

# St Matthews Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107060
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Valerie Anne Curotto
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Matthews Church, Clare Road, Kingsdown, Bristol, BS6 5TB
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<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St Matthews Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Matthews Playgroup opened in 1990 and is affiliated to the Pre-school Learning Alliance. It operates from the church hall of St Matthews Church, in the Kingsdown area of Bristol and serves the local area. Children have access to the main hall, a side room and an enclosed outdoor area. The setting is managed by a voluntary committee, which includes the playgroup leaders and members of the Parochial Church Council. It opens four mornings and two afternoons a week during term time. Sessions operate from 09.15 - 11.45 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 12.30 - 15.00 on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Thursday and Friday a lunch club is available to extend the morning session until 12.45 hours. There are currently 33 children on roll, 22 of whom receive nursery education funding. The setting is experienced in supporting children with additional needs and who speak English as an additional language. A team of seven staff work with the children, five of whom have appropriate qualifications. Additional support is available from parents working on a duty rota. The playgroup is registered to care for up to 28 children aged two to under five years.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children benefit regularly from fresh air as activities are routinely undertaken outside. For example, they investigate insect life in the garden with magnifying glasses and compare their findings with pictures in books. They enjoy sand, painting and singing outdoors at various times of the year. Children develop a good understanding of healthy eating as they grow their own vegetables in the garden and engage in spontaneous discussion with staff during lunch times and cooking activities. In addition, water is routinely available to drink and children proudly bring in fresh fruit each day as a contribution to snack time and a healthy lifestyle. Appropriate formats are in place to record accidents and medication to promote children's health and exchange information with parents.

Children learn everyday routines to promote their health and are supported by equipment, such as steps-up, to develop independence using toilet facilities. However, current arrangements for handwashing are not fully developed, to further promote hygiene within the setting. Children develop a good awareness of their bodies and how they work through topic work and regular physical activities. They learn to identify different body parts and improve coordination as they sing action rhymes. They develop useful skills as activities are varied throughout the year to extend them further. Children gain confidence in a range of movements as they engage in a wide range of structured and free play activities. They confidently manoeuvre sit and ride toys, carefully throw bean bags into hoops and move imaginatively as they respond to music.

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

The provision is good.

Children are safeguarded within the setting as the premises are secure and entry is monitored effectively. Staff are generally vigilant and aware of potential hazards, for example, items stored by other building users. Children are supervised appropriately using toilets in the shared facility to promote their safety. A suitable range of policies and procedures are in place to support children's wellbeing. For example, staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues as their knowledge and understanding is updated appropriately. A clear statement also advises parents of the setting's responsibilities and the role of the local authority in safeguarding children.

On arrival, children enter the welcoming main hall where activities are attractively laid out for them. Available space is used effectively to enable them to safely access equipment and combine a variety of activities. Screens are used creatively as display boards and to build smaller, more secure areas within the large room for activities, during free play or large group time. An extensive range of resources is well organised in storage areas within the main hall. This enables children to independently access additional items to extend their play. Children learn how to safeguard themselves using equipment as staff appropriately reinforce expectations of their behaviour. Children enjoy the security of core items which staff thoughtfully vary to provide challenge and purposeful activity. For example, the familiar home corner remains alongside the new 'office' where children undertake a variety of tasks dependent on their interest and abilities.

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

The provision is good.

Children appear secure and settle well on arrival as they enter the friendly environment. They are familiar with the daily routine and engage readily with activities. Planning is flexible and responsive to children's interests and individual children's needs. Informal discussion at the beginning of each session ensures all staff are clear of their roles and aware of the learning prompts and possibilities for extension to children's learning. This ensures children are engaged in purposeful, challenging activities. While planning is not extensively documented, staff spontaneously respond to children in a way which adds purpose to all children's play. Children benefit from a balanced and stimulating range of activities throughout the year. This is provided through a good combination of well supported free play and small structured groups. While no specific assessment framework is used to track children under three, the level of staff support and knowledge of individual children ensures their needs are met.

