

St Matthews Community Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Samantha Powis

Setting address St Matthews Community Playgroup, Newtown Primary
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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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*.

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Description of the setting

St Matthews Community Playgroup started in the 1960's and was registered at its present premises in 1998. It is situated in a classroom within Newtown School in Exeter, Devon and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents. The playgroup is open term time only between 9.15am and 3.15pm Mondays to Thursdays, and 9.15am to 12.45pm on a Friday.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register to care for up to 18 children from three years to the end of the early years age group. There are currently 44 children on roll. The playgroup welcomes children in receipt of government funding for three and four years olds. The nursery supports children who learn English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The setting employs eight staff, which includes two regular bank staff members and an administrator. The manager is a qualified teacher, and three of the remaining staff hold relevant childcare qualifications. Two staff are currently working towards childcare qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are happy and settled and enjoy a wide range of exciting activities and experiences that support them in making good progress in their learning and development. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of children's needs, which means they are able to offer specific support to each of them. The highly inclusive indoor and outdoor learning environments ensure children are motivated and keen to learn. Strong relationships are established with parents, who are generally kept well informed about their child's daily routines and their developmental progress. The environment is frequently assessed to ensure children remain safe, and most documentation is used effectively to support children's ongoing welfare. Staff are keen to increase their own knowledge and skills and use this to help them implement positive changes to improve outcomes for the children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve systems for reviewing the use of documentation to ensure information is accurate and sufficiently detailed
- increase opportunities for sharing information about children's learning at playgroup and at home to help plan for their continued progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety and welfare is well supported. Staff have a confident awareness and understanding of their responsibilities regarding child protection, ensuring that prompt and appropriate action is taken in the event of a concern. Excellent practices are followed to support children's health, for example, children become confident in practising good hygiene routines and sing 'hand-washing' songs whilst they independently wash their hands. Most documentation is used effectively; however, occasionally staff forget to obtain a written signature from parents to confirm they have been informed of an accident. Also, some records of information lack details, such as details of a child's Doctor, to ensure that they receive appropriate support in the event of an emergency. There are clear recruitment and induction procedures in place to check staff's suitability to work with children, and to ensure they are fully aware of their role and responsibilities. Staff ensure children are well supervised at all times, which helps to ensure they are safe and well cared for. Safety arrangements are reviewed regularly throughout the day to ensure risks to children are minimised, and that children can move around the playgroup environments in safety. For example, two-way radios are used to ensure good communication between staff indoors and outside to assure children's safety.

The staff work well together as a team and are well organised. Children feel settled and secure due to the relaxed and consistent routines and expectations applied throughout the playgroup. Staff have an excellent understanding of their roles and use their skills and experience well to provide children with good levels of support throughout the day. The staff team are supported by a keen committee of parent volunteers who are actively involved in ensuring the best outcomes for children. For example, they have recently accessed funding to provide additional resources to improve children's outdoor play experiences. Staff frequently review current arrangements to identify areas for future improvement based on their understanding of the needs of children attending. They seek feedback from parents, early years professionals and from the children themselves as to how improvements can be made, and plan how these new ideas can be implemented to continually make it better for the children.

Strong relationships are developed with parents and carers, which means they have a clear understanding of the settings aims, policies and procedures. They benefit from daily discussions with their child's key person and see plans of daily activities displayed on the notice board. Although parents are made aware of their child's development records, there are currently no formal arrangements for them to share these with key persons, to encourage a more consistent approach when planning for children's progress. There are good systems in place to support children with additional needs. Staff liaise closely with parents and external agencies, and implement the use of pictorial notices and sign language throughout the playgroup, to ensure all children are fully supported and included within the setting. The playgroup links closely with the school where they are based, and with other local schools to which children move onto, helping to ease the transition from playgroup to school for each child.

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

Children are motivated, interested and keen to learn. They settle quickly to an activity of their choice, confident due to the skilful support they receive from familiar and attentive staff. Children form good relationships with adults within the setting, and build firm friendships with their peers, as they learn to share, respect and help each other. Excellent organisation of resources allows children to make choices and select equipment for themselves, encouraging children to become increasingly independent in how they play and what they play with. Children are well behaved as staff use a fair and consistent approach. Children feel fully included as routines and activities are adapted to suit their needs. They develop a strong sense of belonging as they see examples of their own work displayed on the walls, and photographs of each of them identifying their birthday. They have high levels of confidence and self-esteem, encouraged through activities such as bringing their pets into the playgroup; this makes them feel proud of the uniqueness of their own family.

Children's learning is well planned for and promoted effectively to ensure they all make good progress. Regular observations made by key persons help them plan future activities that will interest and challenge the children appropriately. There is a good balance of group and child-led activities and opportunities to play indoors and out. However, a lack of opportunities for some parents to share in children's progress records and include what they know about their child's learning at home, means that this important information is not always considered as staff plan the next steps for individual children. Excellent interaction from staff, as children play, encourages children to be inquisitive and think things through.

Children are confident communicators. They negotiate roles as they play imaginatively in the playhouse and share their thoughts as they engage in conversations during snack time. They show an increasing awareness of letters and sounds, identifying their names by the sounds they hear and noticing rhyming words during discussions. They are aware that books can be used for enjoyment and for sourcing information. Large selections of books are available throughout the playgroup, encouraging the children to use the books for themselves. A group of children show excitement as they enjoy sharing a sensory book with a member of staff. They press the buttons to make the sounds and use their hands to feel the different textures on the page, building their interest in accessing books. Children are encouraged to engage in activities that help them to make marks, encouraging them to develop skills for later life. Staff model the use of writing, such as when they pass messages to each other, increasing children's awareness that print carries meaning. Children are involved in problem solving and use numbers regularly as they play. As they sing their song, they try to work out how many sausages are left sizzling in the pan, as the numbers slowly decrease. Children have shown a great interest in their current work on animals. They are fascinated as they observe the newly hatched chicks, knowing that only days earlier they were small eggs. They observe the caterpillar cocoons, anticipating what they will see inside after hearing the story about a hungry caterpillar.

Children benefit from many outings to local places of interest to experience the wider world. They benefit from visitors to the playgroup, who share their own understanding of other cultures and festivals, bringing their experiences to life. Painting easels are available both indoors and out, allowing children to express themselves creatively when they choose.

Children's physical development is extremely well supported. They access the outdoor area freely whatever the weather, enjoying the different experiences and benefiting from playing out in the fresh air. They have large spaces to use wheeled vehicles, developing strong muscles as they pedal the trikes up the hill and gaining control and balance as they free-wheel back down, the huge smiles on their faces illustrating their enjoyment and sense of pride. Children learn the benefits of engaging in physical exercise as they take part in yoga sessions. Children learn excellent practices regarding personal hygiene through regular routines and discussion. They happily sing the hand washing song as they scrub their hands thoroughly before they have their snack. They are reminded about putting their hand over their mouth if they cough or sneeze, understanding that doing this will prevent any germs from spreading. Children learn about safety as they engage in daily activities. They gain confidence in emergency procedures as they practise these frequently and learn about road safety as they enjoy outings in the local community.

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	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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