

St Mary's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309477
Inspection date	07 March 2008
Inspector	Carys Millican
Setting Address	St Mary's Church Hall, Mayfield Avenue, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 2NT
Telephone number	01253 403 707 and 07718 072 582
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Registered person	St Marys Pre-School 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 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 is run by a management committee. It first opened in 1967 and operates from within a church hall in a residential area in the South Shore area of Blackpool. A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. The setting operates from 09.00 to 15.00 on Monday, Tuesday and Friday and Thursday morning 09.00 till 12.00 during term time only. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 38 children on roll. Of which 23 children receive funding for early education. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The setting employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted by staff who have a secure knowledge of the pre-school's health and hygiene policy and procedures. Children are protected from the potential risk of cross infection by the staff following suitable environmental health procedures. Staff members allocated to snack times do not toilet children and visa versa. Tables are consistently wiped before and after children eat and play areas are cleaned after use. The food preparation areas in the kitchen are clean and well maintained. Children's hygiene practices are fully promoted. They understand the daily routine and confidently go to the toilet before they sit down for their snack. Children's growing independence is aided by the provision of small plastic steps that children use to stand at the sink. Soap and paper towels are easily accessible to them on a small table in the toilet. Children enthusiastically explain to staff during conversations that they 'must wash hands to keep them clean and get rid of germs'. Nappy changing is completed in the ladies toilet. Staff explain appropriate nappy changing procedures following the health and hygiene policy. Children's welfare and the protection of other children are fully considered by staff following the sick child policy. All documentation is in place and written parental permission is obtained for emergency treatment, and to administer medication.

Children benefit from the healthy eating programme encouraged in the pre-school. The setting encourages a rolling snack programme. Children help themselves to a cup and serviette which they place on the table. They learn about food that is good for them and the importance of a balanced diet. Children access a selection of healthy snack options as they sit with their friends. They benefit from the social occasion created at lunchtime when they sit together in small groups with staff supporting them. Children's growing independence and self-help skills are encouraged in daily routines. At snack time they are encouraged to pour their own drinks and put their used beakers on the tray ready for washing. At lunchtime children help wipe tables and set out children's place mats. Children's needs are met by staff following care routines, dietary needs and parental wishes closely. Details of allergies are confidentially recorded. Fresh drinking water is freely accessible to children.

Children benefit from physical activities which contribute to their good health and all round development. Physical play is encouraged within daily indoor and outdoor activities. Children enjoy themselves. They run around the large hall confidently finding their own space. They enthusiastically take part in the 'bean bag rap' music and movement tape completing simple exercises to music and singing songs. Children competently climb onto the wooden climbing frame and slide down the other side. Children complete obstacle courses indoors practising balancing skills and coordination. They access the outdoor play area where they explore and investigate the natural habitat. Children rest according to their needs as they look at books and listen to stories in their 'quiet area'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept safe and secure when playing inside and outside. Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised. Staff use effective risk assessments to identify hazards and install suitable safety equipment. Children are protected by the health and safety practices and procedures that staff follow to help prevent accidents. Areas are checked daily by staff as they set up the play rooms before children arrive and all play equipment is checked for any damage,

such as loose or broken parts. Children cannot leave the premises unsupervised. Inner doors are secure and all exterior doors are locked once children are inside. Staff monitor the outer door to ensure children's safety on arrival and collection. Socket covers protect children in both rooms and tables and chairs in the main hall are stacked safely. Children are kept safe outdoors. A grassed area within the church grounds is used by children and staff supervise children's play at all times. Children begin to learn about how to keep themselves safe. They listen to the staffs' gentle reminders throughout the session, for example, not to go on the climbing frame with dressing up clothes on. Children benefit from visits from 'people who help us', such as the police and fire fighters. These experiences are beneficial in raising children's awareness of personal safety. Fire fighting equipment is in place and all fire doors are unobstructed. The fire evacuation procedure is displayed and practised by children and staff regularly. Children are kept safe on outings as adult to child ratios are maintained, permission is obtained from parents and documentation is in place.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. The pre-school rooms are spacious and well maintained. Children explore and investigate numerous, low level, sensory visual displays and textured experiences. Children confidently move around their surroundings and help themselves to a range of safe, suitable and age-appropriate resources that are accessible to them. The pre-school rooms are well organised to maximise play opportunities for children. Children feel a sense of belonging. Their art and craft work is creatively displayed throughout the rooms. Children's health, safety and welfare is maintained by staff checking equipment before use and regularly cleaning toys and resources.

