

St Marys Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101569
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Inspector	Jenny Read
Setting Address	Church Hall, Cheltenham Road East, Churchdown, Gloucestershire, GL3 1JG
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Registered person	St Mary's Playgroup
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 Playgroup opened in 1986 and is run by a voluntary committee of parents and volunteers. The playgroup operates from one room in the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the grounds of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary school in Churchdown, situated on the outskirts of Gloucester. They share use of the room with an out of school club and other community groups. The playgroup share use of the school reception class outside play area and have use of the main school playing field and adventure playground for additional outside play. The playgroup serves the local area.

A maximum of 24 children from two to five years may attend at any one time. There are currently 40 children on roll. Of these, 34 children receive funding for nursery education. The playgroup is open each week day during school terms. Pre-school sessions operate on a Monday and Wednesday from 09.00 to 12.30 where children bring a packed lunch. Family sessions operate on a Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 09.00 to 12.00. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs four staff, of these three hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 2 and 3, and one member of staff is working towards a level 2 qualification. The playgroup is a member of Gloucester Parent and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a clean environment where staff take care to ensure the floors and toilet facilities are swept and washed each day and throughout the session to minimise the spreading of infection and cross contamination. Children understand simple good health and hygiene practices and develop good independence in their personal care needs. They use the anti-bacterial liquid soap and paper towels to wash and dry their hands after using the toilet and prior to mealtime routines, and use the bowl of water in the room to wash their hands following messy play activities. Staff now monitor this carefully and support children when necessary. The children demonstrate good awareness of the importance of hand washing, explaining clearly how they have to wash their hands when they come inside because 'they have germs on'.

Children's health is generally well promoted because staff follow satisfactory procedures if children have an accident. For example, two staff have completed first aid training, the first aid box is well stocked and most contents in date, and staff record any accidents as required. However, although a carbon copy is given to parents most of the time and most entries are signed by parents, therefore, confirming they have been notified, information recorded does not consistently show the date and time of the accident. Staff explain clearly the procedures to ensure children receive appropriate care if they are ill, although the policy is basic in content.

Children are well nourished and have their health and dietary needs well met because staff and parent helpers demonstrate sound awareness of children's individual dietary requirements. Clear care plans are now in place and a list of allergies are displayed on the notice board in the kitchen. This enables adults to refer to when preparing the children's snacks or organising cooking activities. Letters have also been sent out to parents to help alleviate a medical situation by requesting certain foods are not included in pre-school children's lunch boxes, therefore, minimising the risk of children coming into contact with specific foods. In addition, there are clear contingency arrangements in place that are well known by all staff in the event that risk foods are brought in.

Children select snacks from a varied range of fresh fruit, dried fruit, bread sticks and toast over the week. They have ample quantities and eagerly devour their chosen food. Children competently pour their own drinks when they are thirsty during all sessions and help themselves to the jug of milk or water during mealtimes to ensure they are well hydrated. Mealtimes are a social occasion with children eager to share their news with each other and staff. However, snack time during family sessions are noisy and not well managed. There is little appropriate intervention from staff when a selection of children become disruptive, get up and down from the table and walk around with bread sticks in their mouth, raising the risk of children choking.

Children enjoy daily large physical play and on most occasions fresh air. They benefit from many opportunities to develop large muscle skills and coordination on regular trips to the reception class playground where they use the scooters, balance along the crates, make pirate ships, negotiate around the cones when pedalling the tricycles and enjoy the freedom to run, dig in

the earth and explore the outside environment. They also benefit from occasional access to the school's playing field and adventure playground where they build strength and control as they balance and climb on the equipment. Children learn to throw, kick and dribble balls during the monthly 'Super Strikers' session, move their body in rhythmic ways during music and dance with ribbons and participate in the yearly sports day with the school. Through these activities the children are improving their fitness, strength and agility, gaining confidence in their own abilities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have more than adequate space to move freely and staff place greater emphasis on making sure the play room is welcoming for the children to aid their development and independence. For example, low-level shelving units and drawer units displayed within the room and a selection of construction boxes on the floor, now enables the children to select resources for themselves to develop their play further. Children's pictures and examples of their work decorate the display board and contribute to the bright, cheerful playroom. Children play with a broad range of toys and play materials suitable for their age and stage of development. The purchase of further resources is enhancing children's experiences and providing them with further challenge.

