

St Mary's Catholic Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	305324
Inspection date	06/07/2009
Inspector	Graham Martin
Setting address	Belgrave Avenue, Congleton, CW12 1HT
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Description of the setting

St Mary's Catholic Pre-school has links with the Catholic primary school in Congleton and is located within its grounds. It is registered on the Early Years Register and may offer care to a maximum of 25 children aged two years upwards. It re-registered in April 2009 and is administered by a committee of parents. The pre-school operates from a mobile building consisting of two large playrooms, a kitchen area, toilets and an outside play area. The group serves the local community and surrounding areas. There are currently 25 children aged from two and half to five years on roll. This includes 15 funded three year olds and no funded four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Full day care is offered so that children can attend two sessions in one day, and more than five sessions in one week. The lunch time is an optional link time between the normal sessions, when children staying bring a packed lunch from home. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The group opens five days a week during term times. Sessions are from 09.00 to 11.45 and 12.45 to 15.15 with the lunch club operating from 11.45 to 12.45. There are seven members of staff, of which three hold the NVQ level 3 qualification, two hold NVQ level 2 and two are working towards NVQ level 2. The supervisor and one other member of staff also hold the level 3 qualification in Early Years Foundation Stage practice. The group is supported by a teacher from the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of provision is good. Good links with parents enable the staff to meet each child's individual welfare and learning needs well. Children make good progress because of staff's flexibility, response to their interests and effective support. These ensure that individuals are all included, benefit from good learning opportunities and are well supported in initiating their own activities. Children become active and independent in choosing resources for their own learning, although they do not have sufficient resources to explore sound and music. Managers and staff continuously evaluate their practice but some managers have not yet had formal training in safeguarding children, and a system for keeping ongoing records of children's learning has not been fully implemented. However, staff devise satisfactory action plans for future improvement, thereby offering a service which is responsive to the needs of all children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure that training in safeguarding children is updated for all managerial staff
- ensure that there is a consistent system to record observations of children's learning to inform assessment of their progress
- ensure that children have access to resources for exploring and developing

their musical learning.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The committee and management have worked hard to implement a number of improvements since the last inspection. In particular, staff have received training in providing good quality opportunities for Early Years Foundation Stage children. However, they have not yet fully implemented a scheme for recording their observations of individuals' progress. Plans to extend and partially cover the outdoor play area, with some funds already raised, show a commitment to improving provision.

Children benefit from a good ratio of experienced, well-qualified staff working with them. Good staff induction procedures and the consistent implementation of the setting's policies support the efficient daily running of the pre-school, helping to ensure that children are offered a secure and welcoming environment. The manager carries out rigorous checks on all staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff participate in regular in-house training relating to safeguarding children but not all who take on a managerial role have received formal training off-site. However, good internal policies and procedures promote the good welfare of all children at all times. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure that hazards are minimised or removed. Explanations from staff help children to gain a clear understanding of safety issues, such as why it is important to cover their heads and necks on a sunny day.

The setting works well with parents. Staff ensure that there is a thorough exchange of information and they actively use this to inform their planning of activities. 'The teachers are doing a wonderful job taking good care of the children and helping them to learn in a fun way,' is typical of parent's views. As committee members, parents are actively involved in working with staff to ensure that the pre-school continues to self-evaluate and sustain improvement. The findings from parental questionnaires are reported to the committee so that there is inclusion of parents in decision making. Parents are well informed of their children's progress. A digital photograph frame provides a continuously looping visual record of the activities enjoyed by the children. Good links are maintained with other settings, including St Mary's school, which happily receives information about the children's progress from the pre-school's assessment records. The support of a specialist teacher helps pre-school staff to continue to develop the setting and to ensure that children's care is consistently good and their learning promoted well.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children come into the pre-school happily and enthusiastically. They behave well, enjoy their learning and achieve well in response to staff's clear and consistent expectations and much use of praise when it is deserved. Children of all ages make good progress towards the early learning goals. This is because the staff provide a wide array of interesting and well-resourced activities that take into account children's individual interests and current learning needs. For example, mark

making skills are developed using a variety of writing tools, with older children tracking patterns to aid their coordination and prepare them for writing. Children proudly sound out the letters of their name when they have successfully written it. However, there are few opportunities to explore sound and music, and resources for these activities are limited. The staff are flexible, adapting their planning to make use of opportunities as they arise. A visit to a zoological park was an exciting day out for the children, who now know that some animals need different foods from those that people eat to keep them healthy but that they still need exercise to keep fit. Their own outdoor play area gives them good opportunities for exercise, as does practising to join with the school's sports day. The children show excitement about the fruit and vegetables they are growing in their garden and good awareness of the healthy properties of these foods. Staff talk to children about colours and shapes while they are drawing and encourage children to develop their language by asking probing questions about their pictures.

Children develop good social skills. Older pre-school children develop good self-confidence and independence through a lunch time visit once a week to the dining hall in St Mary's school. They show great confidence performing their end-of-year concert in the school hall, with children from the school's Reception class as well as their parents for an audience. When listening well to a story about a zebra looking for its striped clothes, the children commented independently on how important it was for the zebra to be helped by the other animals. They themselves cooperate well on activities and help each other to tidy up well, showing an understanding of community. When children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are due to join the group, staff make good use of circle time discussions to help children understand and support their particular needs. The children gain some awareness of our multi-cultural society using toys that reflect a variety of cultures.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

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