

St Mary's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY290992
Inspection date	05 February 2008
Inspector	Emily Alderson / Moira Oliver
Setting Address	St Johns Hall, St Johns Way, Corringham, Essex, SS17 7LJ
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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 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. Mary's Pre-School is a privately owned pre-school that opened in 2004. It operates from one room in a hall attached to St. John's church in Corringham. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The pre school is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays 09.00 to 14.30 and on Wednesday and Thursdays from 09.00 to 11.30 term time only. All the children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 63 children aged two years nine months to five years on roll. Of these, 50 children receive funding for early education. Children mainly come from the local community.

The pre-school employs seven member of staff. Of these, five including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and two members of staff are currently working towards higher level qualification in early years.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy because practitioners follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. For example, the kitchen is clean and hygienic and tables are cleaned before snack and lunch times. Details of children's health or any medical conditions are recorded after discussions with the parents, enabling staff to care for the children appropriately. Parents are aware of the group's policies on exclusion times relating to childhood ailments, reducing the possibility of cross-infection.

Suitable action is taken when children are unwell or have accidents. For example, parental contact numbers are available to enable staff to contact them at any time. The first aid box is well stocked supporting staff to deal with accidents and emergencies effectively. However, at the time of inspection there are no staff with up to date first aid certificates. Consequently they do not have up to date knowledge of first aid which potentially puts children at risk in a medical emergency.

Children understand simple good health and hygiene practices as they routinely wash their hands before snack and lunch times. Children access a portable sink unit in the main room. However, the sink is filled prior to use and the children all wash in the same water, potentially putting their health at risk.

Children are nourished with a variety of healthy foods at snack time. They enjoy fresh or dried fruit and often link the snack with festivals. For example, children help to prepare pancakes by spreading them with jam. Staff work closely with the parents consulting them about the snacks that are provided. A daily snack menu is displayed and staff encourage parents to provide healthy lunch boxes. Individual children's needs are discussed and recorded to ensure their dietary needs are met.

Children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the session from a dispenser which they can operate independently. However, drinks are not provided during snack and lunch times and the system relies on children remembering to access the drinks when snack or lunch has finished. Children who are keen to resume their play could potentially be dehydrated.

Children's physical play experiences are promoted indoors as children are able to use the large hall to participate in physical exercise. Staff provide the children with activities to encourage children to exercise such as music and movement. Although children regularly exercise they do not regularly access the outdoors as staff only take the children into the garden during the spring and summer months. Staff do not plan activities for the outdoor area and consequently children are not experiencing fresh air or the opportunity to play and learn outside. Children are using their bodies in a number of ways and demonstrate their physical skills as they carefully balance a pancake on a spoon running alongside each other having a race. Children are able to use a number of resources including a climbing frame, hoops and balls and enjoy throwing and catching. They have space to move around in the hall and enjoy music joining in with the actions controlling their movements as they bend down and jump up. The children negotiate the space around them as they are careful not to bang into one another when dancing or playing games. They have an awareness of their body and health and demonstrate this by independently getting tissues and disposing of them in the bin provided. Children's hand and eye coordination is developing through the use of scissors, puzzles and threading beads.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. The premises are checked before the children arrive to ensure they are free from hazards. Arrival and departure times are monitored effectively, parents and children are welcomed at the door as parents record their child's arrival time. The main door to the premises is locked as soon as the children have arrived ensuring children do not leave unsupervised. Parents use a door bell to alert staff if they arrive late or early to collect their child, ensuring unauthorised people do not have access, keeping the children safe.

The kitchen is out of bounds to the children, however, the bolt used to secure the door is not effective and the door can easily be opened, which potentially compromises the children's safety.

Children use safe and appropriate toys and equipment which are checked when they are set out and put away. Any broken items are repaired or removed ensuring they do not pose a hazard. Clearly defined procedures are in place for emergency evacuation of the building and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Regular practises take place at the beginning of every term including all staff and children so any problems can be identified and addressed.

Children are cared for by adults who are vetted and have relevant qualifications and experience. They are protected because staff understand their role in child protection and those that have received training are confident to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children develop confidence and self esteem as they choose their activities from the range set out. They are able to select extra items from a storage unit in the role play area and items such as glue sticks, collage, paper, pens and paints from boxes in the middle of the creative table. They confidently volunteer to sing their chosen song in front of the whole group at singing time.

Children show interest in the activities provided as they make monster faces in the dough and play the percussion instruments along to music. They ask each other and the adults questions, requesting help to dress-up and to find out what adults are writing. Children use their initiative as they play a guessing game with each other encouraging others to guess what they are drawing.

Although children under three enjoy the activities provided, they would benefit further from the implementation of a framework for planning for this age group such as 'Birth to three matters'.

The Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some staff have an understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. The setting plans a balanced programme of activities for the children incorporating all areas of learning. Parents provide the staff with information about their child's starting points through completing a questionnaire which gives staff information about the child's interests and activities they enjoy amongst other information. In addition staff complete an initial observation on new children to learn more about the child so

that they can use the information as a basis to plan for their individual needs. The setting use long term plans which identify the weekly themes for the year. The weekly plan incorporates a daily adult-led activity and the continuous play provision. Staff observe children to see which resources they enjoy and anything they particularly like is provided the following day. The short term plan allows staff to write in further detail about the activity. It identifies the aim of the activity linked to a stepping stone, questions to ask, differentiation, extensions of the activity and an evaluation. However, the sheet is not consistently completed and the links to the stepping stones are not clear, consequently staff are unsure of the purpose of the activity. Staff carry out observations throughout the session writing them on stickers so that they are easily transferred into the children's individual records. The observations are used at team meetings for staff to discuss their key group children and their learning needs so that opportunities can be planned for the following week. Children's records are completed by ticking the stepping stones they have achieved, staff occasionally write a note of how they achieved it. Some staff use their records to identify any gaps in the child's learning, this information allows them to provide opportunities and activities for the child's individual needs. Activities are not consistently evaluated and therefore it is unclear whether the child has achieved the aim of the activity or whether the activity was successful. Consequently children's learning is compromised as the evaluations of past activities are not used to inform future planning. Staff set up the room with lots of resources for the children to choose from and deploy themselves so that they can offer the children support in their activities. Staff sit with the children joining in with their activities they use some open ended questions to encourage the children to think about their responses. However, sometimes staff are very rigid in their approach to teaching and control children's games rather than allowing them to explore them for themselves with particular reference to adult-led activities.

Children are confident and some are able to concentrate on an activity for quite some time for example, they patiently wait their turn to spread jam on a pancake. Children increase their self-esteem by making choices about their preferred activity selecting where they want to play and resources of interest. Children are aware of the routines and when they finish a picture or a model they take it over to their bag and place it on top ready to go home. The children have clearly built evident relationships with the staff and their peers often playing in small groups. Children happily talk to each other confidently using words to communicate. They have conversations between themselves as they discuss activities they are involved in for example, one child tells the other during their pancake race 'hold your spoon carefully then run, I win'. Children are able to phonetically sound out their names and recognise it when it is written. One child explains 'you need a big a at the beginning then another little one in the middle'. Staff read lots of stories to children and children independently access the books. They enjoy mark-making and ascribe meanings to their marks. Lots of children draw a line in the corner of their paper before drawing a picture and tell staff it says their name.

Children's mathematical skills are developing as they confidently count during daily activities such as registration or snack. Children count numbers in the correct order with some children accurately counting to 24. Staff ask the children how to make the number 24 and the children are able to answer a number two and a four. Children are learning about calculation and are able to recognise if a number is missing when shown the numbers one to 10. They are freely using mathematical language during their play often referring to things that are big or small, long and short and quick and slow. Children identify different shapes in every day objects with one child looking at his sandwiches saying, 'it looks like a square', after eating a few mouthfuls he holds it up in and says 'I have made a diamond now'. Children enjoy exploring the texture of playdough using their fingers to pull, prod and knead it. They use their rollers to flatten it then roll it into a ball. Children enjoy designing and making things using a variety of junk

modelling resources to make different objects. Children are aware of time as they talk about past events such as their birthdays. Children know different colours and refer to them when requesting objects. There are opportunities for children to be creative and use their imaginations for example, in the role play area. Children enjoy dressing up in different costumes pretending to be different people such as police and firemen. Children make links between real and imaginary things for example, during a discussion about how to make pancakes a child makes a pancake out of playdough the member of staff tells him the ingredients of pancakes and that it has to be cooked before he can eat it. The child takes his pancake over to the role play area and puts it on the oven he turns the switch and waits for it to be cooked.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a happy and caring environment where staff welcome them and help them to settle. They get to know them through discussions with parents, news books and observations. They are developing a system for each child to have their own special day where they have opportunities to talk to others about their interests. Sheets will be provided for their parents to complete to support the children to think about the activities they enjoy.

Children feel a sense of belonging as they build relationships with their key workers who offer reassurance and comfort for those who find it hard to separate from their parents. They find their own names to register their attendance and enjoy pointing out photographs of themselves on a tea towel displayed on the wall.

Children are beginning to understand responsible behaviour as staff talk to them at group times about the 'golden rules', reminding them of acceptable behaviours. They are learning to take turns and to share the toys and equipment through card and lotto games. However, staff direct them in turn taking or remove them from situations. This does not provide the children with the tools or strategies to enable them to learn to solve problems and simple disputes themselves or to manage their own behaviour effectively.

