



St. Mary's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	143101
Inspection date	30 November 2005
Inspector	Bridget Copson
Setting Address	Lysander Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2BU
Telephone number	
E-mail	
Registered person	St Marys Pre School
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 Pre-school opened in 1992. It operates from within the Holy Trinity Community Centre in the town of Yeovil, Somerset. It is open from 09:15 to 12:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays during term time only. It is registered to provide care for a maximum of 26 children under 5-years. The premises offers use of a spacious hall with a kitchen and toilets. The children have access to a garden.

There are currently 29 children aged 2 to under 4-years on roll. Of these, 22 children

receive funding for nursery education. There are currently no children attending with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. The pre-school offers sessional care to children from the town and surrounding areas.

The pre-school employs six members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group is supported by the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about keeping fit and healthy through a good range of activities and play provision. For example, they enjoy music and movement, games and action rhymes indoors. They also use small and large scale equipment in the hall and garden and walk within the school grounds. Children learn about healthy lifestyles and good eating habits through interesting topics, such as 'All About Me' where they explore healthy food and drink options. They also choose from a good range of fresh fruits with milky drinks, squash or water at their café style snack times.

Children are cared for within a clean and hygienic environment where staff have good systems in place to prevent the spread of infection. For example, regular hand washing, thorough cleaning and disinfecting routines and excluding sick or infectious children and adults. Children are learning about managing personal hygiene well through good hand washing routines and not handling other peoples' food.

Children's health, medical and dietary requirements are met well by staff who keep written records of care required. Staff are equipped with the necessary skills to meet any additional medical needs, for example, knowing how to use an inhaler. They provide parents with written details of any accidents, incidents or medication administered for consistency of care.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for within well-maintained premises which is organised to allow them the freedom to move between activities freely and unhindered. Children are kept safe and secure by staff who check all areas of the provision before children arrive and ensure appropriate safety measures are in place indoors and outside. For example, external door locks, socket covers, radiator temperature controls and secure boundaries in the garden.

Children learn about keeping themselves safe through good practical activities and staff guidance. For example, walking safely to the school, using sharp tools, such as scissors, safely and effectively and practising the evacuation drill regularly.

Children enjoy a good range of play provision appropriate for their stage of development. They choose freely from the range of activities set out by staff and

extend their play by choosing suitable craft equipment from the resources cupboard. Children do not have access to anything that is not safe for them to use independently. For example, staff only allow children to use scissors under their supervision.

Children are protected well by staff who have good systems in place to safeguard their welfare at all times. For example, staff keep a record of all visitors and children who arrive late and hold details of adults authorised to collect children. They have a good understanding of child protection issues and procedures to support them in keeping children safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a good range of activities to support their learning and development. For example, different role play environments and small world sets, story and reference books in a quiet corner, puzzles, manipulative toys and games and different constructional sets. In addition children enjoy organised and free choice creative activities.

Children enjoy different learning opportunities linked to topics each half term and benefit from the same experiences as children in receipt of funding. All children's learning and development is planned according to the Foundation Stage curriculum, regardless of their age. However, staff do link activities carefully to help children make connections and to support their learning. For example, children explore their own needs, looks, features and lives in the 'All About Me' topic.

Children arrive happy and settle quickly. They self-register, know where to put their possessions and seek out peers and staff to talk with. Children focus on favourite toys well and are proud to show off their work. This all demonstrates children have a good sense of well-being and belonging within the group.

Children use their imaginations well in role play situations, small world activities and with music. They extend their own creative play by accessing some additional resources themselves. Children's communication skills are developing appropriately. For example, they discuss news and ideas at group times and younger children use facial expressions and body language to communicate. Children are developing some independence through finding and choosing favourite toys, visiting the toilet and washing hands alone.

Children's progress and wellbeing is monitored through key workers observing and interacting in their play. However, staff do not use their observations of children's achievements effectively to monitor progress accurately, provide appropriate challenges and plan children's next steps.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children enjoy interesting activities and practical experiences linked to topics each half term which promote their learning and development in most areas. This is supported by staff who have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are clear what they intend children to learn from activities. The manager, with contribution from staff, develops plans which detail how activities will be used to provide learning opportunities for children linked to the six areas of learning. A different focus is set each week to keep children interested, for example, for the 'All About Me' topic children focused on health, looking, listening and faces.

Staff offer well-planned activities and practical exercises to capture children's interest. They encourage children to contribute their thoughts, knowledge and skills to the benefit of all. For example, children talk about healthy foods which they then find and stick onto paper plates to create healthy meals. Staff ask children lots of questions to encourage them to think and express themselves. For example, encouraging children to express what they see, feel and hear when using their senses to explore. Key workers observe children in play and write informal observations which they use to create a report in the spring and summer term for children starting school. Reports include children's stage of development for the six areas of learning, but do not include any areas for development to promote learning further. As a result this system does not ensure all children's progress is monitored accurately on an individual basis to ensure appropriate challenges are given and next steps planned.

Children are interested and motivated to learn. They access new experiences with excitement and focus well on the things that interest them. Children behave well and are developing a good understanding of what is right and wrong. Children sit and listen well to stories, discussion and instructions. They ask questions and communicate their news, ideas and answers at group times. Children enjoy books and choose favourites at group times. They are learning how to handle them appropriately and contribute elements of the story from memory and using pictures as prompts. Children write spontaneously in many different activities. For example, in role play, mark-making with different tools, drawing and labelling their work.

