



## St Mary's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	318678
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 January 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Mary Kilroy

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<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*

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## 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 Playgroup opened over 30 years ago and was registered in 1992. It has use of St Mary's church hall, toilets and kitchen facilities during opening hours. The playgroup is situated in a residential area of Davyhulme. A maximum of 28 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open Tuesday to Friday from 09.00 to 11.30 during Trafford school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 42 children aged from two to under five years on role. Of these, 15 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come mainly from the local area. The playgroup currently supports children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

Six staff work with the children all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The playgroup receives support from Trafford's Sure Start/Early Years Team.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are helped to wash their hands after using the toilet and staff encourage independence wherever possible. Steps and stools are provided to facilitate this. Children enjoy using the liquid soap dispenser and it encourages them to want to wash their hands. Children are unable to access toilet facilities independently as the playgroup no longer has sole use of the toilet facilities on one day a week. The disabled toilet only was being used at the start of the session and following a reminder of ratios of children to toilets, another toilet was used also. Children assist in wiping tables after activities and before snack time. They use wet wipes to clean their hands before eating. Some children then clean the tables again with the wipes that they have used for their hands. Children would benefit from gentle reminders from staff during the session as to why they are washing hands/cleaning tables/wiping noses to enable them to understand about being and remaining healthy, such as that food dropped on the floor is dirty and may make you poorly if eaten, or that germs on the hands might make you poorly if you put them in your mouth before washing them. Children remain healthy as medication records and permissions to administer medication are kept accurately and are up to date. There are four first aiders on the premises, with certificates valid until 2007. First aid boxes are regularly checked and accidents are correctly recorded. One first aid kit is readily accessible in the kitchen with the children's inhalers that are frequently used. Cold compresses are kept in the fridge for bumps and bruises, however, there is no written permission for staff to seek emergency medical treatment and no clear guidance for parents on what the procedure is if a child is taken ill at playgroup. The sickness policy is open to misinterpretation, as it lists some exclusions and not others, such as sickness and diarrhoea. This could lead parents to believe that children with exclusions not listed may attend.

Fresh drinking water is accessible and children use this independently as required. They thoroughly enjoy using the fresh water dispenser and are allowed to experiment with the spilled water on the tray. Children are heard discussing healthy drinks before bed with a member of staff. A child aged three knows that milk and water are healthy choices and make you grow. Children choose healthy options at snack time of fruit and drinks of either milk or water. Parents bring in a piece of fruit a week so that staff always know there is something that every child will eat. Individual dietary needs and allergies are listed and discreetly kept in a cupboard in the kitchen. They are regularly reviewed as needs change. All staff know these requirements and 'emergency' chocolates are kept for a child who cannot have jelly sweets or gelatine, if there is a

birthday and parents bring in sweets. Children are given opportunities to sample foods from around the world and have just done a theme on the senses and taste.

Children have access to a satisfactory range of equipment indoors to develop their physical skills. They have ample space to run around using tunnels for large play activities. They enjoy parachute games and music and movement with musical instruments. However, the music and movement activity was rather rushed at end of the session and children took longer to dress up than they had for the activity. Children have opportunities for a range of outings and there is a small enclosed outdoor play area. However, opportunities for fresh air are limited due to the condition of the grassy area and children have not been out since before Christmas. Many of them come in cars. Parents receive good information on plans, themes and activities and there is a regular newsletter. This ensures that children have suitable clothing to enable them to have fresh air in all weathers and to take advantage of naturally occurring events, such as recent snow.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have a good sense of belonging in the setting because it is friendly, warm and welcoming to them. They arrive happily and are eager to play and greet staff and friends. The premises are clean and well maintained and toys and activities are set out in an inviting and stimulating way. The room is sectioned off to suit varying needs, such as there is a large part of the room for physical play, a quiet reading area, a messy art and craft area and a role play area. The children are able to move around and freely choose from the planned and free play activities. Children enjoy the good range of activities which are available to them. These are well organised and provide them with opportunities to progress in all areas of their development. However, the planning of the available space does not meet the needs of all children attending. The reading/ quiet area, although well equipped, is positioned in between the main doorway and the physical play area which is often disturbed. Staff try to alleviate the problem by setting up small reading areas within the playgroup but because the rest of the staff are unaware of the groups, music time and other noisy activities are set up nearby and the stories are being abandoned part-way through.