Children play in a safe environment where staff give high priority to the security of the premises and the transporting of children safely to other areas on the church and school site. The doors are kept locked at all times with a buzzer on the external door which notifies staff when the door is being opened, and a bell and high latch on the main entrance. Children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised because staff are vigilant and monitor the entrance successfully, welcoming and receiving the children and parents at the beginning and ends of each session.

Staff promote children's safety generally well through implementation of the daily risk assessment and clear understanding of the setting's new policies and procedures. However, the safety policy is brief and does not provide clear guidance on procedures to follow, for example, the safe conduct of outings. The attendance register now shows accurate times of arrival and departure for most children and staff, to show clearly who is present at any one time. Although children are not involved in contributing to the risk assessments, they gain good awareness of safe action to take in an emergency through monthly practice of the escape plan. They learn how to cross the road safely through yearly visits from the road safety officer and regularly practise walking back and forth to the school playground. Staff supervise children generally well during play and daily routines. and children know to put their chairs under the table after use to prevent tripping. However, intervention and explanations from staff when children are rocking and swinging on their chair is inconsistent to enable children to learn the consequences of doing so.

Children are well protected from abuse and neglect because staff have a professional understanding of safeguarding issues. They have all completed safeguarding children training and demonstrate sound knowledge of the signs and indicators of abuse, and the procedures to record and inform the play leader of any concerns. Staff are clear of their responsibility to report any concerns and indicate they will refer to the groups policy for further guidance. However, the safeguarding policy is very basic and does not clearly outline procedures, for example, reporting any concerns to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The committee are clear of their role to support the staff and safeguard the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a good range of stimulating experiences each day that are based upon observations of their interests. Reorganisation of the room has given the children more flexibility in accessing the activities available. The children have more choice and a good balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities, with staff actively encouraging children to make choices in their play. Sessions have some structure regarding daily routines and are generally child-led, although deployment of staff and grouping of younger children during key times is currently not effective in encouraging all children to participate and gain valuable learning experiences. Support from the groups development officer is helping staff link children's assessments to the different stages of development, which is guiding and supporting their new planning systems. Consequently, staff are developing a greater understanding about the children and their interests.

The children readily explore their senses as they prod, roll and manipulate the play-dough, making cakes and using the tools to make different shapes. They investigate the paint on their hands and watch what happens as they mix the colours together to create their piece of artwork. Photographs show children exploring different textures, such as shaving foam, soil, flour and water, and building relationships with their peers. Children are happy and most self-assured, confidently seeking out familiar friends and sharing news or asking questions of staff. They show curiosity and are confident to communicate their feelings and initiate conversations with other people. For example, asking the Father of the attached Church during the visit, 'why have you got no hair?'

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children's progress towards the early learning goals has significantly improved because of the progression in the quality of the teaching and staff's greater understanding of the planning cycle. Consequently, the better choice and presentation of activities available across the six areas of learning is encouraging children's independence and enabling them to become more autonomous in their play and learning.

Staff observe and record children's interests and play ideas routinely and now use these to help inform future planning, meaning the activities and topics are beginning to radiate from the children. For example, previous planning shows staff observed children displaying an interest in putting toys in bags and carrying them around, therefore, planned a topic on bags, in addition, staff observed children talking about friends so felt it appropriate to include a topic on friendships. The new profile records for each child are now dated to show attainment, however, there are no next steps in place to inform weekly learning intentions to compliment the planning and complete the link in children's learning and development.

Children are very confident, self-assured and independent in their self-care. Children that are more able show interest and are motivated to organise and plan their own play, confidently linking up with others to initiate their own play ideas, such as adapting the bag shop role play to be a travel agents. Observations show children are readily making good attachments within the group and although a small number of children require some direction and support to help them feel safe and secure, they are mostly cooperative and support the younger children during play. However, the grouping of the children during key times, such as circle and story times is still not effective in supporting and challenging all children's learning because there is no clear

differentiation made, for example, for the children that are more able, those who speak English as an additional language or the younger children. As a result, some children talk and lose interest quickly, therefore, disturbing the group. In addition, the pre-school children miss out on valuable learning opportunities that help them build on what they already know and can do, such as talking about the day, date and weather, recognising the letters and counting, comparing and calculating the numbers of boys, girls and adults present because these key times are cut short, meaning the tasks do not take place every day.

