



## **St. Mary's Pre-school**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	219115
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 January 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Kelly Eyre

<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Mary's Church Hall, St. Mary's Road, Wootton, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK43 9HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 767158
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	St Mary's Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Pre School is managed by a voluntary committee, in partnership with St Mary's church. It opened in 1967 and operates from two main rooms in St Mary's Church Hall in the village of Wootton, Bedfordshire. A maximum of 32 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open each weekday during term-time only and sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45. It is also open on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 12:45 to 15:15. All children have access to a secure

enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 47 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves the local community. It currently supports a number of children with special educational needs, and is able to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. Five of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. They are learning good health and personal hygiene practices through following practical daily routines, such as washing their hands before snack time. They understand the relevance of these practices as staff explain these to them. Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are clearly documented and staff ensure that these are respected. Children's growth and development are promoted because they are offered a variety of nutritious foods at snack time, including fresh fruit, toast and breadsticks. Their knowledge of different food types and healthy eating is developed through topic work such as food tasting sessions, and through the use of daily opportunities and routines as opportunities to discuss this, for example, whilst listening to a story about a caterpillar, children discuss which foods are good for them and the reasons why.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities, which contribute to their good health. They regularly use the outdoor play area, or space is made indoors, so that they are able to use larger play equipment such as climbing frames, slides and ride-on toys, and smaller equipment such as balls and hoops. They also practise and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in activities such as music and movement sessions and action rhymes. They show developing skills in smaller physical movements, for example, they are able to use scissors correctly and construct objects using a range of materials.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where their work is creatively displayed and resources are well organised. Their safety is given a high priority and staff carry out daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. A major risk assessment has also been completed and staff are able to refer to a large file of additional safety information. This helps to ensure that children are able to move around safely, freely and independently. The daily implementation of practical policies and procedures ensures that staff are aware of safety practices and are able to promote children's safety in all areas, for example,

there is a clear procedure regarding emergency evacuation and this is practised regularly.

Children are developing an understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves safe. They are consistently given clear explanations by staff to help them understand the relevance of safety rules, for example, they understand why it is important not to run inside and to always hold hands with an adult when crossing the car park. Children use toys and resources that are appropriate for their size and developmental stages. Staff regularly check these to ensure that they are clean and safe. Children's welfare is very well promoted because staff have attended additional training and have a good knowledge of child protection procedures and are able to identify, report and follow up any concerns.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They enjoy their time at the pre-school and are enthusiastic about the activities and play opportunities provided. They are confident in their relationships with each other and with adults. Their personal development and self-confidence are promoted through appropriate support and interaction from staff. New children settle well, quickly becoming secure within the setting because staff are calm, confident and plan ahead to ensure that children receive individual attention and support whenever needed.

Children are in a stimulating environment where resources are easily accessible and there are colourful posters and creative displays of their work. They confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Staff get to know the children well and make good use of open questions and discussions to encourage them to think further and extend their learning. Children can participate in all activities because these are adapted to suit individual development and capabilities. An example of this is children participating in an activity to draw an item beginning with the letter 'b' where younger ones are supported in forming this letter and choosing an item to draw, whilst older children are encouraged to develop the activity by thinking of further items and writing their own names on their pictures.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, enabling them to plan appropriate activities. Children are supported well in whichever activity they choose. Their time is spent purposefully because staff are skilled in monitoring children throughout the session, quickly noticing when they need encouragement and direction. They also make the most of everyday routines and opportunities to extend children's learning, for example, counting how many children are at the table and how many more pieces of toast will be needed. Children's progress in all areas is well balanced as staff use clear assessment methods, using information gained from this to highlight areas to be covered and to produce individual play plans for each child.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. These include regular opportunities to participate in a variety of crafts, construction, imaginative play, reading and music sessions. Children's knowledge is further extended as they cover a variety of topics enabling them to look at themes such as 'Autumn' where they are involved in fruit-tasting, collecting and drawing leaves, discussing animals and their habitats, planting bulbs and producing firework pictures. Children are confident in initiating conversations and in using language to explain their thoughts, often forming complex sentences. They enjoy listening to stories and are beginning to communicate through writing, for example, older children are able to recognise and form letters of the alphabet and write their names and simple words. However, some sessions for younger children do not offer consistent opportunities for them to practise mark-making and writing.