Children benefit from the range of stimulating toys equipment and materials available to them. Toys are well organised to allow children to freely choose, they are safe, mostly clean and accessible for children to independently self-select. However, one large garage was observed to be very dirty. There are some books that show positive images but the ability to show children different cultures through the toys and equipment provided is lacking in some areas, such as dolls in the home corner.

The manager has taken reasonable steps to ensure that hazards to children both indoors and outdoors are minimised. However, some hazards are noted throughout the rooms. The fire exit was purposely blocked with a table and cleaning materials and sharp knives are stored within easy reach of the children. The radiators are very hot and some of the toys are dirty. There is also a gate outside which is broken and exposes some rusty nails. The group do not risk assess the premises although some

checks are carried out before each session. The manager is addressing these issues immediately and a recommendation was made to regularly risk assess the premises.

Children are protected from harm as satisfactory procedures are followed to maintain their safety and reduce hazards to them. However, children's safety is compromised as some safety procedures have been omitted. The building is not always secure as it is shared with other users and the main door is often left open. Children's welfare is maintained as staff demonstrate a secure knowledge of child protection procedures and of their roles and responsibilities within them. However, parents are unaware of these procedures because there is no written statement.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy activities on a winter theme. They discuss the snowmen that they are making and choose and identifying colours of scarves. They discuss what snowmen wear. Staff question children about snow, is it hot or cold? They extend children's language by introducing new words, sticky, messy, crunchy, lovely white snow. Staff could ask more open ended questions to further develop children's vocabulary. Children have opportunities to revisit and repeat experiences, as these activities are out again next day. The seasonal theme continues throughout the morning, with white paint on the easel, snow stories, white corn flour play containing white animals and white chalks for mark making. Children had good tactile experiences in the corn flour play. They enjoyed adding water, discussing more than/less than, thick and thin. Staff interact well with the children and they are interested in what they say and do. There is a good balance of plastic and natural materials. Children enthusiastically joined in and thoroughly enjoyed a singing session. The staff are not yet using the Birth to three matters framework to plan for play as they have been awaiting training. They agreed to introduce this straight away and to use the framework for planning. Activities are planned for the group needs and they cover a wide age range. Consequently, the needs of under threes and older children are not always met. Older children are not sufficiently challenged. A three-year-old correctly constructs a man. There are limited opportunities for mark making using a good selection of pencils, crayons and felt tips on the trolley. Children enjoy a clothes activity, choosing shorts, tee shirts and skirts to colour. They play well alone and in groups. They interact well with each other and their peers and form strong secure relationships. Children laugh as they play with the corn flour and let it drop slowly from their hands.

Children benefit from high levels of adult interaction and staff and children have fun together. Children have time to explore and re-visit resources and activities on offer. The activities provide children with the opportunity to develop emotional, physical, social and intellectual skills. Staff have an understanding of individual children's needs and meet these appropriately by working closely with parents. They have a satisfactory knowledge of children's stage of development. However, next steps are not included in the assessments and are not used to inform short term planning and not all staff adapt activities appropriately for individual children, consequently some more able children are not presented with enough challenges. Teaching and learning are difficult to assess as activities provided cover a wide age group and all children

are accessing the focussed activity. As Birth to three matters is not yet implemented this results in activities sometimes being more of a learning through play activity rather than structured to meet Early Learning Goals. Looking at examples of children's records, key workers know where their children have reached in the stepping stones. Should the key worker be absent, other staff would not know this. Recording needs to show where individual children are up to.

Children have opportunities to see lower case labelling on play areas, equipment and toy boxes around the room. Names are written on their work by the staff. Children identify their name on arrival and post it into the correct key worker group envelope, also using their understanding of colour and shape. Parts of the home corner, such as the door and window are labelled, but there are no opportunities for children to see everyday print seen in the home, such as a newspaper, letters, phone book and catalogues. Children accessed the reading corner and made limited use of mark making equipment at the second visit. There are good tools for mark making, but children would benefit from having opportunities provided in all areas, such as a telephone and a pad and pen or pencil next to it in the home corner, a shopping list board in the kitchen. Story time has to be abandoned on two occasions as children are disturbed and distracted by a music and movement activity. A third attempt in a key worker group ceases and starts again as children drag chairs across the floor to another activity. Timing and sitting of the story time and book area were discussed. Children are not observed independently accessing the reading corner on day one but on day two they enjoy it for considerable periods of time when puppets are added to extend the basic play. This enhances their opportunities for language and good imaginative play. They concentrated well and carefully turned the pages.

