



St Mary's Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	650135
Inspection date	13 January 2006
Inspector	Jacqueline Oldman / Anne Daly
Setting Address	St Mary's Church Centre, The Chase, Great Baddow, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 7JU
Telephone number	01245 471683
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Registered person	St Marys Playschool
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 Playschool is committee run. It opened in 1968 and operates from St Mary's Church Centre. It is situated in the centre of Great Baddow, near Chelmsford. A maximum of 90 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each week day from 09:15 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 14:45 on four afternoons during term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 116 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 84 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with special needs, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 20 staff. Over half the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children thrive because staff follow sound procedures which meet the children's physical, nutritional and health needs. There are clear written guidelines that protect children from illness and infection and cover the procedures in the event of a child being unwell. Staff have attended first aid courses and keep clear records of any medication administered. Methods for recording accidents have been reviewed and changes were being implemented during the inspection to ensure confidentiality was consistently maintained.

Children stay healthy because they are beginning to show good levels of understanding regarding simple good health and hygiene practices. The older children in the pre-school learn about personal hygiene. They know why they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet and hands can carry germs. The younger children are encouraged to wash their hands after having their nappy changed to promote good hygiene practices. The pre-school have already identified a need to improve the hand washing facilities. A new siphon sink has been purchased.

Individual groups of children come together for an organised snack time. Generally they are offered fruit or biscuits on alternate weeks. Children are offered milk and fresh drinking water is made available to them. Older children learn about healthy living as they discuss with staff how nutritious vegetables and fruit promote healthy growth and development. Children have their health and dietary needs well met because the staff gather information from parents. They are all extremely well aware of any allergies or special diets and take good account of these when planning activities.

Children have plenty of daily opportunities for a wide range of physical exercise, both indoors and outdoors; this contributes to their good health. They benefit from effective planning for regular use of the large indoor hall, indoor courtyard and outside play areas. Children show great enthusiasm when invited to join in circle games and have good control over their bodies. They run and move confidently, skilfully manipulating items and confidently use a range of small and large equipment. A range of indoor and outdoor apparatus is provided so that children can practise and refine their skills when climbing and balancing. This is further enhanced with

playground games such as snakes and ladders and painted car tracks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a spacious, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. Potential risks to children are minimised by staff completing regular risk assessments of each room and the outdoor areas. Children's welfare and safety is given careful consideration and staff help them learn to keep themselves safe. Children talk about safe practice and give clear explanations demonstrating their understanding of the related issues. For example, they know why they must always be in the direct care of an adult. Good use is made of safety items such as radiator covers and door locks to help children learn about potential hazards. Equipment to develop children's skills in balance and climbing are available in a well-supervised indoor courtyard.

Children benefit from the well-organised and vibrant learning environment. A wide range of equipment and resources is available that are suitable for the ages of children attending. Sound procedures are in place to ensure equipment is safe and well maintained. Children access their own resources independently across the provision; this helps to develop and sustain high levels of independence.

Children are protected because practitioners have a sound knowledge of child protection issues. Staff have attended recent training to update their knowledge and understanding. They know their role and responsibilities and how to implement both the setting and local child protection procedures. The recording of all staff, children and visitors to and from the pre-school, detailed policies for the collection and non-collection of children and fire safety procedures contribute to ensuring children are safeguarded from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children quickly settle and become familiar with the routines and their surroundings in the pre-school. Parents complete individual child profile forms to ensure staff are well informed of their child's needs. Children demonstrate good levels of confidence as they learn through play and relate well to each other. They establish close friendships and build comfortable relationships with staff. Children are able to choose from a good range of resources set up ready or made freely available to them. Younger children are mostly confident and make good progress. Staff have reviewed their developmental records to effectively incorporate the 'Birth to three matters' framework and plan learning opportunities to support and encourage the development of children aged under three years.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff have developed a secure

understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn, through training. Children and staff have opportunities to spend time with the foundation class of a local infant school. The programme of activities and the indoor and outdoor environment has been developed effectively to provide a stimulating range of learning experiences across the six areas of learning. Children are motivated and interested to learn throughout each session as they spend time persevering and concentrating on their tasks and activities. There is a good balance between supervised activities and allowing children freedom to create from their imaginations, for example in role play and painting. They respond extremely well to the staff's expectations for good behaviour.

