

# St Mary's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 127608  
**Inspection date** 07/06/2011  
**Inspector** Claire Parnell

**Setting address** Riverhead Village Hall, Amherst Hill, SEVENOAKS, Kent,  
TN13 2EL

**Telephone number** 07502 428 413

**Email**

**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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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## Description of the setting

St. Mary's Pre-School playgroup originally opened in the 1950s. It operates from Riverhead Village Hall in Sevenoaks, Kent. A maximum of 26 children aged between two and eight years may attend the pre-school at any one time. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The pre-school is open four days a week, from 9am to 11.45am on a Monday and 9am to 3pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, term time only. Children can attend on a full day or sessional basis. Children have access to the main hall, toilets and a secure outside area. There are currently 39 children aged from two to under five years on roll. The playgroup receives funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four. Children come from the local area. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school employs a total of seven staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications; one has a level 4 qualification, two are qualified to level 3 and one has a level 2 in childcare.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The unique needs of the children are promoted well and staff are committed to meeting children's learning and welfare needs, with some minor area for improvements within some aspects. The staff's knowledge of how children learn is reflected well in the quality of provision which ensures outcomes for children are promoted well and children are making good progress in their learning and development. The strong partnerships with parents and other settings make a significant contribution to children's achievement and well-being. The staff team is committed to continuous improvement of the provision and use local guidance, support and training along with their own self-evaluation and feedback from parents to assess their provision and identify areas for future development.

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

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- improve the steps taken to prevent the spread of infection, with particular regard to cooking activities
- review the organisation and timing of large group activities to promote full participation and engagement of children

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

The safeguarding of children's welfare is given high priority within the provision. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility to keep children safe and protected from harm. They are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about children in their care. A robust recruitment system is in place to make sure staff are suitable to have unsupervised access to children. Consistent risk assessments for both indoors and outdoors are carried out on a daily basis to ensure children play in a safe and secure environment. Children feel safe and secure due to familiar, close relationships with the staff working with them. All relevant documentation is completed and shared with parents to promote children's safety and well-being, such as accident and medication records. A high percentage of staff are trained in first aid to safeguard children's welfare in the event of sustaining an injury.

The staff team and committee work closely together to ensure ongoing development and improvement within the setting. They assess their strengths and make plans for improvement that are likely to bring about improved outcomes for children. The effectiveness of the setting is carefully monitored through regular staff meetings and discussions with other professionals. Parents play an active role in the assessment of the provision, through questionnaires and input into staff appraisals. This helps the setting to monitor and evaluate improvements and to identify further areas for development. The setting has carefully considered and addressed the recommendations made at the last inspection with positive improvement evident.

Children have access to a good and varied range of activities and equipment that promotes all areas of learning. The resources are well maintained and regularly checked for safety. Staff show they are committed to sustainability by using resources such as used materials for children's junk modelling. Staff are responsive to children's ideas about resources and activities they wish to have out and incorporate their ideas into their planning for future sessions. Staff actively implement new ideas gained from training they attend. This has worked particularly well in their support of children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

The setting promotes equality and diversity well. Children have access to a good range of resources that positively reflect today's society. Every child is encouraged to participate in all activities, as they wish. Staff know their key children well and use their knowledge of children's individual interests and any requests children may make when planning and adapting activities. The playgroup also cares for children from the local community who do not yet have a place at the local school. In this way children receive consistency of care and continued progression in their learning until a place can be found for them in full-time education. The staff gain clear information at point of entry about children's individual needs and follow suitable procedures to gain support and guidance regarding the ongoing welfare and development of children with special educational needs.

The staff have established effective partnerships with the local school, working hard to ensure children have easy transfers into full-time education. Staff from the school regularly visit the setting and talk to staff about children's progress, any areas of concerns and their interests. The playgroup children are invited to the school to take part in celebrations such as their nativity play. Links have been made with other early years settings where they share the care of some children. Good communication systems are in place to ensure children's progress is monitored between settings so as to promote consistent approaches to their learning and care.