Children are developing an understanding of numbers and count spontaneously in their play as well as in group situations. Some children are learning to recognise numbers in numeral form. Children are learning to recognise and correctly name different shapes through puzzles and games as well as spontaneously within the environment. They are learning to use the correct descriptive language in play for position and size. For example, moving cars 'over' and 'under' tunnels and creating 'longer' and 'shorter' models. Children explore why things happen and how things work through practical exercises, such as floating and sinking objects and freezing water. They study plants and living things to explore growth and change, such as looking at mini beasts through magnifying glasses and planting and growing in the garden. Children are developing an understanding time and place through exploring aspects of their own lives and exploring their local environment.

Children move with control and co-ordination during physical play activities such as music and movement and action songs. They enjoy a good range of large and small scale equipment both indoors and in the garden to promote their physical development. Children enjoy music and join in group singing with enthusiasm. They

explore sounds and rhythm using many different musical instruments, for example, through attending the 'Music Box' sessions. Children use their imaginations well in art and craft activities, small world play and different role play environments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for equally and fairly by staff in most areas of the provision. Staff have systems in place to ensure all children are included and valued. For example, checklists to ensure all children have been invited to participate in an adult-led activity, displaying examples of all children's work and ensuring activities are suitable for all children present. Children's individual needs are met appropriately by staff through the key worker system, record keeping and effective communication. However, systems for monitoring children's progress and wellbeing is not effective for all children. The pre-school has a special educational needs co-ordinator in place. She is equipped with the knowledge and skills to support children with additional needs.

Children behave well and are developing a good understanding of what is expected of them. For example, children alert staff to those who are not sharing or who use equipment inappropriately. More confident children will also correct others appropriately and say 'please' and 'thank-you' well. Staff create a positive and cheerful environment within which children are happy and learning to share and play well together. They provide lots of encouragement and praise in recognition of children's achievements which promotes their confidence and self-esteem. Any issues are managed in partnership with parents for consistency of care. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Children are cared for consistently and according to parents' wishes in most areas. Parents receive a prospectus, copies of the group's policies and procedures and complete enrolment forms and consent for all required areas of care. This supports staff in meeting children's needs appropriately. Parents are kept informed through daily contact with staff, monthly newsletters and an informative notice board in the entrance hall. Parents have some opportunities to get involved in their child's learning. For example, they receive details of all curriculum plans and forthcoming topics and can volunteer to help in sessions. However, parents do not contribute information on their child's stage of development on admission and are not invited to meet with staff to discuss their child's progress throughout the year.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by an established team of staff who all hold appropriate child care qualifications to support them in their roles within the pre-school. Staff are committed to updating their knowledge and skills to the benefit of children through

attending training opportunities. There are effective systems in place to ensure staff are suitable and well-prepared to carry out their roles effectively. For example, an employment and vetting procedure and an induction programme for new staff. However, there are less effective systems in place to monitor the quality of care provided. For example, appraisals to monitor staff development and ongoing suitability and regular risk assessments to monitor safety.

Children are cared for within well-organised premises which is warm and welcoming to them and parents. Staff make appropriate use of their time in most areas and organise themselves to provide children with support and a structured routine with flexibility for special events. For example, nativity play practice and the 'Music Box' session. High adult ratios support staff in providing well-organised sessions within which children are involved and not kept waiting. However, staff do not spend time working with key children in small groups or on a one to one basis to promote their learning and development more effectively. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Staff keep all records relating to children secure to maintain confidentiality whilst allowing them access to relevant information easily. However, not all documentation is updated regularly to ensure accurate information is held. For example, policies and procedures have not been updated for over two years and do not contain some relevant information for staff and parents. Also systems are not in place to ensure all children's records are updated regularly to ensure appropriate information is held and to support staff in continuing to care for children appropriately.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

The setting has some systems in place to monitor the quality of nursery education and its strengths and weaknesses. For example, staff meetings when required and evaluation of some adult-led activities. However, systems are not always effective in monitoring all areas of the provision, especially staff development and assessment systems. The pre-school shows a commitment to improvement. For example, staff have close liaison with the local school which most children attend. Children visit regularly, join in school events and use some of the facilities. This promotes continuity and aids children's transition into school. In addition staff attend local cluster groups and meet regularly with the local authority to discuss good practice and development.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure that confidentiality is maintained with all records relating to children. It agreed to provide more opportunities for children to explore a range of print in books and the environment and opportunities to calculate. Also to develop an effective method of assessing children's progress to ensure appropriate challenges are offered.

The provider keeps all records relating to children secure to ensure confidentiality is maintained whilst allowing staff to access appropriate information easily. The staff have improved the organisation of the book corner and the range of books available

to children. As a result children make better use of the books to enjoy stories and to explore a range of print. Children are developing an understanding of early calculation from the activities provided by staff during session. The systems in place to assess children's progress are still not effective in accurately monitoring progress to ensure appropriate challenges are offered.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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

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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):

- develop activities and assessment systems for younger children to ensure appropriate challenges are provided and next steps planned, for example, through implementing the Birth to three matters framework
- improve systems of monitoring the quality of care provided, especially staff development and risk assessment

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):

- provide parents with more opportunities to get involved in their child's learning and development
- improve systems of monitoring and evaluating the quality of nursery education
- improve systems of assessing all children's progress to ensure appropriate challenges are provided and next steps planned

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