

St Mary's Church Nursery

St Mary's Church, Church Street, DUNMOW, Essex, CM6 2AE

Inspection date

03/11/2014

Previous inspection date

17/10/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

1

Previous inspection:

2

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend 1

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- All children make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. This is due to the consistently excellent quality of teaching by the dedicated, enthusiastic and highly motivated staff team, who ensure activities are stimulating, exciting, imaginative and fun.
- Children's emotional well-being is promoted extremely well. They form warm and meaningful attachments to the adults caring for them, and make friends with their peers. All children are confident, active, self-directed learners.
- Children are kept safe and free from harm as staff have an excellent understanding of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. Partnerships with parents are very highly valued and fully effective in supporting children in their learning and development.
- Leadership is inspirational. The manager works tirelessly, supported by the committee, to raise standards of care and learning for all children. She inspires staff with her dedication and enthusiasm. Consequently, staff are highly motivated and work as a team to deliver high-quality experiences for all children.

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 interacted with children in the playroom and in the outside area.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager and staff members and carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation including evidence of staff suitability checks and certificates, some policies and children's development profiles.
- The inspector took account of the views of several parents spoken to during the inspection and information on surveys gathered by the nursery in advance of the inspection.

Inspector

Sarah Williams

Full report

Information about the setting

St Mary's Church Nursery was registered in 1997 on the Early Years Register and is committee run. It operates from a church hall in Great Dunmow, Essex. An enclosed area is available for outdoor activities. The nursery is open from 9am to 3pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, in term time only. There is an option for an early drop off at 8.40am for parents who need it. Children can stay for lunch and session times are flexible with morning, afternoon and all day sessions. There are currently 18 children on roll. Funded education is provided for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery employs four members of childcare staff. All hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The manager holds Qualified Teacher Status for early years teaching.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enrich the presentation of some resources, for example, the snail tank, so that children's interest and curiosity is maximised to help them investigate and discover, and enhance their knowledge of the world.

Inspection judgements

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

All children attending St Mary's Church Nursery make exceptionally good progress in all areas of their learning and development. This is because the staff team provide a consistently excellent quality of teaching in a well thought out, stimulating and child friendly environment. They use the available space to create an outstanding, child-centred and welcoming environment that is colourful, bright and stimulating. Although the resources are generally very attractive, a few areas of the playroom are less well presented to promote children's curiosity about the natural world, for example, the snail tank. As well as the main playroom, children have free access to an imaginatively resourced enclosed outdoor area. Here they can use wheeled toys, hunt for mini-beasts in the bug hotel, tend their herbs and plants, or play hopscotch. For more adventurous outdoor exploration, children frequently visit a nearby open space. Here they can use the natural environment and trees to balance and climb, kick up the autumn leaves, run and move freely. This provides the opportunity to extend and challenge their physical skills and take risks by negotiating uneven terrain in a fully supervised environment. More structured activities also take place here, such as den building, games and sports, and treasure hunts. Staff are very aware that children learn differently in an outdoor environment and note the benefits to those children who may be less able to express themselves in the playroom. Younger children enjoy play with a variety of messy materials, including sand, water and gloop. Theme days, where there is a focus on messy play, are extremely popular and enable staff to observe children interacting with a wide variety of resources,

experimenting and investigating their different properties. This type of exceptionally well-planned, themed session enhances learning in all areas. For example, children confidently use mathematical language, such as heavy and light, more and less. They explore texture and form and use materials to create collages and structures. Some usually reluctant participants are actively encouraged to try something new in a fun and non-threatening way and find they thoroughly enjoy the sensation of different materials, as they freely explore them. All sessions are very child friendly, relaxed and well planned to ensure that children's individual learning needs are fully met. The planning allows for spontaneous and child-initiated activities to be woven into the day. For example, children eagerly ask for a favourite music soundtrack, so that they can dance and sing. Staff clear a space and provide children with ribbons and accessories to enhance their expressive movement. Staff understand well how children learn by thinking creatively and making links. For example, activities about fire, fire engines, bonfires and fireworks are supported with stories and discussions about colours, noises and fire safety, while skilfully weaving in children's own personal experiences. Children learn about their community and the local environment when they visit the library for story sessions and when visitors, such as the police and health professionals, come into the nursery to talk to them. They eagerly anticipate a visit from the fire service, tying in with their exploration of fireworks and fire safety.