Children show increasing independence in selecting and carrying out activities. They have a positive approach to new experiences and form good relationships with adults and peers. Children have a good sense of belonging, they choose books and read by themselves using puppets to enhance their experiences and enjoyment of the story. They confidently ride bikes and move around to their own ability, such as some children can pedal the bikes whilst others push with their feet. They play cooperatively with others. Children using scissors by themselves to cut paper and stand on a chair so they can reach toys that are high up. They cooperatively and willingly help to clean up after each session. Children behave well within the clear boundaries for positive behaviour.

Numbers are displayed around the room on posters and children play with a number game activity but there is little evidence of how children learn about numbers, shapes, space and measures. However, an area of floor in the construction area was too small for a child to play with the train track, so the child problem solved and extended the track into the reading area as well. He confidently took the play in his chosen direction. A child also used a chair to reach a high shelf. A till is available for children in the home corner and taking photographs is included in the planning. A child uses a tape measure appropriately and children construct large towers with bricks. Children sing number songs and a three-year-old correctly builds a man from the construction toys.

Children are exploring media and materials, they describe the texture of the corn flour, that it looks wet but feels dry and still drops like fluid. Children enjoy a painting

activity and dressing up at music time. They relish joining in with the music and dancing and they use props for role play. They confidently use their imaginations and respond by expressing and communicating ideas. They show interest in what they see, feel and touch. Children enjoy joining in with the words of the songs and clapping along to music.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children gain confidence speaking within a group during small group times, such as snack time and during activities and large group times. They enthusiastically chat to adults about past events at home and in the playgroup. They build close friendships, sharing ideas for play and showing each other their achievements. Children enjoy making choices from the resources on offer. However, in some areas these are limited, reducing their opportunities to develop independence, practice skills and consolidate their learning. Children are beginning to recognise the letters in their name and some can write their name with varying degrees of support. Children rarely practice these skills independently or make marks or write for a purpose spontaneously during the play sessions. Children greatly enjoy exploring books. They handle them carefully and become engrossed as they develop their reading skills by following the pictures and telling a story. However, these story times are often cut short due to ineffective room planning and sitting of the book corner and inevitable distractions from noisier activities. Children develop curiosity as they explore various tactile and natural materials and they observe changes in them, such as during corn flour play. They build and design mainly using construction sets and railway tracks. They have some opportunity to use technological equipment, such as a camera and a cash register. Children play creatively and develop good imaginative skills during their time in the role play area, however the majority of creative art activities are adult lead, restricting the children's opportunity to develop their individual creativity or imagination in art. Children develop good coordination and large muscle skills through well thought out and varied physical play sessions.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have opportunities to sample foods from around the world during themes of the senses, seasons and Chinese New Year and there are opportunities for children to celebrate Christmas and to learn about the nativity. Children are interested in the activities provided and enjoy what they do. They are provided with opportunities for outings, such as to Stockley farm, to increase their understanding of the natural world around them and they gain experience of the local area during visits to the school for Easter egg hunts, sports days and parties. Links between the playgroup and the local school, which many children will attend, are good. Children are learning about the world around them by seeing positive images of areas of equal opportunities in toys, books and equipment. Children would benefit from seeing positive images throughout all areas of the play provided, such as increasing the dressing up outfits. Staff use an 'all about me' theme in September when children are new and they benefit from lots of settling in activities to increase their sense of belonging and develop their self-assurance. 'All about me' includes a faces of the world activity and the next theme is about families. Children enjoy pets week and accessing show and tell

boxes.

Integration of children who have special educational needs is really well done and all their needs are met. Children help to ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not miss out in any area of play. Staff meet the individual needs of all children well.

Children's behaviour is good and they show concern for the feelings of others. They independently help younger children and search diligently when a child loses a favourite toy from home. Children behave well within their clear boundaries. They share, negotiate and take turns. Staff are consistent in their approach to managing children's behaviour. They are good role models for positive behaviour.