Children are motivated and enthusiastic about their play and activities. They have good relationships with their peers, playing imaginary games and negotiating turn-taking and sharing. They show developing skills in mathematics as they learn about this through number rhymes and activities, confidently using size and positional language in their play. They are gaining an awareness of their own culture and that of others through activities, discussions and regular access to resources such as dressing-up clothes, books and puzzles, which provide both information and positive images. Children enjoy joining in with favourite songs and rhymes and show an emerging awareness of rhythm and different types of sound, for example, during a music session, children beat time with shakers and bells, listen to changes in tempo and respond appropriately by playing loudly or softly and using the xylophones to create the sound of raindrops.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are offered a variety of activities which help promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include celebrations connected with Christmas and Chinese New Year and the invitation to the setting of visitors such as the local fire service. Children are valued and respected as individuals and staff ensure that specific needs are clearly identified and consistently met. Children are kind and considerate to each other. Their behaviour is good throughout the sessions as they competently choose their activities and organise turn-taking and sharing. They respond well to staff, and the positive approach and good staff role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have special needs have their requirements clearly identified and met as there is a practical policy relating to this and staff ensure that this is implemented daily. Staff have attended additional training and are skilled in identifying needs and in working with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support. The competent implementation of individual education plans, good teaching methods and an excellent understanding of inclusion means that children participate meaningfully in all activities and routines. An example of this is the practical use of a visual timetable to ensure that children are aware of

what will be happening during the session and are able to see the range of activities available and make choices about how they spend their time.

With regard to the provision of funded nursery education, the quality of the setting's partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given initial information about the setting and the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. They are kept well informed of their children's progress and activities through newsletters, end-of-year reports, informal discussions with staff and the use of notice boards. This positive attitude helps ensure that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care can be provided for each child.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Overall, the needs of all children attending are met. Children's care is enhanced by the setting's good organisation and they benefit from the care provided by experienced, qualified staff. There are stringent procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. However, Ofsted has not been given clear information about the management committee responsible for the group, which could compromise children's safety and welfare as the necessary checking process has not been completed. A clear staff induction process, regular supervision and ongoing monitoring ensure that the pre-school's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied.

Children's play opportunities are enhanced by the good organisation of space. They are able to move safely and freely between activities, enabling them to feel confident to initiate their own play and learning. Good organisation of all areas ensures that children are offered a wide range of activities and opportunities both within the building and outside, for example, children are able to work in small groups and to listen to stories without interruption as staff plan ahead and make good use of the additional, smaller room.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the manager has of her role and responsibilities, ensuring that she is aware of all regulations. She acts as a good role model, attending additional training and demonstrating her enthusiasm and enjoyment of her work. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting and helps staff to feel valued and motivated. All sessions are well planned, with a balanced range of activities throughout the week. Children are always given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and monitoring. Staff pay attention to the planning of future work, ensuring that the needs of individuals are met and the development of all children is promoted.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At their last inspection, the group was asked to provide children with more opportunities to learn about other cultures and traditions. Staff have now provided

additional resources and have also introduced the celebration of a range of festivals as short-term topics, offering children positive images and further information in this area. They were asked to review policies to ensure that they contain sufficient details. These have been reviewed and contain relevant information to enable staff to act in the best interests of children at all times. Staff were also asked to review the organisation of snack time. They now use a 'snack bar' system for older children, enabling them to make choices and promoting their independence, for example, through choosing when to eat and pouring their own drinks.

With regard to the provision of funded nursery education, the group was asked to review the planning and assessment processes. They have implemented a new planning system and each child now has an individual play plan which is reviewed on a regular basis. These changes ensure that children are offered appropriate challenge and are set realistic targets to promote their development. The group was asked to ensure that parents are informed of the educational provision and updated on their children's progress. Staff now write an end-of-year report, make good use of newsletters and invite parents to meet with them to discuss progress, ensuring that all parents are fully informed. Finally, the group was asked to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision. They have now introduced regular staff appraisals which cover all areas of staff and service development, enabling them to review and improve the service they offer.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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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On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### **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):

- ensure that Ofsted is informed of all committee members and any changes to the committee.

### **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):

- increase opportunities for younger children to practise writing and mark-making.

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