

St Mary's Playgroup (Tetbury)

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

Linda Janet Witts

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Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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*.

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Description of the setting

St Mary's Playgroup was first registered at the present premises in 1999. It is registered on the Early Years Register and is registered to accept up to 24 children aged from two years to the end of the early years age group. The group takes children from the age of two years six months. There are currently 38 children on roll of whom 28 are in receipt of nursery education grant funding.

The playgroup operates from Christchurch Hall near the centre of Tetbury, a rural town in Gloucestershire. The playgroup serves the local community and is managed by a voluntary committee with charitable status. The playgroup facilities include the hall, kitchen, toilets and the use of the gardens of a nearby nursing home, for outside play. The premises are accessible to disabled users. The playgroup is open Tuesday to Friday, term-time only from 9am to 12 midday and also 12.15pm to 3.15pm on Thursdays. Additional sessions are offered for pre-school children on Monday mornings from 9am to 12 midday during the summer term only.

The group uses the High Scope Approach to learning and welcomes children for whom English is an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The playgroup employs four members of staff. The playleader holds a Level 4 qualification and all staff hold Level 3 qualifications in childcare. The playgroup receives teacher support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The playgroup practitioners promote children's care and well-being effectively and help children to make good progress in their learning. Inclusion is fostered. The playgroup has highly effective partnerships with parents and others involved in children's care to ensure children's individual needs are met. The playgroup staff reflect on their practice and the playleader works with the playgroup committee to evaluate the playgroup provision and to identify its strengths and weaknesses. They demonstrate strong commitment to improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review hand-washing procedures to ensure that the risk of cross-infection is minimised
- continue to develop observation and planning to identify next steps for individual children's learning; consider different methods of observation to track the activities that children engage in during free play
- monitor progress records to ensure they give a clear record of children's progress

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare is safeguarded through implementation of mostly very effective policies and procedures. Staff are suitably vetted and trained in first aid and child protection. The identity of visitors is checked and staff are vigilant in their supervision of children. Risk assessment is given high priority and findings are recorded and reviewed regularly. The group's hygiene practice does not always reflect their policy. Healthy eating is promoted well.

The playgroup practitioners have embraced the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the welfare and learning requirements. An effective key person system is implemented. Staff know the children in their care well and plan activities that build upon children's interests. Short observations are made of the children at various activities and those recorded are added to children's 'learning journey' files, along with examples of children's work and some annotated photographs. Different methods of observing children have not been explored. The practitioners are beginning to record next steps for individual children's learning but there is a heavy reliance upon mental assessment of what stage children are at and what they need to do to progress. There is also no clear system to monitor the effectiveness of this practice. As a result practitioners cannot be sure that children are being sufficiently challenged. The practitioners are all enthusiastic in their work and instinctively know when to be actively involved in children's play and when to stand back and let them play freely. They promote children's language and thinking effectively and encourage children's personal, social and emotional development and other areas of learning well.

The church hall premises are transformed before each playgroup session into an interesting, well equipped and welcoming environment. Resources are set out attractively and displays of children's art work and learning materials enhance the play space. The very small outdoor play area is utilised effectively to enable children to enjoy activities such as digging and water play in fresh air. Children are also taken out during each session to local green spaces where they can participate in physical play and exploration. The High Scope approach to learning is implemented and this encourages children to play an active role in the setting. They are encouraged to make decisions in their play and to reflect upon their activities at the end of each session.

The committee supports staff so that they can access training for their own personal development and to benefit the playgroup provision. Team work is fostered impressively. Each member of staff is clear of their role and responsibilities. Together they plan a broad range of activities that successfully cover each of the six areas of learning within the EYFS. The playgroup leader works with the committee and staff to evaluate the provision. They also seek feedback from parents. They understand the importance of commitment to continued improvement and strive to provide high quality care and education.

