



## St Mary's Playgroup (Cheltenham)

Inspection report for early years provision

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 101598  |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 05 June 2006  |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Miriam Sheila Brown   |
| <b>Setting Address</b>         | Brotherhood Hall, Lyefield Road East, Charlton Kings,,<br>Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 8AU |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01242 260080  |
| <b>E-mail</b>                  |   |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | St Mary's Playgroup (Cheltenham)  |
| <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 satisfactory. 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 is a community run group established in 1966. It operates from a village hall, next to the local infant school in Charlton Kings, a residential area to the south of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The playgroup have sole use of the premises which include a hall, kitchen and associated facilities. There is a secure outside play area which includes hard-standing and a grassed area.

A maximum of twenty four children may attend the group at any one time. It is open

from 09.00 to 12.50, three days a week, and from 09.00 to 12.00 for the remaining two, during term time. There are currently 33 children on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for early education. The group currently support children with learning difficulties.

The playgroup employs five members of staff, three of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene as they are usually encouraged to wash their hands prior to eating, and after using the toilet. They understand why they should wash their hands, for example "to get rid of the germs". Staff maintain accident and medication records effectively and have received first aid training, helping to ensure that children are cared for appropriately if they have an accident or become unwell. Children are provided with good role models by staff who pay close attention to basic hygiene practices such as wiping tables with anti-bacterial spray prior to eating, and quickly cleaning any spills during snack times. The premises are maintained to a very high level of cleanliness throughout the day. Nappy changing and disposal routines are hygienic and maintain children's privacy.

Snack times are pleasant social occasions when children enjoy a variety of fruit and vegetables, and sit together. They are encouraged to learn social skills such as saying 'please' and 'thank you'. Pre-school children bring a packed lunch on three days of the week to assist them in their transition to main stream schooling. Children's dietary requirements are documented and individual needs met effectively. Children assist in preparing their snack by opening small bottles of milk and inserting straws, although do not have opportunity to cut fruit and vegetables. Parents are encouraged to provide their children with drinking bottles to enable them to have free access to drinks throughout the day. Children's knowledge of how food is prepared and cooked is further enhanced through weekly cooking sessions when they make cakes, crumbles and sandwiches.

Children's physical development is well supported through a wide range of planned activities which assist in their small and large muscle development. They play outside each day using bats and balls, a slide and other outdoor equipment. Children move freely, confidently and with pleasure, demonstrating good spatial awareness when negotiating restricted spaces such as the tunnel and willow tent. Inside they enjoy many activities which support their small muscle development, such as small construction, painting, drawing, sand and water play. Children's all round physical development is further supported by weekly 'Sporting mini's' sessions with a peripatetic teacher.

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

The provision is good.

Children and parents are greeted by staff each morning and the hall is prepared prior to children's arrival. The premises are clean, warm and well maintained. Space is organised effectively to provide a wide variety of play opportunities which include table-top games, carpeted areas, role-play and craft work.

Furniture, toys and equipment are in good repair and checked daily before use. There is a good range of resources to ensure children are comfortable and can play and eat together, assisting in developing their social skills. Children can reach their toys and equipment easily although children cannot easily identify boxed equipment as these are only labelled with print. Staff rotate certain toys and activities according to their plans for the day. Basic equipment such as role-play, sand and water is available each day.

Children's safety is very well maintained and proper precautions are taken to promote safety within the premises. For example, children tuck their chairs in when leaving a table and understand this is to prevent others from tripping. Fire drills are completed regularly, although these are currently planned with staff in advance. Staff ensure the premises are secure at all times and are vigilant in ensuring that main doors are secured when children are present. Outside areas are fenced and secure. Staff supervise all aspects of children's play, very well, including maintaining a detailed record of visitors to the premises.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by good staff awareness of child protection procedures. The current policy clearly outlines their approach to any concerns and all staff receive child protection training to familiarise themselves with the signs and symptoms of abuse.

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

The provision is good.

Children take part in a good range of activities throughout each day. They are happy and settled and adults provide a calm environment for them. The playgroup has recently introduced Birth to three matters guidance to assist in planning activities for the youngest children and this helps to ensure they partake in activities which support their all round development. For example, they enjoy story and circle times, music and imaginary play, early number and language games and physical play. Children enjoy using a range of creative materials such as sand, water and paint, which encourages them to express their experiences and feelings in a variety of ways.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are well occupied, motivated, eager to learn and explore the good range of age-appropriate opportunities provided by the staff. Planning covers all areas of learning and is soundly based on the Foundation Stage curriculum and the early learning goals. Regular observations and assessments are used effectively to identify children's different stages of

development, enabling staff to meet individual needs. However, not all staff complete these with sufficient regularity to ensure that in the long term children are assisted to move on from what they already know and can do. Staff interact appropriately with children's activities, for example, assisting when asked, extending knowledge and understanding through questioning and praising children to develop self-esteem. The play leader supports staff well in developing their abilities, for example, by providing clear learning intentions for activities.

