



St Mary's Playgroup (Tetbury)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 101530

Inspection date 15 November 2005

Inspector Pamela Edna Friling

Setting Address Christchurch Hall, The Chipping, Tetbury, Gloucestershire, GL8 8EU

Telephone number

E-mail

Registered person St Mary's Playgroup (Tetbury)

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Mary's Playgroup was first registered at the present premises in 1999. The playgroup operates in a church 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 group is open from 09:30 to 12:00, Tuesday to Friday during school term-time

only. Additional sessions operate each Tuesday afternoon from 12.15 until 14.45 for pre-school children, and Monday mornings during the summer term only.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the group at any one time. There are currently 27 children on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for nursery education. The group use an adapted form of High Scope to organise children's learning. The group supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs four members of staff. Two, including the playgroup leader, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The remaining two staff members are working towards a level three qualification. The playgroup receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children take part in a varied range of stimulating activities which enable them to learn about good health and encourage children to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene. The staff and other adults present support all children well in their quest for independent personal care. For example, children wash hands independently and describe the need to have clean hands before eating.

Children develop the range of their physical skills over time through a rotation of activities within the playroom. Children undertake further physical development as they use the grounds of the local care home for outdoor play. Children recognise the effect of exercise on their body as they become hot and tired during physical activity. The 'Birth to three matters' framework training has been undertaken to extend adult understanding of individual children's stage of development.

Children discuss healthy eating and are able to confidently describe healthy food options. The children and their key worker sit together for sociable snack times. However, children are not offered consistently healthy snack options and they do not take an active part in the snack time routine. Children have access to drinks of water on request but are not able to access drinks independently when they are thirsty. Children's health is well promoted through clear routines for administration of medication and first aid. Records contain clear detail and all required signatures.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for within an environment which is both safe and secure. Risk of accidental injury is minimised by the thorough and well documented risk assessment of potential hazards within the play room and for proposed playgroup trips. Staff are vigilant in their approach to safety and supervision.

Children have a good awareness of safety issues and are learning about keeping themselves safe. For example, children are aware of safety issues surrounding use of the cooker as they bake apple crumble, telling the staff to 'be careful you don't burn yourself'. Children's understanding extends to their role play in the home corner where they request an oven glove for their play cooking. Vigilant supervision and clear explanation extends young children's understanding of safety issues. For example, children know how to stay safe when playing indoors, recognising why it is not safe to run. Children develop good independence as they access resources freely for themselves. These are stored invitingly in attractive labelled boxes to aid individual choice. Children's pictures and paintings are attractively displayed around the room, creating a colourful and welcoming environment for children.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted through staff knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at playgroup and are supported well by the staff as they play and learn. Children arrive with enthusiasm and settle very quickly to the well established daily routine. They are relaxed in the company of the attentive staff. Children are encouraged to express themselves through careful staff questioning and genuine interest in individual conversation. Children benefit from effective monitoring of their development and education by their key worker. This allows all children to build on what they already know and can do, and ensures they access a wide range of activities within their free choice time. The High Scope approach is used to encourage children to plan and review their daily activities.

As a result of the sensitive care offered, children are happy, secure and confident. Children are very independent. They make choices from all available resources and activities, take care of their personal care needs and assist with some daily routines. Low-level, well-labelled storage of toys encourages self-reliance.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children benefit from the staff's childcare experience and understanding of the stepping stones to the early learning goals. Staff interaction and questioning encourages children to think and solve problems as they take part in both self-initiated and adult-led play activities. Staff observe children as they play and share their observations with the child's key workers to ensure future learning extension or support is appropriate. Using the High Scope approach to learning, children select their play areas and activities. However, the free choice activities do not always have clear learning intentions linked to individual next steps of learning or routinely cover all curriculum areas.

Children develop good relationships with staff and other children in the group. They learn to co-operate, share and work well together. For example, children take turns and share well during role play as they share resources and roles within the home corner. Children offer praise to others for their art work with comments such as,

'That's fantastic like mine'. Children are encouraged to be independent in their personal care and activity choices but take less of a role in preparation for snack time. They show good levels of concentration for both self-selected and adult-led activities. For example, a three year old sat for some time accurately colouring a difficult picture and a group of children demonstrated their independence and perseverance as they produced colourful collages based on their own ideas. Children engage well in imaginative play based on their first hand experiences, for example cooking and washing up in the home corner. Children assign roles as they organise their play, for example, 'You sit there and drink your tea while I cook'. They move well to music as they follow instructions for a range of action songs. Children safely and competently use a range of tools and equipment, such as, pencils, scissors and glue spreaders. For example, children cut out footprints for the 'policemen' to follow as part of their role-play game.

Children demonstrate an interest in numbers and counting. They count confidently, with more able children counting accurately to 20 and beyond. Children are challenged appropriately through practical activities to extend their understanding of numbers as they play. Children recreate pattern as they play with peg boards, and sort bears by size and colour. They confidently describe simple shapes and use language relating to size, shape and speed. Children are confident communicators. They happily share their news and talk in large and small key groups to familiar adults. Children benefit from daily opportunities to make marks, paint, draw and crayon. For example, children make marks to name their own pictures and use pencils and paper to make lists as part of their role play. More able children are forming some recognisable letters and are beginning to recognise and write their own names. Children enjoy easily accessible books both independently and as part of group stories. Children are developing their skills in linking sounds to letters through use of rhyme and rhythm and introduction through play to the initial sounds in words. They confidently offer rhyming words such as 'slippy' and 'nippy'.

