

St Mark's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 103847
Inspection date 07/07/2011
Inspector Susan McCourt

Setting address The Old Vicarage, Vicarage Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 5JA
Telephone number 01634 570489
Email info@stmarkschurchgillingham.co.uk
Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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 1231, 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.

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

St Mark's Playgroup is run by a committee and opened in 1983. It operates from two rooms in a church hall in Gillingham, Kent. Children have access to an adjacent garden area in the grounds owned by St Mark's church. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

A maximum of 30 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open each weekday from 9.15am to 12.15pm, term time only.

There are currently 40 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 20 children receive funding for early education. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six members of staff. The manager has a degree in Early Years Studies, all staff hold appropriate early years qualifications, and one staff member is working towards a Foundation Degree in Childhood Studies.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The playgroup provides good care for children and meets their individual needs very well. Staff have created an excellent learning environment and routine, which maximises children's opportunities for purposeful play and develops their independence. The committee and staff team have a strong shared vision that the children's learning should also be fun, and they focus their work to improve outcomes for children, although this is not fully reflected in the self-evaluation. They reflect on their strengths and areas for enhancement, giving them a good capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- enhance the self-evaluation to fully reflect the good practice of the setting in improving outcomes for children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are very well safeguarded. All staff and committee members are checked for their suitability and the premises are secure. All staff understand their role and

responsibilities in protecting children, and they have a strong understanding that the welfare of the child is paramount. There is a designated safety officer who makes a full risk assessment and reviews it annually. All staff take part in the daily checks that ensure the provision and activities are safe for children, and that any identified issues are addressed immediately. Staff have a good regard for the documentation that supports children's welfare and all accident and medication records are accurately maintained. Guidance is available to ensure that children with infectious illnesses do not attend, and robust hygiene routines minimise the risk of cross-infection. Staff have a shared understanding that focuses all their efforts on the children to provide good quality learning through play and fun. This is evident as they use self-evaluation to ensure that they are doing their best, for the group as a whole and the individuals within it. For example, they adapted the routine just slightly to give children group time as soon as they arrived, which helped them settle to purposeful play. The staff team have high expectations and set themselves challenging targets to enhance the quality of the provision. Currently the written self-evaluation does not fully reflect the group's good practice in focusing on outcomes for children, which reduces its rigour.

The playgroup has excellent resources and organises them in an exemplary way to ensure that children have the best opportunities to sustain and develop their play. For example, the home corner equipment enabled a group of children to play cooperatively and purposefully for over thirty minutes and to return to these games at other times too. Equipment is also chosen with sustainability in mind, and recycled and found objects are alongside conventional equipment in all aspects of the activities. The staff know the individual children and families well, including any additional languages and their cultural identity. Staff work effectively to address any achievement gaps they identify. They promote equality and diversity and as a result, all children integrate well. Staff are quick to identify any additional needs that children may have, and work with the parents and other professionals to ensure their needs are met in a consistent and cohesive way. Staff have built good working relationships with the receiving schools and get feedback about the children's attainments which helps them to refine the way they help children learn. They also ensure that the transition to school is eased for both children and parents. Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved with the playgroup at every level, as they can be on the managing committee, act as parent helpers or simply drop in to play alongside their child. The information available to parents is exemplary, and includes lots of information about why the playgroup operates in the way it does, always with an emphasis on outcomes for children. For example, the recent development of the outdoor area shows parents that using recycled materials such as tyres and crates provides extra interest and challenge in physical play. The staff use parents' and children's feedback to continually enhance the provision and have regular meetings with parents to discuss children's progress.

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

Staff have created an excellent learning environment which is thoughtfully equipped and organised both in and out of doors. The rooms are bright and welcoming with numerous interesting activities, such as sparkly dough, an intriguing investigation area and a cosy book room. The routine gives children maximum time for free play, which enables them to develop and sustain activities for lengthy periods and still take part in a variety of play. Children can be independent, active learners and are confident with their peers and adults. Staff have a thorough understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and use it effectively to assess and monitor children's learning and development. They make meaningful observations and use these to set children's next steps, which are incorporated into the plans for the following week. This enables children to make good progress through the Foundation Stage. Staff compile the observations, photographs and samples of work into a learning journey folder which is very much a joint project for the family, child and key person. The learning journey reflects the child's personality and individuality and is highly valued by all concerned. Children with additional needs are given good support to make strong progress, playing alongside their peers at all times.

Children can feel very safe at the playgroup because all staff have their welfare at heart. Children are settled and secure, calling the staff 'Aunty' to create a family atmosphere. Children understand the clear rules that keep them safe and therefore play safely on the slide and do not run indoors. They take charge of their personal hygiene, and understand the importance of hand washing. The staff provide an open snack bar so children can go when they are hungry and have reached a natural break in their play. All the food on offer is healthy, and children know why this is important. They cut the fruit and pour their own drinks, giving them good self-help skills. Children have a variety of opportunities to develop their small and large muscles in daily play both in and out of doors and really enjoy setting themselves challenges such as building tall towers or making obstacle courses with building blocks. Children's behaviour is exceptional. They cooperate and negotiate in their play, and can be gently assertive about taking turns and sharing. Children have strong friendships and show caring attitudes to their peers, expressing their feelings verbally and through cuddles. They show great pride in their achievements and have high levels of self-esteem, which reflects the respect given to them by staff, who greatly value their ideas and interests.

Children thoroughly enjoy their play and have lots of fun with the staff who bring out the learning and the fun in all the activities. They have frequent opportunities to make marks and use technological toys; as such equipment is available in all areas of play. Children have good writing skills, demonstrated in the books they made of their trips to schools. They can shape their play, for example children were inspired when they had a visit from the photographer. This led to lots of role play to recreate the event, encouraged and enabled by staff. The confidence and resilience this develops gives them good skills for the future.

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?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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