Children are safeguarded. The child protection statement is in place and clearly explains the procedures to follow in the event of a child protection concern. The policy has been updated with changes in recent legislation regarding the Local Safeguarding Children Board details and who to contact. Staff have attended recent safeguarding children training and therefore clear on the procedures to follow under the new legislation. Children's safety and welfare are met by the documentation maintained by the pre-school. Systems are in place to keep records regarding any child protection concerns and confidentiality is maintained. Children's individual record forms contain a wealth of information, including details of named persons allowed to collect them. The hours of attendance of visitors, staff and children are meticulously recorded by pre-school staff in the attendance register.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are extremely happy and contented. They settle easily into the warm, welcoming atmosphere created by experienced practitioners. Children are enthusiastic and self-assured in their play as they help themselves to the activities and resources provided. These activities and resources support their development and learning and are linked to the planning in place. Children enjoy playing with the sand tray placed on the floor. They fill buckets and different sized containers competently and work together to build sand castles. Children enjoy dressing up. They put on frilly dresses and play with the dolls in the role play area. Children use pretend microwaves and toasters as they make meals with the good selection of play food. Children make sound relationships with adults and other children. They pass creative materials to each other as they complete sticky pictures using a good selection of textured and shiny materials. Children who require help to socialise with others are well supported by experienced staff members who are close at hand to help and advise. All children are included in activities and encouraged to take part.

Children enjoy their self chosen activities within the designated areas of learning. They sit with their friends to mould and roll out the home made dough and help themselves to the cutters and shapes to make their pretend cakes. Children develop their hand eye coordination skills as they complete tray jigsaws easily and attempt larger piece jigsaws with staff. Children use a selection of construction materials. They build with coloured bricks making buildings and towers. Children enjoy singing action songs and listening to stories. They listen to instruction and understand the routine as they help to tidy up before snack time. Children use the dustpan and brush copying the adult as they roll up the carpet and brush up the sand from underneath it. Children develop confidence and self-esteem through the interaction, care, love and attention they share with all staff. The key worker system enables younger children to settle easily when starting the play group. Staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, which is used in practice during activities. Children are observed by staff during their play. These observations form part of the ongoing observations of their learning and development used to identify children's progress and later used as starting points for the Foundation Stage. Written progress reports are maintained to record children's achievement and development. Planning includes individual children's next steps in their learning. Staff have a good understanding of child development and this is seen in practice.

Children benefit from a relaxed atmosphere and homely environment. Close and caring relationships with staff increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. Children are valued and treated with concern and respect by staff, who have a kind and caring manner. Adults support children in conversation and help extend their play experiences through simple questioning. Children relate their own experiences in their play, for example, when in the role play area. They relate well to each other and socialise well as they build up relationships with other children. Staff are on hand to support and challenge them, skilfully extending their learning. Children begin to distinguish between right and wrong as staff skilfully use positive methods with children to achieve a positive result.

Children enjoy a wide range of indoor activities. Routines are established to allow flexibility, to accommodate the needs of the younger children and to allow them sufficient time to explore through their senses. These routines enhance children's learning. The activities are adapted to suit the individual needs of the children. They eagerly join in the activities provided and their concentration levels are maintained. Children enjoy painting pictures. They use brushes to start their picture then decide to paint their hands to create hand prints. Opportunities within the daily routine are used to engage children in conversation. Children enjoy sitting on the carpet and listen to the staff member talk about what 'Billy Bear' has been doing. The resources are placed in both rooms so children can help themselves easily, either on the floor in baskets or in accessible labelled storage boxes within low level cupboards. Quieter activities allow young children to sit on cushions and look at a wide selection of books. Staff support children by reading to them in small groups or one to one. Children enjoy a wide range of physical play activities, both indoors and outside.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make steady progress towards the early learning goals. Children's learning needs are understood by the staff who have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage. Regular meetings and discussions are held by the staff to develop the planning following the learning needs and interest of the children. These are displayed in the hall for parents and in planning folders. The key-worker system is well established and adult to child ratios are high, which means children are well supported. Activities are adapted in practice for the different age groups and abilities. Information about children

