

# St Marks & Hesters Way Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

101605

**Inspection date**

31/03/2011

**Inspector**

Jenny Read

**Setting address**

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**Type of setting**

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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## Description of the setting

St Marks and Hesters Way Playgroup first opened in 1961 and is situated in a community centre to the north of Cheltenham town centre. The playgroup is managed by a committee of parents and is registered on the Early Years Register. The playgroup may provide care for a maximum of 30 children from two years to the end of the early years age group at any one time. There are currently 34 children on roll; of these, some children aged two, together with three and four-year-olds, receive free early education. The playgroup serves the local community and is open each weekday from 9.30am to 3.30pm during school term times. Sessions operate from 9.30am to 12.30pm, 12.30pm to 3.30pm and 9.30am to 3.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup has use of one main playroom, the hall and two other rooms at different times. There is an enclosed garden area with hard surfaces for outdoor play. The playgroup committee employs six staff members, including the overall manager. Five staff work directly with the children. Two staff, including the manager, hold relevant degree level qualifications and Early Years Professional Status. The play leader holds the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Childcare Learning and Development. Two other staff hold relevant qualifications at level 3.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is inadequate.

Outcomes for children are not consistent and are weak in some areas. Children's individual needs are not met consistently and they make little progress in their learning and development. Leadership and management, including the capacity for sustained improvement is weak. Those in charge have an inaccurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and have overlooked a number of breaches of regulation that place children's safety at risk. Ineffective evaluation means the playgroup is in a weak position to maintain continuous improvement. Partnerships with parents and other settings children attend are generally suitable to help involve them in their children's care and education.

Overall, the early years provision requires significant improvement. The registered person is given a Notice to Improve that sets out actions to be carried out.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To comply with the requirements of the EYFS the registered person must take the following action by the specified date:

- plan and organise systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and
- 27/05/2011

- development experiences that is tailored to meet their individual needs (Organisation)
- ensure that there is a balance of adult-led and freely-chosen or child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play (Organisation) 27/05/2011
  - take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff and others on the premises in the case of fire, with particular regard to the emergency evacuation procedure and provision of appropriate fire detection equipment (for example, smoke detectors) (Suitable premises, environment and equipment) 21/04/2011
  - obtain necessary information from parents about who has legal contact with the child; and who has parental responsibility for the child (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare) 21/04/2011
  - ensure the risks assessment identifies aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis: maintain a record of these particular aspects and when and by whom they have been checked (Suitable premises, environment and equipment) 31/05/2011
  - request written parental permission, at the time of the child's admission to the provision, to the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment in the future (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare) 14/04/2011
  - carry out a full risk assessment for each type of outing undertaken and ensure this is reviewed before embarking on each specific outing (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare) 27/05/2011

To improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- improve children's enjoyment of learning by reviewing the management of daily routines, to ensure they meet all children's individual needs
- improve children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe by more consistent application of safe practices and routines, such as at lunchtime
- review the arrival and departure procedures for staff .

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Arrangements for safeguarding children are inadequate. Risk assessments are poor. They do not identify all aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis in order to keep children safe. Outings undertaken are not risk assessed to ensure that hazards to children are kept to a minimum. The system in place to ensure these are up-dated regularly is weak and staff responsible for maintaining the assessments are inadequately trained to do so. These failures to meet specific legal requirements result in children being placed at risk. The premises are secure and staff supervise the arrival and collection of children

robustly. Staff demonstrate basic knowledge of the signs and indicators that would cause them concern for a child's well-being. They have satisfactory awareness of the procedures to follow with any child welfare concerns. Whilst all staff hold childcare qualifications to level 3 and above, this knowledge is not seen to be implemented in practice. Staff do not promote children's learning and development by providing a stimulating, challenging environment in which children may play and learn.

Children benefit from choosing indoor or outdoor play; however, poor use is made of the play space to provide an interesting environment for children to play and learn. Resources for the role play and for children to practice early writing skills are poorly displayed, are of poor quality or are not available. Opportunity for children to access technology daily and to investigate are severely limited, which restricts children's experiences. Staff deployment is weak meaning that children do not receive purposeful support and challenge to meet their individual needs.