Children are growing in confidence in their learning and relationships with each other. For example, they find their own labelled coat pegs, change their shoes, and tidy away resources after use. They talk animatedly to staff, unfamiliar adults and each other, about their experiences. They are beginning to take responsibility for themselves, for example, by making decisions about their first activity of the day.

Children are starting to recognise their written names on coat pegs and name cards, helping them to develop an awareness of print having meaning. They make marks in role-play and many children write their names with all letters correctly formed. Children have a good range of vocabulary which is used confidently when speaking to each other and extended well by adults, for example, a staff member to the group, 'Does anyone know what a ferry is?' 'Yes, a boat', a child answered immediately. Children develop their knowledge of number, shape and size as they match, compare, sort and count in daily activities. They are starting to recognise numerals and confidently say and choose the correct date for the calendar. More able children sometimes lack sufficient challenge to solve simple problems as part of daily routines, such as calculating numbers.

Children's knowledge and understanding of their immediate and wider world is very good. They taste a variety of foods from different countries, listen to music and play with resources which reflect positive images of different cultures and identities. Local walks to the library and other places of interest develop their awareness of the local community. They use a range of everyday technology in their play and planned activities, for example, weekly cookery sessions and working crossing lights when going on walks. Children have a good awareness of time and confidently discuss past, present and future events in their lives, for example, talking about what they did during the half term break.

Children enjoy a wide and varied range of creative activities which stimulate their interest and increase their awareness of texture, and use of different resources. For example, children regularly play with dough, sand, water and paint. They are absorbed as they make three-dimensional creations to their own design using self-chosen resources, providing them with good opportunities to initiate and develop their own ideas. Children enjoy role-play and acting out familiar scenes with the puppet theatre.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

All children and parents are welcomed to the playgroup each morning. Children demonstrate their confidence by settling quickly to group routines such as changing

their shoes and finding an activity immediately, whilst others arrive. They are well known by staff who efficiently record individual details and highlight specific needs to ensure these are met effectively. All toys and resources are easily and equally accessible to all children. Children celebrate a variety of different festivals throughout the year, increasing their awareness of the wider world and different lifestyles. This awareness is further supported by displays and resources around the hall.

Staff demonstrate a good awareness of children's special needs, enabling them to effectively support those who attend the group. They work closely with outside agencies and parents to ensure continuity of care and learning

Children are well behaved, and have many good opportunities to learn about sharing and taking turns in their play and activities. This encourages them to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Staff have high expectations for behaviour and provide positive role models for children. They offer frequent, meaningful praise, helping to develop children's self esteem. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff are available each day to talk with parents, and information about weekly activities and how the Foundation Stage curriculum is delivered is readily available to them. Regular newsletters provide more detailed information and encourage parents to take an active part in children's learning through bringing in items to support topic work and helping on the rota. However, parents and staff do not have access to up-to-date written information about how the group is organised and their approach to various aspects of care.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the playgroup is satisfactory. Children's care is well supported by the calm atmosphere generated by the organised and caring staff and the good quality leadership of the nursery education. The premises are effectively organised to meet the children's needs. All legally required documentation is in place, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being. Good regard is given to keeping children's records and personal information confidential. All staff hold appropriate clearance to work with children and ratios are met at all times.

The nursery recruitment, induction and training programme is robust, and staff appraisals are used to highlight ongoing training requirements. However, not all issues from the last inspection have been addressed in respect of operational documents, which are not complete. The playgroup committee and staff meet each term and playgroup staff meet each week to develop the following week's activity plans, helping to ensure that children can build on what they already know. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the group agreed to devise and implement a number of

policies to assist in informing parents and staff about various aspects of playgroup practice. They also agreed to ensure that relevant records were witnessed by parents, retained for the recommended time and were stored so that confidentiality was maintained.

The group have made generally good progress with each of these points. Records are witnessed by parents and are stored in a lockable filing cabinet. Most policies are now in place, although some require further up-dating to ensure they reflect current group practice.

### **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.

## **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 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 policies are available to parents and staff and provide them with clear information about all aspects of playgroup organisation.
- provide labels on resources which ensure that younger children are able to easily identify the contents to enable them to make choices.

#### **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 that staff maintain up-to-date records of children's achievements to enable them to build effectively on what children already know and can do.
- provide more opportunities for children to practice and develop simple calculations through their play and daily routines

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)