The playgroup's engagement with parents is strong. Parents feel they are a valued part of their children's care and learning in the setting. They openly enter the setting at the beginning and end of the session, talking freely to their key people about their children's progress and events at home. Parents are very involved in the assessment system of their child's development by completing an initial profile when their child starts, linked to the areas of learning, followed by a thorough assessment of their child's development within the first few weeks of them settling in. Information is used from home to initiate their child's ongoing progress. Parents have access to a wealth of information displayed around the hall and entrance area with regard to themes, changes to the setting and information required by staff. Newsletters are sent home electronically to keep parents informed of the progress within their child's setting.

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

Children enjoy a varied programme of exciting and challenging activities due to the careful selection that staff make at the beginning of each session. The space in the setting is used imaginatively to ensure all areas of learning are promoted through safe and accessible resources. For example, the mark making table is situated next to the home corner to encourage children to use writing for a purpose throughout their role play. However, some aspects of the session such as circle time, snack time and lunch time lack suitable organisation. As a result children are expected to spend long periods of time at the activity or waiting and some become disengaged and distract others.

Children are active learners, choosing where they want to play and who with. They have very close relationships with both their peers and the staff, demonstrating a caring and loving attitude to all. For example, a young child hurt themselves on the climbing frame and the surrounding children stop and ask if he is alright. They are confident to ask questions which are very effectively answered in a fully and easily understandable way by the staff. They are inquisitive and intrigued by visitors and any new equipment. During the inspection, children ask the inspector how the laptop works and compare the buttons to those on their computers at home and in the setting. They thoroughly enjoy experimenting and explore different materials, either through sensory and malleable materials or through creative activities. Children spend long lengths of time at activities of their choosing, such as, exploring the flour and use the tools provided to build on their sensory

experiences. They manipulate the flour trying to create different forms and linking these to other experiences such as going to the seaside and building sand castles. They thoroughly enjoy exploring and creating their own imaginative creations through junk modelling, confidently asking for the resources that they need. Staff spend time talking to children about what they want to make and what they need to make it, helping children to become critical thinkers.

Children's communication, language and literacy skills are developing well. They use their experience of language to express themselves verbally and with gestures. They listen intently to stories and enjoy choosing and looking at books independently. Some children are desperate to share their experiences of the story and the pictures in the book with others, demonstrating their enthusiasm to communicate their feelings to their peers. Children are encouraged to question and solve problems for themselves throughout the session. They use and are introduced to mathematical language and staff encourage children to compare sizes and shapes and to count objects, for example, children compare what they all have in their snack boxes and staff ask if one child has the same amount of grapes as they have, the child looks and estimates that it is more, the staff member then helps them to count to find out if their guess is correct. Children take part in a good balance of adult-led and child initiated play which encourages children to think for themselves and make independent choices. Therefore, children influence their own learning and development as well as gaining skills for the future.

Children are developing a very good sense of belonging and are very aware of keeping themselves safe. Children behave impeccably within the setting. They clearly understand the behavioural expectations within the setting and the friendly staff team act as very positive role models for children. Continuous praise and recognition for children's achievements helps their positive behaviour as well as developing their self esteem and positive attitudes towards others. Children tuck their chairs under the table at each activity and during snack times so as not to create hazards to others and watch where they are treading in the book corner so as not to tread on fingers and toes. Staff give clear guidance as to how to use large equipment safely and children know they must hold on to the rails of the climbing frame and wait until the slide is clear before going down. Children are reminded about expectations and rules within the setting, such as the number of children allowed on the climbing frame at any one time. Children count and check that this number is not exceeded and remind one another of the rules. Children are eager to be independent and use the facilities on their own but tell staff that they are going to the toilet so that they know where they are.

Children's healthy well-being is promoted well at most times. Children have access to outside play during most sessions, using a secure area to the front of the premises. Here all aspects of learning are promoted with a good emphasis on physical development and fresh air. Children access the toilets themselves where they use soap and running water to wash their hands before eating and after toileting. However, children are not encouraged to wash their hands before commencing food activities such as icing biscuits. This does not minimise the risk of cross-infection. Parents are encouraged to send children with healthy snacks and lunches. Children talk about the healthy aspects of their food with enthusiasm,

linking exercise, healthy foods and fresh air to their well-being.



## 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>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### 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>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

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

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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met