The playgroup has an exemplary partnership with parents and also with others involved in children's care. Parents are actively encouraged to take an interest in and be involved with their children's learning. Most parents do regular playgroup duties and get an insight into children's learning experiences. They are encouraged to use 'wow' sheets to record achievements children make at home and these are added to children's progress files. These files are regularly shared with parents and the leader happily arranges home visits to share information about children's progress with parents who are unable to attend the playgroup. Parents are invited to join their children on outings to places of interest and to the annual Nativity play. The committee is made up of parents and they organise well-attended social events for parents and staff to enjoy together. Information about the provision is prominently displayed for parents and regular newsletters keep them up-to-date. Policies and procedures are routinely shared with parents. Many of the children attend different settings in addition to the playgroup. The playgroup practitioners are proactive in developing links with these settings. They visit the children during their time at other settings and share information with children's key carers there. In this way they can ensure that children's experiences at the playgroup enhance children's early years experiences elsewhere.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

The children attending enjoy their time at playgroup. Children new to the setting receive sensitive support from the adults caring for them and soon settle quickly. Children of all ages relate well to adults and their peers. They learn to show kindness and consideration to others and also learn good manners from an early age. The children are motivated and interested in the broad range of activities and experiences offered to them. They make good progress towards the early learning goals of the EYFS. Children are familiar with the playgroup routine and make choices in their play. They can access resources stored at low level and extend activities using their own ideas.

Children are secure and develop a sense of belonging to the setting. Children spoken to report that they 'like coming to playgroup'. They learn behavioural expectations within the playgroup and on outings. Staff help children to understand safety issues by reminding them about dangers and how to keep themselves safe. Children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and older children show good awareness about what constitutes this. They learn the importance of personal hygiene; for example, they routinely wash their hands after wiping their noses, toileting and before they eat. However, sometimes they use a communal bowl of water and hand towel and this fails to minimise the risk of cross-infection, compromising their good health. Children eat well, enjoying healthy snacks, and learn about healthy eating through planned activities such as cooking. Children have regular fresh air and engage in a wide range of physical activities both indoors and out. When outdoors they explore the natural environments of the gardens they play in and also places of interest they are taken to such as Westonbirt Arboretum and Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust. Children also have good opportunities to learn to care for creatures such as rabbits, hamsters and ducklings brought into playgroup.

Children develop skills for the future. They gain independence and become active, inquisitive learners. They are encouraged to problem-solve and show interest in numeracy. Children investigate how things work. They operate torches, push-button and programmable toys and many operate the computer competently with little or no adult guidance. The computer is a popular activity which children learn to take turns on. Children often sit together and talk about particular programs. Children demonstrate confident communication skills; they talk through what they are doing, share past experiences and make their needs known. Children who need help in their acquisition of language are supported well by staff who model the use of spoken English, introduce new vocabulary and show genuine interest in what children have to say or are trying to convey. Children take opportunities to mark-make. The writing table is well-used, as is painting at an easel. Children draw lines and circles and some can write their own name with some letters correctly formed. Many draw recognisable pictures skilfully with control. Children look at books for pleasure as they relax in the book corner. They are also keen to snuggle up with the practitioners to enjoy stories together. Children listen intently to stories at group story time. The children show curiosity about the wider world and see some positive images of culture, ethnicity and disability within the resources available to them. Children learn about different cultures through planned activities but the cultural heritage of all children attending is not always celebrated. The children are taken out into the local community and they have strong links with the nearby nursing home. Children regularly visit and play in the gardens of the home and also perform their Nativity songs to the residents. Occasionally the elderly residents spend time with the children in the playgroup. As children prepare for transition from playgroup to school they are supported very well because the playgroup practitioners have excellent links with the schools and also encourage the teachers to visit the children in the setting.

The children use their imagination within their play. In the home corner, children, including those under the age of three, relish opportunities to role-play based on their own first-hand experiences. They can dress up and 'cook', 'make tea' and 'do the washing up'. They will often take the role-play resources out to have 'picnics' in other areas of the church hall. They also link up with others to share in their imaginative play. Small world cars, house and figures also support children's imaginative ideas, as do creative activities. Children combine materials to make collages and are introduced to different painting and craft techniques.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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