Children have a record of their development in the form of a learning journey. These scrapbook-style records are compiled by their key person. They include a one-page portrait detailing children's likes and dislikes, their approach to learning and their developmental starting points. This information is provided by parents, normally at the settling-in visits before children start attending. The appealing and extremely well-presented learning journeys include examples of art and craft work, children's attempts at writing and photographs of activities they have taken part in, together with comments and observations by their key person. There is a wealth of information for parents about how they can use the different activities to promote and continue the learning at home, and space to comment and contribute their thoughts and ideas. This clearly illustrates the very strong and effective partnership working with parents, which benefits children and contributes towards their progress. The clear and precise next steps, devised accurately by the key person from observations, are reviewed and fed into the comprehensive, rigorous tracking system. This serves to check that children are reaching expected levels of development and identifies any gaps, which may need additional attention. The progress check for children between the ages of two and three years is incorporated extremely well within this system. Parents are able to take the findings and use them when they see the health visitor for their child's routine check. Any identified problems are promptly addressed, with specialist help from the setting's knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator. Any additional outside help required is sought from a team of professionals. All external support is clearly documented and systematically reviewed. As a result, all children are effectively supported to make the best possible progress in their learning and development. Children who speak English as an additional language are supported very well by the use of sign language and key vocabulary where appropriate. The playroom has posters and signs using different languages and scripts, and dual language books can be obtained. This enables all children to see the diversity of language in written form. Using sign language in singing and story sessions also benefits children who are in the early stages of language acquisition.

All children very successfully develop the skills and attitudes they need for the future. They are active, confident, eager and enthusiastic learners, taking control of their chosen activities. As they approach their final term in the nursery, they take part in structured activities designed to help them prepare for the changes ahead. Their independence and confidence is boosted by having responsibilities as a helper, for example, at snack time. The move to school is made as seamless as possible by staff's thorough and thoughtful preparation. All the feeder schools are contacted and arrangements made for children to visit, and for teachers who wish to come to the nursery. The home corner is resourced as a school, with items of uniform for children to try on. By using role-play, they can talk about their hopes and any anxieties they may have for the move to school. For children who attend more than one early years setting, highly effective links are established and information exchanged, which supports them and guarantee an exceptional continuity of care and learning.

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

Children attending St Mary's Church Nursery are extremely relaxed, confident and demonstrate a strongly developing sense of self as they engage with their peers and participate in activities. Children quickly develop firm attachments to the adults caring for them and turn to them for support and reassurance. This helps children's high self-esteem to be promoted exceptionally well by staff from the earliest days. For example, children ask staff to get out a particular toy or for help with building a train track. Staff support children but do not dominate or take over the play. They skilfully allow children to solve problems, manage and resolve conflicts, and make decisions. This approach successfully promotes the development of children's independence and self-reliance. Children's behaviour is managed calmly and consistently, so that children learn early on that their actions have consequences and that by being kind and helpful they can help to influence how others feel. The freely flowing use of the outdoor area, when weather permits, helps to facilitate this, by providing children with meaningful choices about where they play and work. With the open-ended play and learning this provides, as well as the wide range of indoor play and activities, children can challenge themselves and take risks in a supported environment.

Children are emotionally very well prepared for future challenges, such as the move to primary school. Staff are given time every day to work specifically with their key children, so that they can plan activities around the child's known next steps and social needs. For example, they may set up a game or small group activity, which involves waiting for a turn, or describing what they are doing. The key persons are highly skilled in preparing children well for their future learning. Children learn how to keep themselves safe when they take part in an emergency evacuation drill, and when crossing the road to get to the wooded area and play space adjacent to the churchyard. Staff take these opportunities to reinforce the rules for safe conduct.

Children's good health is outstandingly well promoted. Children have freedom to move about, developing control as they negotiate the various surfaces and levels of the outdoor area and the open spaces they visit. At times, they climb trees, balance on logs and use

wheeled toys to steer and move about the garden area. Children learn that exercise and exertion are good for them, and tell staff they can feel their heart beating faster when they have been very active or energetic, such as after a dance session. Children willingly engage in these active sessions because staff are inspiring role models. They join in, show enthusiasm and provide props for children to enhance their enjoyment. Children's self-care is exceptionally well promoted. They each have a named basket where they know they can find their belongings. They confidently change their shoes for indoors or outside. They use the bathroom independently, or with support, washing and drying their hands on their individual towels. Children who require a nappy or a change of clothing are catered for discreetly and sensitively to preserve their privacy and dignity. Snacks are served during the morning sessions. The rolling snack service means children choose when they would like something to eat and drink. They take their name card when there is a space at the snack table, and enjoy a selection of well chosen, healthy options. These always include fruit, vegetables and energy giving foods such as bread or crackers along with a drink of milk or water. Independence is very well promoted as children serve themselves and use cutlery at appropriate times and tools for spreading or cutting. Occasional treats, such as fruit jelly, are prepared in advance with children, incorporating learning as they talk about how the ingredients change. At lunchtime, children sit together and eat their packed lunch from home. Staff sit with children modelling good table manners and encouraging discussion about the foods they are eating. Children talk about what is good for them and which foods are best seen as occasional treats. For children who become sleepy or tired during the session, a cosy corner is available in a quiet area, so they can rest undisturbed while others continue to play.

