

# St Mary's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	127608
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 March 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Melissa Turner
<b>Setting Address</b>	Riverhead Village Hall, Amherst Hill, SEVENOAKS, Kent. TN13 2EL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 742215
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St Marys Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day 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](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 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 Playgroup opened in the 1950's. It operates from Riverhead village hall in Sevenoaks, Kent. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open four days a week, from 09.00 to 11.45 on a Monday and 09.00 to 15.00 on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, term time only. Children can attend on a full day or sessional basis.

There are currently 30 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 25 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs a total of seven staff with five staff members in on a daily basis. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children understand the need to keep themselves healthy as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times, such as after using the toilet and before snack time. They wash their hands with running water and antibacterial soap. Staff clean tables with antibacterial spray before they are used at snack time, and wear gloves whilst they are doing this, children also change in to indoor slippers or plimsolls on arrival. These aspects help to avoid the spread of infection. Suitable systems are in place to ensure that staff are aware of dietary requirements, are able to deal with emergencies and illness, however currently the permission for emergency treatment consent is not available for all children. Sufficient first aid qualified staff are present on a daily basis.

Children enjoy healthy snacks on a daily basis, which they bring in themselves. For example they enjoy fruit and vegetables and parents are encouraged to provide healthy foods for their children's snacks and lunch boxes. They pour milk or water to drink, however they do not have access to fresh drinking water at all other times to ensure they remain hydrated, although they can ask. Although the outdoor area has not yet been set up for use, children enjoy daily opportunities for indoor physical play. A physical activity is set up every day for children, such as the climbing frame or trampoline. Other activities, such as music and movement sessions are offered. Children thoroughly enjoy warming up; they wiggle their fingers, stretch up and down, and do action songs such as 'Incy Wincy Spider'. They enjoy using ride on toys in the afternoon session.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, child friendly environment which is organised to meet their needs. Currently some areas require further development to ensure they are well organised and used, and inviting for children. Children have access to a wide range of good quality resources which are set up so that they can help themselves and make independent choices.

Security is well maintained and visitors are ID checked and sign in on arrival. Staff promote children's safety, completing head counts, and ensuring the environment is safe, for example fitting socket covers and supervising children as they use the toilets. These aspects help to keep children safe. Full risk assessments are reported to be completed, although this has not been completed recently and evidence is not readily available. Staff complete a daily safety check list to ensure the pre-school is safe and suitable for children's use. Fire drills are practised to help keep children safe in the event of a fire. However, no detailed record is kept to enable staff to review and improve routines.

Staff deploy themselves and supervise children well to promote their safety throughout the session. Clear procedures for local outings ensure children are kept safe when outdoors. The nominated person for child protection has a sound awareness of child protection issues and has attended training to support her in this area. A policy is in place supporting staff; however this requires further detail and updating. Children's welfare and well-being is considered a priority and is promoted by staff at all times.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and happy at pre-school, they arrive with confidence and quickly immerse themselves in to a range of table top activities. Staff support children well and offer them a warm welcome as they arrive. Younger children are well cared for, although plans do not currently link to the Birth to three matters framework.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are supportive and involved in children's activities, offering them opportunities to learn as they play or take part in planned activities. Children benefit from staff who are knowledgeable, encouraging and interested in what they do. However, too little of the session allows children to learn through free play opportunities, with much of the session given to planned activities, dividing the children in to age groups and group times. This limits children's time and ability to explore and play freely without being moved on to the next aspect of the morning. In addition, most of the planned activities that are offered to children are overly adult directed, with many of the arts and crafts activities being pre drawn/ cut or organised for children, or the use of worksheets, both of which limit children's ability to freely express themselves creatively.

Staff plan a wide range of topics and themes for children where they have the opportunity to develop their knowledge about new areas such as the theme 'travelling by water' which prompts a range of good discussions. Plans support staff although these are broken down in to the age bands and do not clearly show how all areas of learning are covered on a daily basis. Staff do show good levels of enthusiasm, commitment and interest in the children and are keen to help all children make progress in all areas of learning. However, some aspects of the pre-school require further development.

Children are very confident at the setting and are developing good friendships. They show independence as they pour their own drinks and enjoy contributing at circle time. Children develop some mathematical skills as they count at opportunities such as snack time. Some children get the opportunity to check the number of cups correspond with the number of children present at their table, but overall, mathematical challenges are limited. Children develop an understanding of shape as they complete shape pictures, naming correctly circle, triangle and rectangle. Children recognise their names as they self register on arrival. They have some opportunities to write their own names although staff do this for children on occasions, even when children indicate they can do it themselves. Children's free mark making opportunities are limited although some access to pencil colours and crayons is available. They enjoy creating letters in the flour with staff guiding them. Children spend periods of time in the book corner when they are directed; such as after lunch time, however they do not readily access this area at other times. Some development is required to ensure it is fully inviting and welcoming.