is obtained from parents on admission to the setting and initial starting points are gathered from observations and assessment. They use effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and to plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. Children are provided with play opportunities to explore objects. They look at how things work, such as, keys and locks and magnets and help themselves to the interesting display in order to explore and investigate them. Children can count confidently to 10 and can name a number of different colours. Focussed adult initiated activities help children develop an understanding of mathematical concepts, such as heavy and light, as staff provide planned activities to help children distinguish between both. For example, children use weighing scales and weigh several different objects such as feathers, cotton wool and cotton reels. However, children's mathematical skills, such as calculating, comparing and problem solving, are not sufficiently used by staff in everyday experiences and routines.

Children are eager to learn are self-assured in their play, and confident to try out new experiences. Children enjoy using the keyboard and musical instruments in the sensory area. They enjoy the creative activities, gluing and sticking pictures using a variety of textures. Children independently access mark making materials and use one-handed tools confidently. They access a number of natural resources and develop hand-eye coordination in activities. Staff use questions successfully to challenge children's thinking and language skills. Children chat confidently with each other using a wide range of language and sentence construction, and their thinking skills are suitably promoted during activities such as circle time and when listening to a story or recalling past events.

Children behave well and begin to show an understanding of right and wrong as they interact together in their play. Staff support children well during their play. Children enjoy small group activities which help them learn how to share and take turns, and the staff skilfully encourage the children's understanding of respecting each other's needs. Children interact well with each other and listen to one another during quieter activities. They listen to stories and sing funny songs. Children recognise colours as they paint and play with the construction bricks. Children's development of large and small motor skills is sufficiently promoted through the physical activities provided. They can find their personal space as they sit at the table at snack time and can negotiate their own space when playing inside and outdoors.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time spent at the pre-school. All children are welcome and fully included in the life of the setting. Children play harmoniously together and are very considerate towards each other. They begin to understand and respect the values and feelings of others through activities and daily routines. Children mix well together and form constructive and harmonious relationships. Their understanding of equality is promoted through the many activities that encourage equal play. During activities they show consideration towards others as they share and take turns. Staff are sensitive to all children's individual needs and these are recognised through discussion with parents. Children are very relaxed and have a loving relationship with staff who are on hand to help, praise and constantly support the children throughout the session. Children are very familiar with the routine. They take responsibility for themselves and the environment as they help each other tidy up. Children take part in activities that celebrate diversity where they begin to appreciate their own culture and the cultural traditions of others. For example, by celebrating Easter and Chinese New Year. However, visual stimuli that promote positive images of difference and diversity are limited. Children begin to value each other's contributions as they listen to each other when sharing personal experiences at circle time.

Children behave very well. The positive strategies staff use encourage children to behave well, explain their behaviour and acknowledge wrong doing. Any incidents of unwanted or challenging behaviour are recorded and explained to parents. Staff listen to children, praise achievements and provide individual support and comfort when required. Children become aware of their own needs and the needs of others. They make suitable choices and decisions about their play from the continuous free play opportunities available to them and the focussed adult directed activity. Children's confidence and self-assurance are fully promoted by staff constantly praising achievement. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children make a positive contribution because staff have a good relationship with parents and carers. Children settle easily, supported by the induction arrangements in place. They are introduced to their 'key worker' who has responsibility for them throughout their time in the pre-school. Children's individual care needs are discussed with parents prior to registering. Their initial developmental starting points and achievements already reached in the home are obtained from parents. Ongoing assessment in the pre-school informs the progress reports and child profiles completed by staff and is made available for parents on leaving. Parents feel well informed about their children. They see a big difference in their children from when they first started and they are continually updated on the level of progress their child has made towards the early learning goals in the Foundation Stage. Parents and children are made very welcome. They are extremely happy with the care and education their children receive. Parents express a high regard for the manager and staff in the pre-school. They say how good the setting is and how welcoming, friendly, helpful and approachable staff are who care for their children. Children's steady progress is welcomed by parents. However, opportunities to extend and reinforce children's learning at home is not encouraged. Parents are provided with information about the pre-school and the care and activities within a detailed prospectus. The policies and procedures for the pre-school are displayed for parents. The complaints procedure is displayed. Parents and staff are aware of the procedures for complaints and a system to record complaints is established. Children's daily activities are shared verbally with parents on collection. Opportunities to discuss their child's progress are welcomed by parents and staff. Information about the weekly activities and planned topic for the coming terms is contained in regular newsletters which are given to parents and displayed on the pre-school hall door.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are well cared for by adults who have a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. Most staff members hold appropriate qualifications. Children benefit from a well organised environment where staff are experienced practitioners who work extremely well together as a team. They are clear on their roles and responsibilities which shows in their daily practice. The recruitment and vetting procedures ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff with an excellent knowledge and understanding of child development. Staff checks are rigorously completed and the induction procedure ensures that the policies and procedures are applied. Staff appraisals are maintained and individual training needs are recognised with continual training and development fully encouraged. Staff have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. Regular staff meetings take place to make sure continuity is maintained and information and planning is developed following children's interests. Positive behaviour management strategies ensure children's self esteem and confidence is fully promoted and consistently applied in practice. The premises are well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is suitably laid out to maximise play

