

Inspection of St Mary's Pre-school

St Mary's School, Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7EG

Inspection date: 31 January 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children of all ages happily and confidently enjoy their time in this welcoming and well-equipped setting. Their emotional well-being is given a high priority. Staff diligently get to know children very well. This starts with the home visits they complete. The detailed information gathered from parents helps plan children's bespoke settling-in sessions. Staff ensure children feel safe, secure and comfortable.

Staff offer interesting and exciting activities based on an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. This helps to build on children's curiosities and motivates them to play, explore and experiment. For example, children try to work out ways to reveal small toys in blocks of ice. Staff skilfully facilitate this by suggesting simpler ways. Children learn to ask for warm water to pour on the ice to speed up the melting process. This extends their thinking, which they revisit with interest and excitement. Practical activities such as these greatly benefit children's knowledge.

Experienced leaders set high expectations for all children, including those identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work diligently with staff, parents and other professionals to plan specific support. This is proving successful at bridging gaps in these children's learning. Staff act as good role models to encourage children to be kind and friendly. They praise them for showing consideration towards others and playing cooperatively together. This is particularly effective outdoors.

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

- Staff's passion for books spreads rapidly to children. Listening to their chosen stories being read and brought to life by staff is a popular activity among them. Children get actively involved in repeating familiar phrases in stories, and they contribute their ideas about what might happen next. Staff ask a range of questions to encourage them to think, share their knowledge and make informed responses. This helps children make consistently good progress in their communication skills. The knowledge and skills gained from such valuable interactions help children to start creating their own stories using story characters, a plot and ending.
- The pre-school has created a magical outdoor area where children's imaginations and creativity are heightened. Children seamlessly move from one area to another, extending their own play as they go. For instance, in role play, they negotiate their roles in the pre-school's fruit and vegetable shop. The 'customers' select real fruit and vegetables, placing the produce in shopping baskets. The 'shopkeeper' pretends to calculate the total cost, while another

child bags up the items. Staff intervene at appropriate times and ask provoking questions, such as 'What will you make?' Children's ideas are boundless, such as onion soup, vegetable stew and sweet potato fries. They independently move to the kitchen role-play area to cut up their vegetables with child-safe knives. Children are fully engrossed and committed to completing the task.

- In general, the daily routines are well planned. Children know what will happen next and show awareness of routines, such as by putting on their coats and hats before going outdoors. However, some parts of the day are not as well managed by staff. This is common during a change of activity, such as the routine of tidying up and sitting on carpet for circle time. Times like these can take much longer than necessary as some children get restless or show unwanted behaviour. Staff's efforts to deal with this and give children clear messages to correct their behaviours are less consistent. Consequently, some children's usual good behaviour temporarily deteriorates until the next activity begins.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the provision is good. Leaders identify staff's areas of development where needed. However, they do not monitor each staff member's practice precisely enough. For instance, some staff's implementation of addressing individual children's next steps in learning is not always sharply focused. Leaders are yet to target support for staff who are less effective at adapting activities to build on individual children's existing knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders proactively strive for continual improvement. They are passionate about providing the highest standards of education and care. Staff, parents and children's views help to inform the improvement plans. For example, parents' questionnaires highlighted the need for staff to provide better communication about children's learning and development. Leaders responded by putting in place a variety of effective improvements, such as newsletters, online platforms and opportunities to speak to key persons. Parents now feel fully informed and use the shared ideas to complement children's development at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to manage children's behaviour more consistently and help them understand what is expected of them
- monitor and evaluate staff's teaching more robustly and provide individualised support and training to improve their practice even further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	108463
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10376219
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	25
Number of children on roll	38
Name of registered person	St Mary's Pre-school Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP524724
Telephone number	01628 627013
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2019

Information about this early years setting

St Mary's Pre-school registered in 1992 and is situated in Maidenhead, Berkshire. The pre-school provides care from 9am to 3.30pm, Monday to Friday, during term time only. The provider is eligible to provide funded early years education for children aged two to four years. There are 10 members of staff, seven of whom hold relevant qualifications at level 3 or above.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sonia Panchal

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children and staff spoke with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector and the manager carried out a joint observation of a group activity.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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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