Parents are kept well informed about plans and themes and there is good information for them in regular news letters. They are thus able to ensure that children have suitable clothes to enjoy outings and can take advantage of naturally occurring events, such as recent snow. However, as Birth to three matters is not yet implemented they are not informed about this. Parents are all highly satisfied with the care of their children and many return with subsequent children. They feel that they are kept well informed and that staff are supportive and approachable. Parents of new children are very pleased with the settling in process and felt welcome to stay as long as they needed to. They are kept well informed of accidents and would know how to make a complaint. However, parents are not informed of the procedures for child protection and the manager agreed to provide a statement outlining these.

Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are fostered. Children benefit from high levels of adult interaction and staff and children have fun together. Children have time to explore and re-visit resources and activities on offer. Activities provide children with the opportunity to develop emotional, physical, social and intellectual skills. Staff have an understanding of individual children's needs and meet these appropriately by working closely with parents. Staff have a knowledge of children's stage of development. However, the next steps are not included in the children's assessments and are not used to inform short term planning and not all staff adapt activities appropriately for individual children. Consequently, some more able children are not presented with sufficient challenges.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

All the staff who work with children are vetted and are suitable to do so. There are good ratios of staff to children. Staff attend training to ensure that children remain safe. Four members of staff have first aid certificates valid until 2007. All hold an appropriate early years qualification. Staff take turns to work with funded children and facilitate the focussed activity. All staff work with the funded children and all are involved in activity planning, which takes place every Friday. Activities and observations of the children are assessed and reviewed and staff plan using observed weaknesses, such as some children not knowing colours. However, the next steps are not included in the assessments and are not used to inform short term planning and not all staff adapt activities appropriately for individual children. The



child's key worker knows where a child is at in the stepping stones, but other staff may not if the key worker is off. Toys and equipment are accessible to children and the play area is mainly satisfactorily planned. The construction area is rather small, however, it lead to one child problem solving by extending the train track into other area. The book corner is not well sited for children to independently access books in peace. Children are very confident, settled and happy in the provision. They enjoy all the play activities and form good relationships with other children and staff.

Most records, policies and procedures are in place, with the exception of parents signing permission for emergency medical treatment or medication. There are satisfactory policies in place for staff to follow for child protection and they demonstrate secure knowledge of procedures, roles and responsibilities. Parents must be informed of the procedures in a written statement. Staff must update the policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious to clarify all exclusions and should discuss this with parents. The policy should include the procedure for contacting parents if a child becomes ill at playgroup. Children are protected from harm as procedures are followed to maintain their safety and reduce hazards to them. However, children's safety is compromised as some safety procedures have been omitted. Regular risk assessments must be carried out to assess identified risks. Children's records are shared with parents, however, they are not informed about Birth to three matters as this is still to be implemented.

Leaders and managers are good role models for the staff to follow and all staff are good role models for the children. Excellent relationships have been built in all areas and parents find staff helpful and approachable. All staff are included in planning, working with funded children and they take equal roles in the provision. Where areas have not been addressed from previous inspections it appears that there is sometimes no clear leadership. In trying so hard to include all staff, and enabling everyone to have a share, occasionally no one takes the ultimate responsibility for seeing that it is done. Staff work very well together and most have been in post a long time.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, the provider was asked to ensure children have access to fresh drinking water at all times. Children now enjoy independently accessing fresh water from a water fountain.

The provider was asked to ensure that good hygiene practices are in place with regard to hand washing. Children are washing their hands at suitable times and all equipment to enable them to independently access toilets and hand wash basins is in place. Good routines and practices are in place.

The provider was asked to conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying action(s) to be taken to minimize identified risks. Minor risks were identified at this

visit which were to be immediately addressed and the provider agreed to carry out regular risk assessments.

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

There are no complaints to report.

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**

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 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):

- obtain written parental permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment on admission
- update the policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious to clarify all exclusions and discuss with parents. Include the procedure for contacting parents if a child becomes ill at playgroup.
- plan and provide activities to help children's development in line with the aspects and approach described in the framework Birth to three matters.
- conduct a risk assessment of the premises identifying action(s) to be taken to minimise identified risks.
- ensure that parents are aware of the child protection procedures by providing a written statement.

### **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):

- develop planning to ensure that all aspects of learning are given sufficient emphasis, grouping of children is effective and that they are set sufficient

challenges.

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