



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 253938

DfES Number: 514194

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	24/05/2004
Inspector Name	Patricia Webb

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	St Marys Playgroup (VAR)
Setting Address	St Marys Church Hall Church Road, Oldswinford Stourbridge West Midlands DY8 5AU

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Mrs Elaine Pritchard
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ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

St. Mary's Playgroup has been registered for over 20 years. The present owner took over in 1989. It is sited in the main hall of the centre adjacent to St Mary's Church in the Oldswinford area of Stourbridge. There are local shops within easy walking distance. There is no outdoor play area.

There are currently 54 children on roll at the playgroup. This includes 26 funded 3-year-olds and 12 funded 4-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The group opens Monday to Friday, 09:15 to 11:45 and Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 13:00 to 15:30. It operates during term time only.

There are eight members of staff working directly with the children. Over half hold relevant early years qualifications. The group receives support from the teacher mentor service of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership of the local authority (EYDCP).

How good is the Day Care?

St Mary's Playgroup provides good care for children overall.

Enthusiastic, committed staff offer a warm, welcoming environment where children are happy and settled. They ensure the smooth running of the setting through consistent implementation of comprehensive policies and procedures, although some staff are not fully aware of using a range of strategies for behaviour management. There is a wide range of well researched resources available ensuring the children have opportunities to experiment and explore their world. There is no outdoor play provision on site although the setting is investigating opportunities to address this.

Staff ensure children are safe and secure whilst in their care. The staff ratio exceeds requirements at times ensuring a high level of one to one support as and when necessary for individual children. Children develop independence when attending to

their personal hygiene through their daily routine. The current child protection procedures do not fully inform parents of the group's overall responsibility should they have concerns about a child.

Staff have devised a broad range of topics which children follow throughout the year. They particularly engage in role play and messy art and craft becoming absorbed in their activities. The effective key worker system enables staff to know the children well and establish warm relationships. Occasionally confidentiality is compromised when staff complete some records of incidents and they do not always insist on a parent's signature to indicate that they have been informed.

There is a good partnership with parents and carers. They are informed of the routine and their children's progress and updated regularly through newsletters.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable, as there were no actions raised at the previous inspection.

What is being done well?

- Children have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of activities that challenge and excite them such as learning about sinking and floating and role play. This is supported by a well collated selection of resources that encourages progress in all areas of development.
- Children develop an awareness of the need for good hygiene through effective routine procedures. Staff are aware of their role in encouraging this by example.
- Staff know the children well and are aware of individual needs of each child. They discuss the children's progress with parents both formally and informally to develop a trusting relationship ensuring that there is a positive exchange of information.

What needs to be improved?

- the provision of outdoor play at the premises
- obtaining signatures from parents indicating that they have been informed of any significant incidents
- confidentiality in some records
- staff's knowledge of appropriate behaviour management strategies
- information to parents on the group's responsibilities regarding child protection issues.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
4	Explore opportunities for the provision of outdoor play on site.
11	Ensure that, when necessary, parents sign incident records to indicate that they have been informed and that confidentiality is maintained when completing records of any incidents.
11	Improve staff's knowledge of behaviour management strategies.
13	Inform parents of the playgroup's responsibilities with regard to child protection issues.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

St Mary's Playgroup provides generally good nursery education.

Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals with very good progress in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy and physical development.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff build very positive relationships with the children and know them well. This is supported by an effective key worker system and good communication between staff members when carrying out observations. Staff have a very good working knowledge of the foundation stage. They understand how children learn and are developing a child-initiated play strategy following recent training. At times this is hindered by limited access to some resources reducing children's spontaneity in exploration and creativity. The key strengths in personal social and emotional development are due to staff's skilful interaction and support when engaging with the children in conversation and developing their self esteem. Staff use assessment records to identify areas where individual children need extra support although this is not always reflected in the overall planning.

Leadership and management are generally good with strong guidance from the owner. Staff feel their input is valued and contribute freely to the topic work and ideas implemented. Non-contact time is spent evaluating the week's routine to ensure that children are making progress. The setting is still developing strategies to evaluate it's own strengths and weaknesses as part of the quality assurance award. The learning objectives for some activities are discussed verbally rather than recorded formally.