Children now show a keen interest in mark making, understanding clearly the different purposes, such as taking the register and orders at the travel agents. They are beginning to form recognisable letters to represent their names on their pictures or when writing letters to each other. Children use language to imagine and recreate roles and their experiences, and demonstrate emerging self-confidence to speak to the inspector, staff and other adults about their ideas, construction models or pictures. Children that are more able are now recognising and distinguishing familiar letters and letter sounds within the environment, and using name cards at most snack times is enabling other children to practise their emerging letter awareness with adult support.

A good range of mathematical resources, questioning from staff and parent helpers readily support children's interest in number, shape, quantity and measure. For example, comparing which bag of objects they have filled is lighter or heavier and using tidy away time to utilise counting and recognition of number. They sustain interest in building with various construction sets and boxes at the workbench, using mathematical thinking and methods to solve practical problems, such as how a piece of stickle brick will fit on to their person or how they will adapt their model to make improvements to their house design. Children show excitement and pleasure in their own achievements as they successfully match up objects on the computer programme and negotiate pathways for the programmable Bee Bot competently. They learn about the process of change as they grow and tend their broad beans and mostly begin to gain awareness of their own cultures and beliefs.

The children are very imaginative and creative in their play and are beginning to show emerging autonomy. For example, they introduce and negotiate a story line in their role play, and adapt and use props effectively to represent the desired object. They use their creativity effectively when exploring foam shapes, tissue paper and various coloured paper at the sticking and gluing table and have fun when wrapping presents and making cakes with the play-dough. They respond to sound and body movement eagerly during music and dance sessions and excitedly chose favourite songs and rhymes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are gaining greater awareness of the wider society and benefiting from a wider range of activities and resources that are helping them value diversity. They experience Indian breads, design, make Diya lights and dress up in traditional Indian costumes during Diwali. In addition, the children are learning about the Chinese culture and festivals by decorating Chinese lanterns, using chopsticks to eat with and incorporating bean sprouts into the Chinese restaurant. However, although staff occasionally greet children who speak English as an additional language in their native tongue, there are few adaptations to activities or opportunities to count and use books, for example, in Polish or to use maps and a globe to increase all children's awareness and help those children feel a sense of belonging and a positive self-image.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are gaining a sense of themselves as a member of the community and respect for their own beliefs through joining in the daily prayers and attending the blessing in the Church during school mass. The pre-school children also enjoy regular story sessions in the reception class. This aids children's transition to school by enabling them to become familiar with the teacher, the school and the reception class room and routines. The children appear generally happy, secure and settled and their individual needs are generally well met because staff monitor, observe and provide appropriate support through care plans and liaison with other agencies when necessary to promote inclusion.

All children respond well to the frequent praise, which values their achievements and promotes their self-esteem. Consequently, most children are generally well behaved and fully understand the groups rules and boundaries. This is empowering children that are more able to learn to manage their own behaviour and is enabling them to recognise right and wrong behaviours of others. Children that are more able clearly explain the sand timers are to help some children with sharing and taking turns, but explain assertively they do not need to use them as 'we are sharing these nicely'. However, consistent explanations and implementation of appropriate strategies to manage challenging and inappropriate behaviours are not always successful, meaning some children are disruptive, aggressive and ignore the staff.