Children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are eager to help the staff and assist each other with simple tasks. Children are animated and enthusiastic as they make choices and decisions about their activities. They are able to select and access resources easily and staff are vigilant in their monitoring and supervision. Children show great pride in their achievements and enjoy sharing their artwork and emergent writing with visitors. They talk excitedly about how colours can change when painting and know that marks have meaning.

Children enjoy a wide variety of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They spend time outside looking at the changing seasons. Children wore sun glasses for a day to increase the awareness of the role of guide dogs and raise money for charity. They count and calculate during practical, meaningful tasks such as working out how many buns are in a baker's shop or checking the register is correct. Children's scientific and investigative skills are used well when they explore the properties of magnets and sand. They skilfully use the mouse as they enjoy very good opportunities to learn about technology when using the computers.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as staff observe, assess and record their achievements. This information is used to inform the next steps in learning, although not yet formalised.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel a strong sense of belonging as they quickly build warm relationships with staff and receive a high level of support for their individual needs. Children's behaviour is exemplary and they play happily together. They rapidly display a good understanding of wanted behaviour and why restrictions are imposed on them. Older children self impose the rules, giving clear explanations of their actions, while younger children learn and implement the routines positively. For example, they know why they help to tidy the toys away or line up. Good use of strategies, such as egg timers, helps them to learn to take turns and respect the needs of others. This is further enhanced by staff being excellent role models as they demonstrate their respect of children's needs.

Children demonstrate good levels of confidence and self-esteem as they join in group

activities with enthusiasm. They celebrate their friend's birthdays and become aware of wider society by learning about different festivals and using musical instruments from around the world. This is supported by a good range of books, posters and play equipment, portraying positive images of diversity, made freely available throughout the pre-school. Children welcome visitors such as fire fighters, guide dogs and puppy walkers.

Children with additional needs receive effective support and staff ensure they are included and participate fully in the life of the setting. Additional adult support is made available to meet their individual development and welfare needs. Staff are active in seeking advice from other professionals to maximise developmental progress and meet the best interests of each child.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Information about key workers, the curriculum and how parents can support their child's learning is displayed on notice boards. Newsletters, information evenings and coffee mornings keep parents and carers well informed. Parents and carers are invited to complete questionnaires and contribute to the comments box to help staff monitor and improve the standard of care and education they offer.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and learning is positively supported by effective staffing levels. The well-qualified staff team use their knowledge well to ensure that children make good progress in all areas. Practitioners demonstrate a sound knowledge of the settings policies and procedures and implement these effectively to ensure that children are kept safe and well.

The required documentation for the safe day-to-day management of the nursery and to promote children's welfare and safety is in place. Some policies and procedures have been updated to meet the National Standards and a procedure is in place to review and update the operational plan in line with the National Standards and associated guidance to consistently create an effective working tool.

Leadership and management is good. Children are cared for by staff that have been vetted and have followed sound recruitment procedures. There is a strong emphasis on training and development for staff to help ensure children benefit from practitioners who are confident and up to date in their knowledge and skills. For example, staff have completed training in using the 'Birth to three matters' framework effectively to monitor the progress of younger children. The manager, deputy and staff review and implement changes for the continued benefit of children's care and education. A staff appraisal system is in place and staff have started to evaluate the activities offered. However, the curriculum is not yet monitored rigorously in order to maximise children's learning in all areas.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of all children that attend the pre-school.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to review and further develop partnerships with parents and review and update policies in relation to Standards 9 and 13. Further, to give consideration to reviewing practices and implementing a system for the use of more formal evaluation for funded education.

Children benefit from the partnership with parents and carers as procedures now ensure they are able to fully contribute to their child's care and learning. The pre-school has developed a system to ensure policies and procedures, which enable staff and parents to know how the setting operates on a day-to-day basis, are regularly reviewed and updated to make sure everyone is aware of their role and responsibilities. Systems have been developed to evaluate and monitor children's progress but are not yet sufficiently rigorous to fulfil the pre-school's vision to provide maximum learning opportunities for all children.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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):

- continue to develop policies and procedures in line with the National Standards and the associated guidance.

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):

- continue to develop the planning cycle to ensure that activities are adapted to challenge and support children to achieve as much as possible.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk