

St Mary's Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Gill Walley

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Type of setting Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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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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 opened in 1990. It operates from the terrapin building in the grounds of St Mary's Roman Catholic School in Maidenhead, Berkshire. There is a secure area for outdoor play, separate from that of the school. The pre-school is run by a voluntary committee. Children come from Maidenhead and the surrounding area, representing its cultural mix. Priority is given to baptised Catholic children but children from all faiths are accepted. The group opens each weekday during school terms. Morning sessions run from 9am to 12 noon. Afternoon sessions run from 12.30pm to 3.30pm each weekday, apart from Wednesdays. The pre-school offers a Breakfast Club for children attending either the school or the pre-school. It runs from 7.45am to 8.50am during school term time. Twenty-five children may attend at any one time and there are currently 51 children from three to five years on roll, some of whom receive funding for free nursery education. The majority of children move on to St Mary's School. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school currently employs 10 staff to work with the children, eight of whom are qualified at National Vocational Qualification Level 3 or above. The setting receives support from the Local Authority and has very close links with St Mary's School. It is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

St. Mary's Pre-school is an outstanding setting where all children make excellent progress through inspiring and extremely well-planned activities. There are very strong links with parents and carers, with the local authority, and an extremely close partnership with the adjoining school. The manager and her staff have a very accurate understanding of the pre-school's strengths and constantly strive for improvement, for example by developing an extensive range of exciting outdoor learning opportunities. They monitor the children's progress closely and evaluate the provision and its procedures regularly to identify what they might adapt. Consequently the pre-school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- develop children's thorough understanding and awareness of safe practices further by practising the evacuation procedure with them more regularly

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All staff understand safeguarding procedures very well and update their training regularly. They fully implement procedures to ensure children's absolute safety and are always extremely vigilant. There are robust recruitment and vetting procedures and security is extremely good because doors and gates are locked and children are always carefully supervised. There are rigorous assessments to reduce the possibility of accidents on the premises or when the children are taken off-site. Children discuss frequently how they leave the building in an emergency and can explain this very well, although they would benefit from practising the procedure more often. Children learn to take responsibility for their own safety, for example when playing outdoors on their slide. Visitors such as police and fire officers help them to understand how to avoid danger. Engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. They receive regular and detailed information about their children's learning and development through daily discussions with staff. They find out about activities such as the sound the children are learning each week on the notice board, and also look at the children's records. They say their children thoroughly enjoy the pre-school. They feel they make especially good progress in their social skills, their understanding of numbers, letters and sounds, and developing their confidence. Parents and carers also attend consultation meetings, where they find out how their children learn so that they can help them further at home. They are consulted about their views frequently but do not feel that anything can improve. They feel that the staff know and care for the children exceptionally well and keep them extremely safe. Partnerships with the adjoining school are very strong, for example the pre-school children share the school's outdoor environment and they get used to being in the school building by having their lunch there. The manager shares information about the children with class teachers so that the children have a very smooth transition to full-time education and settle readily. There are also very strong partnerships with outside agencies to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. The setting works very closely with the local authority to evaluate the effectiveness of its provision. The pre-school is extremely well led and managed and staff meet weekly to discuss planning and areas for improvement. There are excellent self-evaluation systems which include parents and carers' views, and space and excellent resources are used extremely well. The manager drives ambition exceptionally well so that all children, including those with specific needs, make rapid progress. Ensuring quality of opportunity is at the heart of all the centre does. Staff observe the children closely so they know precisely what opportunities each child needs next. The staff know the children extremely well, and they track their progress rigorously so that they can adapt the provision if they identify a group who may be underperforming. The manager and staff have addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection. In particular, the outdoor area now offers a wide range of experiences and all policies have been reviewed and are understood by staff, parents and carers.

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

Children achieve extremely well in all curriculum areas because activities are exciting, and planned according to their individual needs. Children behave exceptionally well and are kind and considerate towards one another. Staff have harmonious relationships with the children and extremely high expectations of them. They know each child individually and show great concern for their well being. They praise them by giving them leaves for their achievement tree to develop their confidence and self esteem. They pitch activities exceptionally well, based on their observations and knowing each child's interests and next steps in learning. Celebrations of festivals such as Eid and St. George's Day give children an excellent understanding of diverse religions, lifestyles, customs and food. The children also play with toys, puzzles and dolls which help them to understand equality and diversity. They develop responsibility through fundraising and looking after their guinea pigs. Children with additional needs are fully included in all activities and staff adapt activities very well to help them. The staff are skilled in responding to particular needs. Children make healthy choices at snack time and develop an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and safe. They take responsibility by choosing what they would like to play with, by tidying their toys away and choosing when to have snacks. They develop their physical skills well as they ride their bicycles and climb in the outdoor area. The adults challenge the children extremely well with questions about their learning. For example, while they were playing on the slide they thought of words beginning with a given sound. They learnt about symmetry through painting butterflies. Boys especially enjoy role play in the den and the pirate ship sand pit, and they learn about concepts such as how water flows through sloping pipes. Children learn how to cross the road safely through talks on safety from the fire and police services. They find out a great deal about the environment through intensive work with Forest Schools and staff feel this really motivates children to learn. They make many local visits, for example to the supermarket, the post office and the fruit farm, and they follow up these visits with many activities back in the classroom. The indoor environment is rich in letters and numbers so that children can learn very well independently. The staff also extend and reinforce children's learning, for example by encouraging them to count their plates at snack time, and staff plan more demanding tasks for the older and more able children. Children are very enthusiastic and motivated to investigate and explore. They develop very good creative skills, for example through collage, painting and making models. They develop good speaking and listening skills because the staff constantly engage them in conversation and they enjoy retelling favourite stories and dressing up. They practise their counting skills through singing nursery rhymes and songs. They learn to grow plants and they cook and eat the vegetables they have grown. They contribute their ideas about resources and activities through their Children's Council. These experiences give the children an excellent foundation for the next stage of their 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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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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