opportunities. It is effectively organised to allow choice, independence and decision making and to encourage children to explore the environment. Children are provided with natural materials to enable investigation and exploration. The adult to child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play. Small group sizes and staff deployment contribute to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement, and the ability to take an active part in the pre-school. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being are in place and regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management of the nursery education provided for children is good. An all-inclusive environment is provided where all children are included and treated with equal concern. Children make steady progress towards the early learning goals from the effective learning experiences planned for and through the exciting and stimulating activities provided. The manager is committed to the development and continual improvement of the pre-school and has a clear vision for future improvements. These include provision of a specific outdoor play area. Planning is well recorded and maintained, and detailed observations are used to highlight areas of progress and development. Staff complete progress reports and final profiles for parents. The manager motivates staff well. They work well as a team to promote children's all-round development and the care and routines of the pre-school. Staff act as good role models by actively taking part. They effectively deploy themselves where children play. They motivate the children by challenging and reinforcing the learning taking place. Daily routines are followed although they are flexible to the children's needs. Children's personal information is collected and recorded. Their individual needs are known and children are well supported. Parents are provided with a prospectus containing information about the provision. The key worker system is firmly established and children relate well to all staff. Parents are kept informed about their child's day on collection. Staff know the children well and can identify the progress and achievement each child has reached.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two actions were raised under National Standard 4: Environment, to ensure the premises are maintained at an adequate and comfortable temperature and under National Standard 6: Safety, to ensure children's safety in relation to the stair case, the radiators and the outdoor fence panels. The registered person completed these actions within the due date agreed. The boiler has been repaired and is now in good working order maintaining the setting to an adequate temperature. Children's safety is maintained in the hallway and outdoors. There is restricted access to the stairs by the use of an extended stair gate. The radiators are covered by staff using protective covers and the fence has been repaired outside.

There were four recommendations raised under care to improve practice. These related to; National Standard 2: Organisation, National Standard 4: Environment, National Standard 8: Food and Drink and National Standard 14: Documentation. Since the last inspection the manager has formulated a detailed induction procedure for new staff and volunteers. There are designated persons within the staff members responsible for behaviour and child protection who have undertaken relevant training in both core subjects. Children are provided with soap and paper towels that are easily accessible from a table close to the sinks. Several bean bags and carpets are available on the floors of both rooms so children can sit comfortably at circle and story time. A rolling snack programme has been introduced with children deciding the day before what they would like from a variety of healthy options. The registered person has devised a review document for the regular updating of relevant documents such as child protection and

behaviour as requested. By completing these recommendations the care of children within the setting has improved.

There were five recommendations raised under nursery education to improve practice. Since the last inspection the manager and staff have undertaken training on the Foundation Stage. By doing so they have improved their understanding of the Foundation Stage and used this knowledge to challenge and support children's learning through questioning and by planning a suitable curriculum covering the areas of learning. The effective observations completed by staff informs the planning for children's next steps in their learning. The environment reflects this also by more emphasis on free chosen activities than adult directed and the provision of sufficient resources to support children's learning through choice and decision making.

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):

- make sure children are provided with more visual images to support and encourage their understanding of difference and diversity.

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):

- extend children's opportunities to show an interest in number problems and simple calculation within every day routines
- encourage parents and carers to become involved in their child's learning by providing opportunities to extend children's learning at home.

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