

St Margaret's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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Setting address

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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 Margaret's Pre-School opened in 1988. It operates from the single storey St Margaret's Centre in Stratton, near Swindon, Wiltshire, and serves the local urban community. The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee and is a registered charity. It provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds. Children use a hall with ready access to an outdoor play area. The pre-school opens for five weekday mornings during school terms. Sessions run from 09.00 to 11.30, with a lunch club on Wednesdays from 11.30 until 12.30. Additionally, sessions for two- to three-year-olds operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12.45 until 14.45.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 48 children aged from two to under five years on roll, all in part-time places.

The pre-school has six staff, three of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least level 2. The manager is working towards an Early Years Foundation Degree.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is outstanding. All children thrive in this caring pre-school in which they enjoy an extremely rich experience of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Their welfare is promoted exceedingly well and all make good progress in their learning and development. Excellent partnerships with the local school aid transitions between the two provisions. Staff show determination to provide the best possible outcomes for children, evaluating their practice commendably well and determining the best ways to drive improvement; consequently, they are extremely well placed to maintain continuous improvement for all children in this inclusive and welcoming setting.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- developing a consistent staff approach to letter formation, taking into account writing styles used at schools to which children will transfer, and take all opportunities to model writing to children in order to help them progress as quickly as possible in gaining early writing skills
- implementing the plans to expand the outdoor area, so providing children with further choice of where to play.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The senior management team work effectively to provide high quality provision. Excellent evaluation systems include canvassing the views of both parents and children, and acting on the advice of outside professionals. Evaluation clearly identifies the pre-school's many significant strengths and most areas for development, resulting in a well-focused action plan that guides a shared vision for the pre-school's future. This has already resulted in improved outcomes for all children through provision of a small outside area, which there are plans to extend.

Systems for safeguarding children are excellent. The senior management team review policies and procedures annually, including the record of risk assessment. They ensure these are relevant to this pre-school. The equal opportunities policy, for example, makes it clear that, although located in a church hall, the setting is an inclusive one and welcomes all children, whatever their backgrounds.

Other policies include appointing suitable staff through a rigorous selection system implementing stated procedures, so that all who work or volunteer in the pre-school know what they can and cannot do when with the children. Additionally, staff undertake regular training in food storage and preparation, and act on the advice of the local environmental health agency to prevent the spread of cross-infection, such as securing a fly net over a window. Staff are extremely well supported in gaining additional skills and qualifications, so that they are better able to help the children learn.

Staff form a cheerful, energetic team whose individual skills are acknowledged and used well. They set up a suitable learning environment for the children each day, working extremely hard to overcome the many difficulties of being in shared accommodation; consequently, children use a bright, welcoming playroom. Staff form excellent partnerships with parents, who receive an abundance of useful information about the pre-school and its work. They are kept extremely well informed as to their children's progress, including regular reviews of their 'learning journey' records. They inform staff about children's special achievements at home, so that these are celebrated at pre-school too.

Children benefit from an exceptionally close partnership with the local school, to which all the older children will transfer. Staff take them on visits, which are reciprocated by the school's early years teacher. This helps the transition to school run smoothly.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children bounce into the playroom, eager to see what is on offer for the session. They quickly become engrossed in self-chosen activities owing to the interesting and suitable range offered. Staff use their secure knowledge of the early learning goals to plan a broad and well-balanced programme of activities overall, although there are some minor weaknesses in literacy. This is because staff do not model writing sufficiently to children or adopt a consistent approach to letter formation,

which hampers children in making quick progress in gaining skills for their future lives. Despite this, all children make good all round progress in all six areas of learning, through exploratory play both indoors and outside.

Children enjoy an extremely good balance between activities they choose for themselves and those led by adults. They listen attentively in group activities, particularly when these are special, such as a visit from a guide dog and its sight-impaired handler. They show evident interest in the world around them and this reflects the attitudes of staff who are very good role models to them, demonstrating a positive, enthusiastic approach to learning. Additionally, staff make clear their expectations so that all children, including the youngest, behave very well and learn to share and get on with the other children and all adults in the pre-school.

Children develop excellent independence skills owing to the way staff set up the learning environment to support them both as individuals and learners. Children help choose which resources are offered. They decide when to take their snack, sometimes choosing items from the local shop and washing up their crockery. They learn which foods are healthy and which are better eaten 'just sometimes'. They learn about healthy living extremely well, spending commendable amounts of time outside and taking plenty of exercise daily. They learn how to keep themselves safe; staff allow them to take risks within a safe context, such as testing how they can clamber up a climbing frame. Trips to local parks provide additional challenge for more physically adroit children.

Children use an extremely clean, secure and safe environment. Staff follow stipulated procedures meticulously to check the hall is safe for children's use before each session, as it is a community facility and used by other groups. They undertake risk assessments for each type of outing, including special ones, such as to Farmer Gows, making suggestions to any parents who accompany their children as to how to maintain children's health and safety. All staff understand their responsibilities to protect children's welfare. They update their training in child protection regularly and know the procedures to follow should they have any concerns.

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?	1
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	1
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	1

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?	1
How well are children helped to stay safe?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

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