The partnership with parents is very good and contributes to children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents are informed about the group's ethos and curriculum and children's progress is shared with parents by the key worker and the manager.

What is being done well?

- Communication, language and literacy is a particular strength of the setting. Children are introduced to elementary reading schemes using books and flash cards. Some more able children read their first books with confidence and enjoyment in their achievements.
- Despite the current lack of a specific outdoor play area, children's physical development is very good. Staff ensure that gross motor activities are included in the weekly planning and that this is rotated to include children who only attend for a few sessions. Good use is made of the local area such as shops and ball pools.

- Staff offer one to one support for children in some key areas such as communication, language and literacy and mathematics. They praise and encourage the children in their individual work, sharing their day to day achievements with parents and carers.

What needs to be improved?

- the challenge for more able children to extend their understanding and concept of numbers beyond 10
- strategies for children to use mathematical concepts to problem solve
- access to some resources to enable children to develop their natural curiosity in the world around them and their spontaneous creativity.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The playgroup has made generally good progress since the last inspection.

Children now have a broad range of opportunities to write and mark-make freely through their play by using strategies like booking hairdressing appointments, or making tickets for the children to use when going on a train journey. They also use clipboards and paper when making their 'observations' like the staff do.

Staff in the setting have undertaken recent SENCO training to develop the role of the special needs co-ordinator. This has led to a greater understanding of the latest legislation that is now referred to in the special needs statement. Staff are also aware of inclusion and are working towards full implementation when current training is completed. Current planning still does not clearly identify adaptations and challenge for children of differing abilities although they are referred to on individual children's progress files.

Sand and water play is still restricted although staff have devised ways in which children can still develop their play with basic natural materials. Small shallow sand trays enable children to make marks and patterns in the sand. Activities such as washing dollies and other large equipment introduce them to the wider properties of water, sinking and floating objects, creating bubbles.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are actively involved in their learning, they are confident and able to work well independently with some older, more able children demonstrating good levels of concentration. They develop positive relationships with each other, learning to co-operate, take turns and share resources such as the computer. They are fully aware of the expected code of behaviour and understand that they have to 'earn' rewards such as the stickers.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children speak clearly and fluently, initiating conversations between each other and with adults. Some children write simple words with little need for guidance from staff. They understand that the written word has meaning such as when making lists, imitating staff carrying out observations and creating tickets for the train ride. They listen to favourite stories with interest and join in with familiar phrases with enthusiasm. Some children write captions and titles on their own work.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

The children recognise numbers up to 10 although older, more able children do not always extend beyond these numbers. Some more able children are beginning to develop calculating skills through simple sums and can carry out simple addition. They understand mathematical positional language and use it in their daily routine. They do not always use mathematics to solve every day problems such as how many cups are needed for snack time or if there are enough chairs for all the children.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children learn about the world around them through interesting topics such as life cycles of frogs and tadpoles and basic chemical changes when making bread and setting jelly. They understand the processes for operating simple technology equipment such as computers, telephones and using toy tools. They do not always access resources freely to enable spontaneous research and exploration to take place.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Very Good
Children develop good spatial awareness, negotiating their way around the premises with skill and confidence on foot and using a range of wheeled toys. They climb and balance well using imagination to devise ways of moving along, under and over. They understand the reasons for following good hygiene practice and are developing an understanding of the effect that exercise has on their bodies. They use a variety of small tools with skill and dexterity.	

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Generally Good
Colour, texture and shape are explored by the children in their daily routine. They engage in a wide variety of creative play such as painting, baking and bark rubbing. They sing with enthusiasm and vigour employing different tempos and volumes in their songs and music making. Role-play is a favourite activity with children developing sustained interest from well presented resources. Children's spontaneous creativity is hindered by limited access to some art and craft resources.	

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- increase opportunities for children to develop problem solving skills in mathematics and extend more able children's concept of numbers beyond 10
- extend opportunities for more free access to some resources to increase the level of child initiated learning particularly in such areas as creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.