

St Mark's Pre-School Playgroup

St Mark's Church Hall, North Road, DARLINGTON, Co. Durham, DL1 3BH

Inspection date

26/03/2014

Previous inspection date

01/10/2008

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

3

Previous inspection:

2

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend 3

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children 3

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Staff have a sound knowledge of safeguarding and welfare requirements in order to ensure children's safety and well-being.
- An effective key person system is in place, which means that the children benefit from being nurtured and supported emotionally and, therefore, they settle very well.
- Children with additional needs are well supported to make progress in their learning.

It is not yet good because

- The supervision of staff is not sufficiently focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, this does not fully develop staff's personal effectiveness in the implementation of the learning and development requirements.
- Staff do not always use the information gained from their observations to personalise planning so this fully supports children's interests and their next steps in their learning.
- Opportunities for children to use reclaimed and open-ended materials outdoors have not been fully maximised.
- Staff's skills in asking open-ended questions are variable. This means children are not consistently encouraged to build on their rapidly developing critical and creative thinking skills.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector spoke to the manager, staff and children throughout the inspection.
- The inspector sampled children's records, checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working with children and some written policies.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector observed activities in the playrooms and in the outdoor area.
- The inspector held meetings with the manager and deputy manager.
- The inspector took account of parents' views through discussion and viewing the pre-school's own questionnaires.

Inspector

Karen Tervit

Full report

Information about the setting

St Mark's Pre-School Playgroup opened in 1985. It is registered on the Early Years Register and operates from St Mark's Church hall in Darlington. The pre-school is managed by a committee. The pre-school serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from two childcare rooms and an enclosed outdoor play area. There are eight members of staff, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications at a level 3 or above. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, term time only, from 8.30am until 3.15pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 40 children attending in the early years age group. The setting provides funded early education for two, three and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff, to ensure that they receive coaching and training in a timely manner to fully support their continued professional development
- analyse the information gained from observations and use this knowledge to plan experiences and opportunities which take into consideration the individual needs, interests and learning styles of children to further develop their progress.

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- enhance the outdoor learning environment further by improving access to a range of materials, which children can use and combine in their own way to meet their own purposes, for example, flexible and rigid pipes, logs and planks of wood, crates and cardboard boxes of different shapes and sizes
- increase staff's understanding of consistent and effective open-ended questioning, so children learn to think more creatively and critically.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have a sound awareness of the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and are using this reasonably well to enhance children's learning and development.

They carry out observations on children to help identify the next stage in their learning and use relevant guidance to help assess and track children's development. Some staff lack a secure understanding of the characteristics of effective learning. As a result, some planned activities are not always fully matched to their individual needs and do not have suitable challenge to help them make the most progress possible. However, very recent changes to planning have been introduced to try and focus more on children's interests, for example staff provide vet equipment linked to children's recent interest in dogs. Children enjoy making items for Mother's Day, with staff encouraging them to 'have a go' themselves. However, because staff are concentrating on not over directing children they occasionally miss opportunities to extend children's learning through skilful questioning. They also do not always get down to children's level when talking to them to ensure they have children's full attention. Despite this, children are happy and appear to enjoy their time at the setting. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, however, this does vary and some staff demonstrate good skills at promoting children's learning. Good provision is made for those children who need additional support. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that children get the help they need at the right time and that parents are fully involved in this process.

Children enjoy sharing stories and songs with staff and their peers. Many join in with actions, predict what happens next and name the different characters with confidence. Some children sing as they play with staff asking them to 'remind them' of the words to certain song. Staff give children time to share their experiences and praises their contributions, all of which helps to develop children's early communication, language and literacy skills. Children enjoy making marks using a variety of materials, such as pens, chalks and paint. Older children are encourage to begin to write their names on their work. Children have easy access to a computer and laptop, which they use independently and with confidence to complete simple programmes. This develops their awareness of everyday technology. Children enjoy exploring a varied range of different materials, such as dried pasta and glitter sand. Children develop suitable physical skills as they have daily opportunities to run outdoors and ride wheeled toys. Staff have a limited amount of time to set up so occasionally the outdoor area does not always allow children to freely access reclaimed and natural resources that they can use, move and combine in a variety of way. This means opportunities for children to play and explore imaginatively are less well promoted.

The progress check at age two has been completed for all relevant children and shared with parents. Staff use daily discussions and diaries to keep parents informed of activities children have been involved in. They provide written progress reports for all children and are planning open days to further involve parents in children's learning. Parents comment positively about the progress children are making, for example they say 'my child is developing in confidence and learning colours, shapes and letters'. Staff are always looking for new ways to encourage and enable parents to share information about what their child is doing at home. For example, they send resources, such as 'Diversity Ted' home so parents can write about his adventures.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children have developed secure attachments with the staff. A key person system is in place and children are happy and settled. Children feel safe and secure and staff support their emotional well-being very well. Information is gathered from parents before children attend with regard to children's personal preferences and requirements which supports the settling-in process. Children visit for short periods of time and are allowed to settle at their own pace. Alongside this, staff support children well who need the security of a routine to leave their parents and ensure their box of special things is readily available for their arrival. Parents comment positively on how well children have settled and the fact the manager and staff are very friendly and approachable.

Children play and learn in a bright, suitably-presented and welcoming environment. Resources are set out covering all areas of learning, such as craft, role play and construction. Overall, children make their own choices about what they want to do, which helps them to develop their independence. All children have daily opportunities to play outdoors and enjoy fresh air and exercise, and this contributes to their health and well-being. The safety of children is given priority and they learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, staff give them timely reminders, such as the importance of walking indoors rather than running, so they do not trip over and hurt themselves or others. They regularly practise the emergency evacuation procedures. The manager and staff are suitable role models talking to each other and children in a polite and respectful manner. Consequently, children are learning the importance of good manners and many say 'please' and 'thank you' unprompted. Overall, children behave well and most play cooperatively with their friends. Staff take a consistent approach in their expectations for children's behaviour so they learn what is acceptable.

The setting is clean and effective procedures are undertaken to help prevent the spread of infection. For example, staff wash their hands after changing nappies and changing mats are cleaned immediately after use. Staff promote children's self-help skills and emerging independence appropriately. For example, children are encouraged to choose their own fillings as they make their sandwiches at snack time. Staff sit with the children and mostly encourage them to talk about the food they are eating. They help children to manage their personal care, such as, washing their hands before meals and snacks. Consequently, staff are helping to prepare children for the move on to other settings, for example school.

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

The manager and staff team demonstrate a suitable understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They understand their responsibilities for safeguarding and all staff have completed recent appropriate child protection training. Consequently, all staff have an awareness of the procedures to follow if they are concerned about a child. A range of policies and procedures are in place to underpin staff practice and to keep parents informed about the provision. These include a suitable whistleblowing policy. The use of mobile telephones and cameras is carefully restricted to protect children. The arrival of any visitor is suitably monitored. Most staff hold a current first aid certificate and can take appropriate action in case of an accident. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure all staff's suitability to work with

children. The manager is fully aware of her responsibility of informing Ofsted of any significant events or changes. For example, she has informed Ofsted of newly appointed committee members.

The manager and staff understand they have a responsibility to meet the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are keen to develop the provision. The current staff team are relatively new and are beginning to work closely with the local authority advisory team, who have recently visited the setting. Following on from this visit the pre-school have started to bring about changes to improve the setting. For example, the deputy manager is currently working on developing the planning so it follows children's emerging interests and learning styles, however this is still in its infancy. Staff have changed the procedures for children entering the nursery so they have full use of both the rooms from the start of the session in order give children greater choice about what they play with. This has resulted in staff having to greet parents at the door rather than them coming into the pre-school room to drop their children off. The manager and staff are working hard to ensure that parents are still made to feel welcome. Parents are greeted in a warm and friendly manner by both the staff and manager and are encouraged to come into the setting if they need to discuss anything about their child in confidence. Staff receive regular appraisals and key person meetings with the manager. However, supervision sessions are not currently rigorous enough to identify when less confident members of staff need additional support to improve their personal effectiveness. Consequently, there are variations in the quality of teaching and learning. For example, some staff are unsure of the characteristics of effective learning. The manager has devised a self-evaluation document, involving staff, parents and children in the process. Consequently, the pre-school demonstrates a suitable commitment to improve.

Overall, staff work very well with parents by keeping them informed of their children's welfare. Parents spoken to at the time of the inspection expressed that they were extremely pleased with the pre-school. They identified the friendly staff and approachable manager as strengths of the pre-school, saying 'staff and manager are always welcoming' and 'I have been impressed and have no concerns at all'. Effective partnership working with parents is underpinned by daily written diaries, which helps to provide continuity of care for the children. Secure professional partnerships help the staff to support children who are identified as having a specific need. Staff have also developed links with the local schools and share information with teachers when children move on to school.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	301174
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	961697
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	40
Name of provider	St Mark's Pre-School Playgroup Committee
Date of previous inspection	01/10/2008
Telephone number	07768 400316

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
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M1 2WD

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