Children learn about the concept of floating and sinking and explore the differences, understanding why some objects sink and some float. They explore natural materials such as shells, feathers and pine cones and learn about other cultures through planned activities such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. They explore their local environment for example enjoying a bug hunt in the local vicinity. Children have some access to resources for technology such as programmable toys and a till when the home corner is set up as a shop. This area is limited however and children do not, for example, have access to a computer or equipment allowing them to operate simple programmes.

Children enjoy creative activities, however these are strongly adult led and limit children's creativity. For example there is no designated area where children can create art work of their own design using a wide range of materials and resources. They do however enjoy painting activities and exploring the flour, water play and play dough. Children do not regularly access the home corner, which lacks full organisation to promote children's use or encourage the development of their imaginative play. Children thoroughly enjoy joining in with singing and music sessions, including those held weekly with students from a local school where they explore different sounds and musical instruments. However children do not readily have access to musical instruments at other times.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff know children and their families well and children's individual needs are recognised and met. Children feel valued and supported by staff who are caring and kind and respond to their needs appropriately. Children are beginning to develop an awareness of our wider society through planned activities, visual images and a limited range of toys promoting diversity. This area requires further development to ensure children are able to fully understand about the diversity of our society. A nominated Special Educational Needs Coordinator is in place, along with a clear set of paperwork, which helps ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported and have their needs met. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's behaviour is well managed with all staff consistently making regular use of praise and encouragement. Children are willing to share and take turns and happily help to tidy away at the end of a session. Children learn about sharing the ride on toys, as they are issued with tickets which enables them to understand they have to take turns. Staff use distraction well if the need arises and encourage children to behave well at pre-school. These aspects help children feel secure, welcomed and valued at pre-school, and encourages them to develop an understanding of right from wrong.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to be involved by helping through the parent's rota or getting involved on the committee. They are provided with information, such as newsletters and a small information board. Parents receive termly reports to help keep them updated about their children's progress. Open evenings are not currently held but parents are encouraged to approach staff at any time to discuss their children's developments. Parents receive some information about the Foundation Stage of education. They report they are happy with their children's care and education. Consequently, satisfactory systems are in place to enable staff to work in partnership with parents.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the setting is acceptable; consequently staff are promoting satisfactory outcomes for children. Paperwork is suitably organised in most areas, however, some areas are lacking or require updating. For example, thorough policies for the recruitment, vetting and induction of all staff, evaluation records of fire drills and permission for emergency treatment for all children. In addition, policies and procedures have not recently been reviewed. Systems are in place for the recruitment of new staff, but paperwork around this aspect requires expansion. There are three staff members who hold relevant qualifications and all staff are

police checked. Good ratios are maintained and staff deploy themselves well, supporting children effectively. This contributes to learning opportunities for all children and helps ensure they are kept safe and well cared for. Some organisation is required to further develop children's free play opportunities and the use of some aspects of the provision such as the home corner.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are supported by the supervisor and work well as a team, although some staff shortages have occurred recently. A supportive committee work closely with staff and have plans to support the staff with some changes in the future such as the revision of all policies and procedures. Some systems are in place for assessing strengths and weaknesses of the staff, such as annual appraisals. Systems to review and make improvements at the pre-school could be further developed, to enable staff to assess strengths and development needs of the setting. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care.

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

At the last inspection in September 2003, the group were set several recommendations in both care and education. Some progress has been made in some areas; however further work is required to ensure all recommendations are met fully, and some areas have arisen again following this inspection.

A visitor's record is now accurately being maintained and security is ensured through a buzzer entry system to the setting. Resources promoting disability and diversity are available but are still limited in this area; consequently this has been set as a recommendation once again at this inspection. The child protection procedure has been developed, however further detail is still required to ensure the policy is sufficiently clear in all aspects.

Staff have attended training and discuss the Foundation Stage of education at staff meetings to help develop knowledge in this area. Children are able to develop an awareness of print through the book corner and have access to mark making materials to support their writing skills, however further development is required in both these aspects. Children have the opportunity to explore mathematical concepts, however the opportunities for this in their free play need to be further developed. Children have the opportunity to handle natural materials such as pine cones, feathers and shells; however use of technology is still limited and requires further development.

### **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 drinking water is freely available to children at all times
- continue to develop the range of resources to promote diversity and disability
- develop, review and expand documentation, to ensure it is up to date, sufficiently detailed and in line with the National Standards

### **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):

- further develop children's opportunities to freely express themselves creatively
- ensure organisation of all areas of the pre-school are fully maximised and free play opportunities are increased, promoting all areas of learning
- continue to develop methods for planning, observation and assessment
- develop and implement systems to effectively identify the strengths and weaknesses of the setting

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