

Inspection of St Mary's Playgroup

THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, HORSEFAIR, BANBURY, OXON OX16 0AE

Inspection date:

6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Staff are caring and kind. They want the best for children. Staff want to help children to acquire the skills they most need to develop next. Staff accurately identify where the focus for the curriculum needs to be, taking account of the particular needs of the children who attend. For example, staff identify where there needs to be an especially strong focus on children's personal and social skills. However, despite good intentions, staff struggle to target their teaching effectively to help children begin to manage their emotions and engage in purposeful play. At times, this can lead to a disorderly environment.

Children are generally happy. They show they want to learn and play. They are made very welcome by the staff, who have created a warm and friendly environment. Children settle well due to the gentle approach staff take when they first start to attend the playgroup. Settling-in arrangements are tailored to children's individual needs. This helps children to develop the confidence to separate from their parents or carers and begin to do things for themselves, such as hanging up their coats and finding their name-cards.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The manager and staff accurately assess children's learning needs. However, they do not consistently take these into account when planning and delivering learning experiences. For example, some activities are too long or complicated for children to be able to join in, focus and learn well from them.
- Staff are calm and patient when supporting children's behaviour. They promptly intervene when needed to ensure that children are safe. However, staff do not effectively focus on teaching children the skills and language they need to begin to regulate their own behaviour. For example, children are not taught effectively to take turns and share. This means that disruptive behaviours continue.
- Children have access to lots of different toys and resources. They show initial enthusiasm for what is on offer. However, staff do not help children to use resources purposefully. As a result, children's initial enthusiasm is not maintained and the sheer abundance of resources hinders, rather than helps, children's ability to focus well on meaningful learning.
- Children develop their independence because staff use routines to encourage these skills. For example, children learn to blow their noses, wash their hands and set out their own lunches.
- Staff understand the importance of regular exercise to children's good health. They ensure that children have daily opportunities to move energetically and develop a positive view of following an active lifestyle. When the weather restricts the use of the outside area, staff encourage children to join in with indoor activities, such as music-and-movement sessions.

- Partnerships with parents are a strength of the playgroup. The manager and staff build supportive relationships with parents. Staff work hard and effectively to engage parents in their children's learning. Staff lend resources, including books, to help parents support children's learning at home. Additional funding is often used to support this. Parents speak highly of the staff team. Parents especially appreciate the support they receive to engage with other professionals to find additional help for their children when needed.
- The manager, who is also the nominated individual, offers staff practical help throughout the day. She is team player and proactively works with other staff to meet children's care needs and keep them safe. However, she is less confident in her role in taking a strategic overview of the provision. Staff receive regular opportunities to discuss their performance. However, they do not receive the targeted support they need to deliver teaching that is of a consistently high standard.
- The manager and all staff want to do a good job. They are keen to develop their skills in adapting routines and activities to the differing needs of children as required. They have a positive attitude towards improving what they do and becoming more confident in their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff keep children safe. The manager is clear about her role in ensuring that staff undertake suitable training to keep their safeguarding knowledge up to date. Staff talk confidently about the signs that could indicate a child is at risk of harm. Staff know how to share these concerns with senior staff. They understand their responsibility to escalate concerns to other professionals, if necessary. Staff ensure that the premises are safe and secure. They deploy themselves effectively to ensure that children are supervised at all times.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
implement effective staff coaching and supervision, to improve the overall quality of the curriculum and teaching	01/03/2024
provide children with effective support to develop the skills and understanding they need to begin to moderate their own behaviour	01/03/2024

ensure that the manager has effective support to develop her skills and confidence to fulfil all requirements of her role, including having oversight of the quality of the provision.	01/03/2024
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To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- improve how resources are used and presented, to help children focus and engage in meaningful play and learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	133606
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10305587
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	39
Name of registered person	St Mary's Playgroup (Banbury) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP518085
Telephone number	07930 122736
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018

Information about this early years setting

St Mary's Playgroup has been operating since 1971 and is situated in Banbury, Oxfordshire. It is open from Monday to Friday, term time only. Sessions are from 8.30am to 3pm. There are six members of staff. The manager and deputy manager hold early years qualifications at level 5. Three members of staff hold qualifications at level 2 or level 3. The playgroup provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sarah Holley

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the playgroup received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the playgroup.
- The inspector and the manager had a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The deputy manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation.
- Parents' views were taken account of by the inspector.
- The inspector held meetings with the manager to find out about the leadership and management of the playgroup.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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