

St Mary's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector David Thomas Hatchett

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Type of setting Childcare - Non-Domestic

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Introduction

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Description of the setting

St Mary's Playgroup opened in 1973, and has been registered since 1992. It is situated in Crayford, on the outskirts of Kent in the London Borough of Bexley. It operates from three rooms in a church hall. A maximum of 36 children may attend the setting at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 8.30am to 11.30am and 12.00pm to 3pm for 38 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 58 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 45 children aged two, three and four currently receive funding for free early years education. Children mainly come from a local catchment area. The playgroup currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school employs seven staff. Of these, two staff, including the manager, hold a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 4, the remainder hold a NVQ at Level 3, one of whom is currently completing a Foundation degree in early years education. The setting manager is also a leading Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) within the local authority and shares good practice with other early years' settings. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children who attend St Mary's Playgroup receive a good quality of education and care. This is because experienced and very well-qualified staff give good attention to children's needs, plan exciting activities, and support children well so that they enjoy and achieve. Other strengths include strong relationships between adults and children, children's good behaviour and positive contribution, a good outdoor area that is used well for experimental learning, good assessment of children's individual needs and progress, and good quality resources which are utilised well. The setting tracks the progress of individuals well, but is not yet analysing trends in the progress of cohorts and groups. Experienced and effective leadership and management have ensured that good quality provision has been maintained since the last inspection, and reflective and accurate self-evaluation means that there is a good capacity for improvement in the future. The active parish setting means the centre is very vigilant with regard to the safeguarding of the children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- enhance good safeguarding practice by taking further steps to restrict the open accessibility of the premises, particularly at times when the other parts of the Church centre are being used
- track the progress of the cohort of children attending the setting over time,

to identify strengths and areas for development within the quality of provision, and the rates of progress that different groups make within the setting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Good safeguarding procedures mean that children feel safe. One of the recommendations from the last inspection was to ensure that recruitment and vetting procedures were robust. This has been addressed through new recruitment processes, which include appropriate adjustments to the application form, suitable questions at interview, and a new health declaration form, to assess candidates' overall suitability. The safeguarding policy is detailed and the manager, as designated lead professional, has received appropriate training, along with all other staff. Staff have also been recently trained in paediatric first aid. Risk assessments are detailed and cover longer term as well as day-to-day hazards and risks. Risk assessments for outings are highly detailed, and adjusted to the needs of the group, for example during a recent visit to a wildlife park. The manager is aware that the playgroup is easily accessible at certain times of the day, for example when parts of the Church centre are being used for community activities, but staff are vigilant at all times to ensure the children's ongoing safety. There are detailed records of injuries and first aid administered at the setting; however despite that staff always inform parents and carers of any incidents, occasionally they do not sign to indicate this. There is good leadership and management in the setting. The very experienced and dedicated setting manager is ably supported by two strong deputy managers, who together have driven improvement and embedded ambition well. The recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed. Leaders have a good and accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the provision, and of the main strengths and areas of development because of good self-evaluation. Regular staff meetings take place, where views and concerns are shared. Committee meeting minutes show that committee members are heavily involved and take an active interest in what is going on, although there are rarely opportunities where members discuss the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Resources in the setting are good and well-used, including a well-developed outdoor area that is used to best effect, despite that it is located down a flight of stairs. Leaders and staff promote equality and diversity very well and have high expectations for all children to achieve their potential. Resources reflect a myriad of backgrounds, cultures and languages, and there is positive promotion of those with disabilities. Stereotypes are challenged by staff, and children enjoy dressing up in the costumes and dress from a variety of backgrounds, for example those worn in Africa and Japan. There are good partnerships with a range of agencies that support the setting in delivering good provision, for example specialist support from the speech and language service, the positive parenting organisation, the local authority's early years adviser, and the neighbouring feeder school, where links are becoming re-established. There is also good engagement with parents and carers who benefit from regular communication with their child's key person, consultation evenings to discuss progress, and an informative newsletter. One parent stated 'When I take my child to playgroup you never see an unhappy child!'

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

Children make good progress in all areas of learning and Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, because of good provision. Activities are very well planned at long, medium and short term level. Planning is mapped well against the areas of learning by a dedicated planning co-ordinator. However the links with the ECM outcomes are less clear, despite the fact that the setting provides good provision within these areas. For example, during the morning snack time children had a choice of apple, breadsticks and water or milk, and were reminded of the need to wash their hands before eating, and after using the toilet. Children also develop safe practices well, for example, they keep together and walk sensibly when moving between the main room and the outdoor area; they know to wear an anorak when the weather looks like it might rain, and an outdoor coat when it is cold. Those that attend in the afternoon group, bring with them healthy packed lunches because staff guide parents and carers appropriately, both informally and in newsletters. During activities, adults engage with children very well. They sensitively intervene during child-led activities, to prompt for information, question and probe for understanding, or to remedy misconceptions. For example, during an outdoor session, the adult asked skilled questions which helped a child understand why water was important for plants to grow, and by using a plastic watering can to model how you would water a plant, making sure it was not too much, nor too little. Children have their own garden area within the outdoor area where they have been growing lettuce, radishes and grass as part of their recent topic on growth. Adults know children very well, and use this information to ensure that they receive the right level of support so that they progress well in their learning and development. Observations and assessments are ongoing, and feed into children's very detailed 'Learning Journeys' which showcase each child's learning and development over time at the setting, as well as snapshots of success, and are beautifully illustrated with children's work and photographs. These records show the good progress that each individual child makes, mapped well to their progress against development matters milestones and their progress in relation to the areas of learning. However, this rich assessment information at individual child level, is not yet collated and used at a strategic level to identify any gaps in progress of certain groups of children, for example those learning English as an additional language, or more closely pinpoint strengths and weaknesses within provision. The impact of the setting's good promotion of equality and diversity can be seen in the way that staff have high expectations for all children. Planning identifies the intended learning outcomes and a range of activities to ensure that those with additional needs are included and make maximum progress. A range of good strategies are used to include children with English as an additional language, such as dual-language resources, visual prompts and aids and hand gestures. The manager also assumes the role of SENCo and ensures that provision is accessible and appropriate to those children who require additional support and input in order to achieve the intended learning outcome. Support for such children is integrated and sensitive so as to build confidence and self-esteem. Children achieve and enjoy themselves very much at the setting, as shown for example when they sing 'Baa baa black sheep' with an adult so enthusiastically as

a group. Well planned activities such as this are typical in the setting, and ensure that all children develop the confidence and self-esteem for success. Through high quality provision and adult input, the setting ensures that children move on to the Reception year well-prepared for their future education.

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

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	2
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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