the setting, showing increasing levels of independence, and forming some secure relationships. They respond positively to simple instructions, and children are beginning to listen carefully at story time. They use one-handed tools correctly, with some children beginning to make marks on their work to represent their names. They show some interest in numbers and counting and are able to map and compare their height, making chalk marks on the garden fence. Children show interest and curiosity as they explore and investigate a variety of media, and enjoy making use of a wide range of resources to create for their own purpose. They move their bodies spontaneously to music and rhythm, and generally judge their body space effectively.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have their individual needs taken into account as practitioners seek specific information and advice from parents and take positive steps, such as providing left-handed scissors, to generally meet needs appropriately. Children develop an awareness and understanding of others as they make use of a small range of multi-cultural resources and books. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are suitably supported as staff work alongside parents and other professionals to provide a consistent approach and appropriate care.

Children generally behave well as practitioners value and encourage good behaviour, rewarding children with stickers.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are provided with some clear information about the setting, such as a handbook and newsletters. They spend time at the group as they take part on a duty rota, and receive an end-of-year report so they are provided with some information about their child's progress. Some care is taken to ensure that care is provided in accordance with parent's wishes. The setting seeks prior written consent for activities, such as outings, the taking of photographs and the recording of observations. Staff are not sufficiently aware of legislation regarding the recording and sharing of information about complaints which means that should a concern be raised, parents do not have access to relevant information.

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

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Employment and vetting procedures are generally appropriate to ensure that children are cared for by suitable adults. Induction and training arrangements mean that staff members are suitably qualified for their roles. Staff are generally well deployed, and suitable ratios are maintained throughout so children receive appropriate levels of adult support.

Resources are generally well organised, but practice occasionally results in children's good health being promoted less effectively. The daily register is kept up-to-date so an accurate record is maintained of children's attendance, but not all documentation reflects current practice or provides parents with relevant information. Records are stored securely so children's confidentiality is maintained. Parents are routinely asked to sign entries in records to acknowledge that information has been shared.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. Practitioners are given clear information about their roles and responsibilities. They meet regularly with committee members to discuss any issues arising. The group demonstrates a sound commitment to ongoing improvement, having completed a quality assurance scheme in recent years. They seek advice and support through the Local Authority, and the Playgroup and Toddler Association. There are some basic arrangements in place for self evaluation, but areas for improvement are not currently identified or addressed, which limits opportunity for future progress. There are some basic links developing with other local providers and schools, which promote children's smooth transition between settings.

The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were several recommendations and key issues raised. Since then, the setting has made some sound progress in addressing these issues. They have ensured that children are only given foods that meet individual needs by making sure that parents are aware of any ingredients used in activities. Children's free-play opportunities for construction have been improved as recyclable materials are now generally available for them to access for themselves. A basic system of observation and assessment has been implemented so children's progress is tracked against the stepping stones. However, written plans are based on ensuring

that all stepping stones are covered over time, rather than on children's individual needs which means that challenges are not always appropriate for all children.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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 hygiene standards are maintained at all times, particularly when children dry their hands or use bedding at rest time
- take positive steps to promote children's knowledge and understanding of healthy eating and ensure that midday meals are balanced
- review and up date the child protection statement to ensure that it reflects current practice
- use observations and knowledge of the children as a firm basis for future planning so children's individual needs are recognised and their progress is promoted
- develop knowledge and understanding of legislation regarding the recording of complaints and sharing of relevant information with parents

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):

- use observations and knowledge of the children as a firm basis for future planning so children's individual needs are recognise and their progress is promoted
- devise and implement strategies to review practice which identify and address areas for improvement

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