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

Leadership and management are highly effective and support all staff to deliver high-quality care and consistently excellent, inspired and imaginative teaching for all children. All aspects of the learning and development requirements are exceptionally well understood. The manager programmes regular staff supervision and appraisals, to ensure that every staff member continues to have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff willingly take on responsibilities and specialist roles within the setting and are keen to attend any training courses, which refresh or add to their knowledge and skills. New initiatives are welcomed. For example, a staff member has created a very effective checklist, to ensure that the very youngest children attending have their specific care needs met. She noticed that younger children need help in accessing resources and using equipment, which older children can do without support. By careful attention to all aspects of the environment, every child's inclusion and participation is fully assured. The committee are highly supportive and value and nurture staff as their main resource. This has resulted in a very strong and stable staff team, who offer mutual support to one another. The manager and deputy carry out stringent monitoring of staff performance, including the delivery of the educational programme. By overseeing the planning and excellent use of published guidance documents, as well as other sources for inspiration and ideas, the sessions flow smoothly and at a good pace. This ensures that children's interest and engagement is maintained and they are never short of a range of meaningful

choices. Senior staff also check for consistency in the quality of the children's development records, to ensure that they all reflect the high standards expected. The progress of groups of children, as well as individual children, is tracked to identify weaker areas and address them immediately.

All children are fully safeguarded and well cared for. The manager and her deputy have attended training to enable them to be the designated persons with a lead role in child protection and safeguarding. Every staff meeting starts with a discussion about any current safeguarding concerns, as this is paramount to the nursery's approach to childcare. All staff confidently identify and respond to any signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect. Comprehensive policies and simply explained procedures, give parents a clear understanding of how the setting protects children. Well thought out, rigorous recruitment and induction procedures ensure that only suitable adults have contact with children. No adult is allowed unsupervised contact with children until all checks are fully completed. Only after a probationary period is a final offer of a position made. Regular appraisals are used as an opportunity to check the ongoing suitability of staff and identify any training needs. All staff have a paediatric first-aid qualification, which enables them to respond to children's minor accidents swiftly and appropriately. Self-evaluation has a high priority and is an exercise that involves all staff equally. Staff contribute by providing comments and ideas, which they wish to be considered. The result is a forward looking plan for future development, with realistic and achievable plans designed to improve outcomes for children. This stems from an overall highly reflective approach. Parents' views are sought very regularly by way of formal and informal discussions, questionnaires and surveys. Where practicable, parents' suggestions are implemented, such as the introduction of an option to drop children off early on some days.

Partnerships with parents are a key strength and highly effective in supporting individual children's care and learning needs. Parents say they find staff very approachable and feel exceptionally well supported in the many aspects of childcare they like to discuss. They unfailingly praise the staff for providing excellent care and learning, and unhesitatingly recommend the nursery to their friends and families. Where children require support from outside professionals, this is secured promptly and in partnership with parents. Staff have developed links with other early years settings attended by children and liaise with them to share vital information to ensure continuity of care and learning. Parents particularly like the fact that staff take the trouble to get to know every child as a unique individual, and therefore ensure an individually-tailored approach to their learning. The manager is passionate in pursuing her vision for the nursery and is guided by her ethos of ensuring a fully child-centred environment where children can play and be excited by their learning. To this end, she supports her staff in extending their skill base and introducing new initiatives and schemes. Currently, there is a focus on extending children's love of books and raising awareness of how books can be used to help literacy and children's investigative skills, both at nursery and at home. To encourage this, she has made a selection of books, with supporting teaching notes, available to parents to borrow. All children flourish, are happy and make excellent progress in all areas of development at St Mary's Church Nursery.

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. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of 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		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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	203985
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	865227
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	18
Name of provider	St Mary's Church Nursery Great Dunmow Committee
Date of previous inspection	17/10/2011
Telephone number	0795759 6303

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance '*Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