Records and documentation required to support children's care and for the efficient and safe management of the group are not all complete. Systems to show when staff and other adults are present when children are attending, are in place but are not implemented. Therefore there is not an accurate record of who is on the premises. Required information from parents about who has legal contact with the child and who has parental responsibility for the child is not obtained. Staff have not requested written permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment in the future, as required. These are legal requirements. Policies and procedures are all in place and are generally well known. Systems to monitor and evaluate the provision are ineffective. Significant weaknesses in the provision are overlooked, so that many outcomes for children are poor. Action that is being taken is misdirected and is having too little impact on improving children's welfare and their learning and development.

The playgroup staff show appropriate understanding of how to access outside professional help, if needed, although this is not always available. Staff offer suitable support to help children with additional needs. Partnerships with other settings children attend delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage are evolving suitably. Staff have a generally positive partnerships with parents and carers. Parents receive sufficient information about the playgroup through access to the planning documentation, notice board and parent pack. There is a regular exchange of information with parents, through the termly parent meetings, providing them with suitable information about their how well their children are achieving. Whilst the children's assessments and learning journals are not always up-to-date, these meetings provide clear opportunities for parents to talk about their children and share information with their children's key persons.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Planning systems are ineffective in meeting all children's needs. Planning clearly identifies learning intentions specific to a few children across the week, shows gaps for child-initiated activities and sections for the six areas of learning. Planned activities, such as exploring a range of different media, for example, shaving foam, splatter painting, jelly and modelling with household recyclable materials, provides

difference experiences for children. However, planning is not supporting or encouraging all children's learning because planned activities are not available for all children attending. Activities are not set out inside or outside across the six areas of learning throughout all the sessions. Additionally, planned activities are not repeated in the afternoons. This limits the activities or resources available for all children. It limits their opportunities to make choices and decisions about where they play and to ensure they have a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities across all areas of learning. As a result, children make little progress in their learning and development from their individual starting points.

Observations are completed occasionally; not all staff undertake tracking observations to help inform children's next steps and future planning. Assessments and learning journals are in place for each child; however, these are not up-to-date. They do not show an accurate assessment of children's progress and development to enable staff to plan effectively for future learning. Children respond to occasional interaction and questioning from staff, such as "What month is it?" and appear relaxed and settled. However, staff mostly supervise children's play rather than facilitate it to support progress effectively. Children miss valuable learning opportunities, and experiences. Children are not sufficiently challenged in their learning to help them build on what they already know and can do.

Children know the daily routines. They know they all have to have a rest time after lunch for half an hour even if they have just arrived, which does not necessarily meet their individual needs. Children know they wash their hands at meal times. However, whole group circle time is not well planned to meet the needs of younger or less capable children. As a result, many children get up and down, move around the room, fidget and disturb those children who wish to listen and participate in naming the day of the week, the month and to talk about the weather. Children spend time in their key groups; these too are poorly planned, and not matched to children's learning needs. Consequently, some older and more able children become frustrated and angry at having to sit and do simple jigsaws.

Children are beginning to form positive relationships. Some are developing appropriate skills working independently as well as alongside others. They show pride in their achievements, exclaiming "I did this all by myself", with their friends praising their achievements. Some staff encourage the children to use good manners and offer praise and encouragement, such as praising children for putting on their own coats. The rules for acceptable behaviour are prominent in the room and some staff refer to these to help some children adjust their behaviour.

However, children spend much of their time with little purpose and with insufficient adult attention or support. This results in children becoming bored, throwing toys, being disruptive and posing a risk to other children. Children are beginning to learn about sustainability and to care for their environment, planting and growing their own fruit and vegetables and helping to recycle.

Children understand and adopt healthy habits such as suitable hygiene routines and practices. They explain how they need to wash their hands before eating because they are dirty, use soap and paper towels and dispose of their tissues straight away after use. Children benefit from healthy, well-balanced snacks, including produce they have grown in the garden area. The healthy eating board is colourful with pictures and names of the different fruit and vegetables they have for their snack. Some useful questioning from some staff, such as "We don't run inside, where do we run?" is helping to raise children's awareness of the rules for safe play; children readily answer "Outside". However, inconsistent implementation

of safe practices and routines results in children frequently getting up and down from the table at meal times and walking around the room while eating, which places them at risk of choking. Some children are allowed to rock back and forth on their chairs which poses a risk. Additionally, the setting has no smoke detection equipment and only practising the emergency evacuation plan twice in over a year means that most children and adults have never practised it at all so have no awareness of safe action to take in an emergency to keep themselves safe.



## Annex A: record of inspection judgements

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	4
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	4

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	4
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding	4
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	4
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	3

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	4
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	4
The extent to which children feel safe	4
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	4
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	4

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