All children and their families, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who speak English as an additional language are welcome. However, staff have limited knowledge and experience of how to plan for individuals to ensure they are fully included and make good progress.

Children benefit because staff understand the importance of working closely with the parents. Parents are well informed verbally when they bring or collect their children and through daily news books and news letters. Parental permissions are sought from all parents enabling staff to care for the children appropriately. Parents are happy with the care and education their children receive at the pre-school and find the staff friendly and approachable. Each term they are invited to watch and listen to the children perform action songs and rhymes which they have rehearsed, involving them in the children's learning.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff discuss the Foundation Stage with parents when the child begins. The setting also has attractive displays giving parents lots of information about the areas of learning, different activities amongst other useful information. The long term plan is clearly displayed on the door for parents to see as well as the session routine. Staff have formed positive relationships with each of the parents and they are encouraged to share what they know about their child through completing the initial questionnaire and other paperwork. This information allows the staff to get to know the child

and plan for them accordingly. The setting have a flexible approach to settling new children allowing parents to decide how many sessions they wish to stay with their child. Taster sessions give the staff the opportunity to observe the children and talk to the parents. Parents are informed of their child's achievements through daily discussions with staff. In addition each child's record is sent home each half term for parents to read through and staff welcome their comments.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Children are developing their self-esteem, have formed positive relationships with staff and children, some children behave well and are developing an awareness of different cultures through discussions and planned activities.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The staff work well as a team and ensure that the premises are safe and set up invitingly for play. Adult to child ratios are high and children receive good levels of support and attention when needed. Recruitment and vetting procedures are sound ensuring staff are suitable to work with young children. For example, checks are carried out on all members of staff and there is an induction procedure making sure all staff and volunteers are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The setting understands the National Standards and their responsibility to comply with these and the conditions of the registration. However, at the time of inspection staff failed to maintain current first aid certificates.

Organised documentation and a comprehensive operational plan supports the smooth running of the sessions. Policies and procedures are shared with the staff and the parents and are available during the session as well as online. They are reviewed to ensure they continue to reflect the group's practice. However, information for parents, who may wish to contact Ofsted, is not accurate as the address has not been updated.

Overall children's needs are met.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The management support staff in their roles with an induction process and annual appraisals. The appraisals are completed by both the manager and the member of staff they discuss what they have written and any improvements needed are made. The manager is responsible for ensuring that the staff have completed training, she shares the training manual with the staff so that they can also select courses of interest to them. After any training attended, staff are asked to feedback to the other members so that everyone can benefit and so that practice is shared. Staff meetings take place every Friday and are used to assess the activities offered to the children, observations written and general discussion about the setting. All staff are involved in suggesting topic and activity ideas and it is clear that they work as a team. The setting assesses its strengths and areas for improvement through completing the self-evaluation form. Staff are all involved in the process as each member is asked to contribute to the self-evaluation form. The setting also ask parents for feedback by completing questionnaires. For example, the setting sent out a questionnaire regarding healthy eating and asked them their views about snack time. The setting have aims for the future to further develop the care and education offered.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last nursery education inspection the setting agreed to create opportunities for children to practise writing in a range of different contexts so that they become confident in forming letters and linking them to the sounds they represent. The setting provide children with many opportunities to mark make in the role play area, using the easel and at the writing table. The children play sound games to help them link letters to sounds. They were also asked to plan opportunities for the children to use ICT, children freely use programmable toys during their play. The setting were asked to encourage children to work independently of staff to develop their own ideas and interact with peers. Children have some opportunities throughout the session to free play making choices about how to spend their time they play alone and with their peers.

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to ensure that all parents sign their consent for staff to seek emergency medical advice or treatment and that parents have access to copies of policies and procedures. All parents have signed their consent forms and all parents are given copies of the policies and procedures or if they wish can access them via the setting's website. They also agreed to ensure that children do not have access to hot radiators in the hall, the majority of the radiators are not accessible to the children however, those that are, are not hot enough to burn a child. The setting agreed to ensure that the register shows times of arrival and departure of children and staff daily as parents sign their children in. The setting also agreed to organise the time spent clearing up the hall to ensure that children are kept suitably occupied. During tidy up time the children are involved in singing and circle time and are therefore occupied.

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 each child has clean water for hand washing
- encourage children to access water throughout the session, especially whilst eating

- ensure children cannot gain access to the kitchen
- provide opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- develop strategies which support children to learn to manage their own behaviour and solve simple problems and disputes
- improve the staff's knowledge and understanding of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ensure policies contain the correct information, this refers to Ofsted's address in the complaints procedures.

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):

- consistently write short term plans and ensure that they clearly link to the stepping stones so that all staff are clear about the aims of the activity
- ensure that activities are consistently evaluated and the information is used to inform future planning
- allow children to explore adult-led activities to further enhance their learning
- plan and provide learning and play opportunities outside.

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