Children benefit from a friendly, informal but more professional relationship between their parents and staff. Communication links have greatly improved through devising a clear and useful parent welcome brochure, providing a parent copy of the groups policies and procedures in the entrance along with numerous notices, leaflets and play ideas. The various notice boards are full and contain much information to parents to keep them well informed about the setting and children's activities. Although, these are not always presented effectively to ensure parents can see important information, such as the monthly newsletter and weekly topic. Staff are on hand at the beginning and end of each session to share information informally with parents about their child and to discuss any concerns. Parents are generally happy and feel staff are welcoming, attentive and supportive, helping parents to feel valued and appreciated.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents now receive clear information about the education provision by displaying the weekly planning sheet and long term plans on the notice board in the room. In addition, the Foundation Stage pack that includes a video and information about the weekly learning intentions are displayed in the entrance and available for parents to view at any time. However, these are not always in clear view to ensure parents are fully aware what their child will be learning each week to be able to provide appropriate support at home and during parent helper duty. Parents feel the hardworking and enthusiastic staff prepare the children well for school, and although the staff have recently implemented scrap books to show children's learning and progress, parents are not aware these are in place. The setting up of twice yearly parent evenings has not taken place to date to share children's on-going progress records and information to enable parents to take an active part in supporting their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the setting are satisfactory. The dedicated staff team welcome the good opportunities to promote their professional development and demonstrate clear commitment to attend additional training and increase their knowledge and understanding of good practice. They have worked hard with the committee and the local authority to begin to

make the improvements required from the last inspection, drawing up an action plan based upon the report. As a result, staff now show a greater knowledge of the children and illustrate a clearer vision for the setting. Staff work well as a team and are very enthusiastic, friendly and solid in their dedication to the children. This is backed up by the support and encouragement of the play leader and is clearly shown in the happy atmosphere throughout.

The staff and committee now demonstrate secure knowledge of the National Standards and the requirements of registration, for example, knowing when to notify the regulator. The operational plan has undergone significant improvement. However, the committee recognise the need for further development to ensure it contains detailed information regarding all aspects of the setting because although all policies and procedures are now in place, well known and implemented by staff, a number of policies do not contain sufficient detail about the procedures to follow. The committee are now very clear of the procedures to follow to ensure staff and new members of the committee are suitable and a tracking sheet is maintained to show individual clearances to monitor these more effectively.

The recruitment and induction of new staff are now very effective. The implementation of a formal interview and clear vetting of staff ensure they are suitable. An initial introduction day helps to familiarise new staff with the settings routines, policies and procedures. In addition, shadowing the out-going member of staff for a week, enables them to begin to build relationships with their key group and parents. As a result, the newest member of staff is very knowledgeable of the setting's policies and procedures and has good relationships with the children and parents. Appraisals are completed at the end of the three month probation and on a yearly basis. This assists the committee and play leader in monitoring staff's development to ensure their continuing suitability. Organisation of children and deployment of staff during key times is currently not effective to challenge, support and extend children's learning. In addition, there are no key worker group opportunities to focus planned activities and children's next steps.

All the required records and documentation are now in place and most contain sufficient detail. Necessary information regarding the children and parents are in place and each record is stored securely in individual named sections to maintain confidentiality and allow easy access. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the quality of care was judged as inadequate. The setting needed to improve knowledge and understanding of the National Standards and regulations; extend the operational plan to ensure all records, policies and procedures reflected current legislation and were well known and implemented; keep a written record of medication administered; devise and implement robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures and maintain an accurate daily record of all persons present at the setting.

The setting has made steady progress on all aspects to promote children's health, safety and welfare and are continuing to make improvements on the operational plan, and policies and procedures to promote the efficient and safe management of the setting.

At the last inspection, the nursery education was judged as inadequate. The setting needed to provide opportunities for children to plan and organise their play; improve observation and assessment systems to ensure these linked securely to the planning and children's next steps;

improve systems for monitoring the quality of the nursery education and develop the information to parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum and children's on-going progress.

The setting has made good progress on extending opportunities for children to ensure they are able to develop their play ideas. The observations and assessments now link more closely to the planning, although links to children's next steps are not clearly shown. Information to parents has greatly improved and plans are being developed to ensure information about children's progress is shared.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made that required Ofsted or the provider 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 the accident record includes all the necessary details to inform parents
- develop strategies to manage a wide range of children's behaviour consistently (also applies to nursery education)
- continue to develop the policies and procedures and operational plan to ensure information is clear, detailed and outlines procedures to follow.

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):

- improve the grouping of children during circle and story times to ensure these are appropriate, well planned and meet children's individual needs (also applies to care)
- continue to develop the information to parents about their children's progress.

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