Children are encouraged to think for themselves and problem solve as part of the daily routine. They recognise new batteries are needed when the remote controlled car stops working and consider what they need for the next stage of their construction. Group time provides regular opportunities to make connections with letters, sounds and numbers as children interpret clues as to what is in the 'shiny box'. Children's creative development is fostered well as they freely access dressing up clothes and craft materials. They manipulate scissors and glue sticks confidently as they independently access junk modelling materials from the craft trolley.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The daily routine includes a good balance of varied group sizes which enables children to develop different skills. For example, they learn social and listening skills at circle time and develop confidence in large groups. Children enthusiastically contribute to stories and predict what happens next. They reinforce their learning in smaller groups as they recall previously learned counting skills and extend these further with sensitive staff support. Everyday routines also reinforce their linking of sounds and letters, number and simple calculations at circle time. Staff interaction ensures individual children are supported and challenged in their use of equipment to extend their learning. For example, during free play in the 'office' children enjoy combining a variety of tasks together as they go through the process of writing, stamping, weighing, posting and delivering letters. Children are enthusiastic learners and eagerly join their allocated groups for structured activities. Sessions are organised effectively to enable children with higher levels of concentration and interest to sustain activities while others return to free play. The outdoor space is used effectively to promote children's development, for example to enable mark making in different environments.

Children's assessments begin at an informal initial meeting with parents. These continue throughout the year and parents' comments are added to them at regular intervals. Assessment records include a range of materials, including regular observations and photographs to track children's development effectively across the Foundation Stage. While these arrangements are not formally organised to impact on planning, staff spontaneously use their knowledge of children to reinforce and extend children's learning effectively. This occurs through all aspects of the session's activities, including group time where children's questions are acknowledged and responded to by attentive adults.

Curriculum planning combines weekly, focussed group activities within longer, termly topics. These are discussed each week by the senior management team to take into account children's

needs. Additional, informal discussion between staff each session, ensures all children are engaged in a balanced curriculum, across all areas of their development. While written systems are not extensive, staff are sufficiently skilled to consistently extend children within the flexible framework.

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

The provision is good.

Children and their families are welcomed into the setting. Flexible settling in procedures and sensitive awareness to children's individual needs, enables them to feel secure in their surroundings. Children match their coats to their photograph on entry and separate confidently from their carers. They learn to take responsibility and develop confidence as they contribute to the setting's routine as the daily helper. Children's choice and independent thinking are encouraged as part of everyday activities. As a result, children become aware of their own needs and gain independence in self care as they pour drinks and initiate their own play. Children behave well and conflict is resolved calmly with staff support. Children learn to consider their actions and offer their own solutions as they resolve issues with others. Desired behaviour is reinforced effectively and children relate positively with staff.

Children's develop high self esteem as their participation in the setting is valued through individual photographic records, which are also used to reflect on their learning. Children learn to appreciate difference as they access appropriate resources, such as books and dolls, and cultural diversity is valued within the setting. Children compare similarities and differences as they look at each other's faces in mirrors. Children with additional needs are supported effectively as the setting promotes inclusion and ensures appropriate resources are available to achieve this. Children engage positively with their local environment as they observe seasonal changes in the garden and enjoy a visit to the local woods. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the care their children receive. A programme of social events, training and an open door policy promote positive relationships and involve parents in the setting. This benefits children as information is regularly exchanged regarding their individual achievements and development. In addition to involvement in the daily rota, parents are encouraged to share their interests and skills within the setting to provide stimulating activities for children. Useful information about the Foundation Stage is shared with parents in a prospectus and 'Ideas for learning' are included in a termly newsletter. This enables them to reinforce children's learning and contribute observations from home.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a high adult to child ratio which includes good use of parents on a duty rota. Parents are given clear information about their role and staff are well organised in their support of children. As a result, regular outdoor play is effectively supervised and a wide range of activities are set up and put away each day. Children also benefit from continuity of care from an established staff team. Keyworkers oversee individual children's assessment records and form useful links with parents. Newer staff members receive effective support and are provided with positive role models by the experienced, senior staff members.

Leadership and management is good. The setting demonstrates a strong commitment to ongoing development and effectively monitors the provision of nursery education. Staff regularly share information together on aspects of training they receive to positively influence their practice. For example, the setting is currently reviewing planning and assessment arrangements to further impact on children's learning. The setting has a clear and positive ethos and is supported appropriately by the committee and church representatives.

An appropriate range of policies and procedures are in place although some aspects, for example, the complaints procedure, are not fully developed. Documentation is generally well organised to support children's care, including details of individual health and dietary requirements. However, committee records were not readily available at inspection and it was unclear whether an effective system is in place for updating this information. Senior staff are able to discuss appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the suitability of those involved in children's care, including induction and appraisal systems. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

Two recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed effectively to promote outcomes for children. Firstly, storage is now available to ensure outdoor play equipment is maintained in good condition. Secondly, additional resources have been obtained to increase children's access to everyday technology. These include a computer, remote control cars and digital cameras.

### **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):

- continue to review policies and procedures to further develop children's care and ensure effective arrangements are in place for maintaining committee records

## **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):

- consolidate planning and assessment systems to further enhance individual children's learning

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