Children enjoy exploring and investigating many different media. They mix paint colours on their paintings and explore textures as they create collages. Children confidently operate simple equipment such as the torches and electronic toys. However, they are more limited in their use of the computer, which does not form part of their free choice activities. Children are introduced to different cultures and festivals through themed activities. Over time children have the chance to observe the natural world through planned activities. As children make and cook their apple crumble they show some understanding of changes that take place when heat is applied. For example, they describe the boiling apple filling as 'bubbling and jumping' and notice the change in colour of the crumble topping. However, they have more limited opportunities to explore science and natural objects as part of their self initiated play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Partnership with parents is good. Children and their parents are warmly welcomed and play a full and active part in the playgroup. The partnership with parents gives

children the confidence to form secure and happy relationships with the staff. Good quality information is shared with parents to ensure they are fully conversant with how their child will be cared for and taught. Parents provide and receive both verbal and written information regarding their child's progress, routines, activities and individual needs and preferences. They are able to contribute ideas to the group via suggestion boxes. Newsletters, an informative notice board and displays extend parental involvement in the shared care of their children.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children have use of books and resources reflecting culture, race and disability. Children are forming firm friendships. They share well and are encouraged to be kind and thoughtful to others. Children show kindness and consideration for each other and willingly assist their friends and adults with daily routines and play choices. Children enjoy praise for their helpfulness and kindness as well as individual effort and achievement. They show empathy for children who have English as their additional language, including them in their play. Children take part in a range of activities in the playgroup to extend their understanding of the wider world. For example, celebration of world festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year and involvement in fund raising events such as Red Nose Day and the local care home events. Children behave very well and respect the premises, equipment and each other. Staff form calm role models for the children. Children with special needs are cared for appropriately through consultation with both parents and external agencies.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children play happily in the bright, cheerful playroom. Space is well planned into separate play areas to allow children to choose their preferred play area within the room. Ratios of adults to children are well maintained to allow quality time to be spent with individual children. Resources are well labelled and accessible to enable children's independent use.

The Leadership and management of the playgroup is good. The play leader has a positive attitude and liaises closely with the chairperson, so enhancing the overall good organisation of the playgroup. Strong team spirit and effective communication through weekly meetings ensures an inclusive environment, which supports children's education and learning. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals, although free play learning intentions are not clearly identified and regular exploration with natural resources and information technology is more limited. Staff and parent helpers have clear roles and responsibilities. They are well motivated and access regular training opportunities. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. There are good strategies to improve the quality of the provision, for example, they have signed up to a quality assurance scheme. Liaison with the early year's foundation advisor guides and supports their practice and procedures.

Policies and procedures have been developed to ensure the smooth and consistent operation of the childcare. Regular reflection and monitoring of practice ensures the

care remains of high quality and well organised. Robust systems for recruitment and vetting ensure staff are suitable for their role. Documentation meets all requirements of registration and contributes to children's health, safety and well-being. The playgroup understands their responsibility to maintain a record of complaints.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended that the group develop their registration system for staff and children and record incidents separately to maintain confidentiality. In addition they were asked to continue to develop their planning to enable staff to adapt experiences and activities to promote learning for individual children. Finally, the group were asked to build upon parent's knowledge of their child's interests, competencies and experiences to help plan the curriculum for the child.

The registration system now shows clearly which children and adults are present. A record is maintained of times of arrival and departure for children not attending for the full session. A visitor record is used consistently to record additional adults present. A confidential incident record is maintained in a separate book.

The development of the group planning system is ongoing. Staff have attended relevant training and are reviewing their planning methods. They are looking at planning models for the introduction of differentiation for children's individual needs. Staff differentiate activities in practice, offering extension or support as required for individual children. However, this is not yet reflected in their written plans. Good baseline information is gained from parents before their child starts at playgroup. This information covers their child's interests, competencies and experiences to ensure their individual care and learning needs are met. Parents continue to contribute information throughout their child's time at playgroup through daily verbal exchange with their child's key worker.

Complaints since the last inspection

A complaint was received on 17 May 2005 that a trip had been arranged to which staff were to bring their own children, and that this may have led to the ratio of adults to children not being met. This relates to National Standard 2 (Organisation). We asked the provider to investigate and to report back to Ofsted within ten working days. The provider supplied details of how the trip had been originally planned and how the plans were changed. The provider also reported that the issue had been resolved with the parent. We are satisfied that the National Standards are being met and the group remain qualified for 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.

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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):

- improve children's access to drinks throughout the session, ensure snack options are healthy and nutritious and children are encouraged to take an active part in snack time routines.

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):

- ensure free choice activities have clear learning intentions, cover all curriculum areas and are selected carefully to help individual children build on what they already know. Within the free choice options provide frequent opportunities for children to investigate and explore natural objects within the room and use information technology to support their learning.

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