

# St. Mary's Convent School Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	205406
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 January 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Valerie Fane
<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Mary's Convent School, Mount Battenhall, Battenhall Avenue, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR5 2HP
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of St Mary's Convent School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Mary's Convent School Kindergarten is part of an independent Christian school (Catholic Foundation) located on the south side of Worcester. The school extends a warm welcome to all children. The Kindergarten opened in 1990 and shares a building in the school grounds with the Foundation Stage unit. The Cottage Nursery for children under 18 months of age opened in 2006 and is housed in a separate building within the school grounds. The school also offers before and after school care, which is based in the Foundation Stage building for younger children and in the Pre-Prep department for children up to eight years of age. Both the Foundation Stage unit and the Cottage Nursery have their own adjacent enclosed outside play area, older children make use of the adventure playground and children of all ages have opportunities for walks and outings in the school's extensive grounds.

The setting is open five days a week for 51 weeks of the year from 07:30 to 18:00 including school times from 08:30 until 15:30 during term time. There are currently 109 children on roll in the Nursery, Kindergarten and Foundation Stage unit. Of these 44 children receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children for whom English is an additional language.

There are 24 staff who work with the children in the Foundation Stage unit, the Kindergarten and the Cottage Nursery. These staff also run the out of school provision. Of these, 20 members of staff have relevant teaching or early years qualifications. The school receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to develop healthy eating habits. Those in the kindergarten bring fruit for morning and afternoon snack time. They enjoy a varied menu of hot lunches provided by the school. The meals support children's awareness of healthy eating because they include menus such as home-made meat balls with pasta, peas and carrots or a roast dinner. Children with special dietary needs have appropriate meals provided. Children attending the after school club learn to eat healthy foods because they are offered a choice of sandwiches using brown or white bread, fresh fruit, yogurt and cake. Staff use an 'Elmer the Elephant' chart to encourage children to eat all their tea. Babies attending the Cottage Nursery are very well-nourished. They bring in meals from home and they are able to eat according to their home routines because staff ensure that they follow the timetable requested by their parents. Babies become independent eaters because staff encourage them to learn to feed themselves before they transfer to the kindergarten. Children extend their knowledge of healthy eating through relevant activities. Older babies make collage pictures of different types of fruit. Children in the after school club read the story of 'Fussy Freda' and talk about the foods that Freda refuses to eat.

Children learn about the importance of good hygiene routines as they wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Signs in the cloakroom prompt older children to do this and staff remind younger children. Children receive good care in the event of an accident or needing medication because several staff have current first aid knowledge. Staff keep accurate records of any accident that occurs or medication given and ensure that these are signed by parents. Children's sleep needs are met well. Younger babies sleep according to their home routine and staff are vigilant about recording checks on sleeping babies every five minutes. Older babies sleep on mats after lunch for as long as they need unless parents wish them to remain awake.

Children understand the benefits of fresh air and exercise because they play outside several times every day in most weather conditions and also have good opportunities for indoor exercise. In better weather children in the Foundation Stage use the outside area as an outdoor classroom. Children of all ages improve their balance and control on a good range of ride-on toys. Older babies develop ball skills as they try to kick soft footballs and they learn to control hoops as they push them round the playground. Younger babies make good progress in their physical development because staff know each child well and support them as they take the next steps towards crawling, standing or walking. Children in the Foundation Stage or attending the after school club improve their climbing and balancing skills on the interesting range of equipment in the adventure playground.

Children in the Foundation Stage have regular physical education sessions in the hall. They learn that exercise helps them to keep warm. They develop their awareness of space as they spread out around the hall. They practise moving in different ways as they play the bean game and respond to instructions to 'shake like a jelly bean' or 'jump like a jumping bean'. They

choose favourite action songs and decide to sing the 'copy song'. They take it in turns to demonstrate different actions for other children to copy.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children use premises that are suitable and are kept clean and well-maintained. The layout of the equipment is attractive and welcoming. Children in all base rooms see imaginative displays of their own work as well as information to support their learning. For example, the two-year-olds have a display relating to the story 'Whatever next' using their pictures of the bear as well as photographs of children role playing the story dressed up in space clothes. All children use a wide range of equipment that is suitable and safe. This is because the staff provide child-sized furniture, equipment and toys that are appropriate for their purpose, are of suitable design and condition and are very well maintained.

Children receive care in a safe and secure environment because staff make good use of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. For example, staff identified concerns about the temperature of the radiators and these are now all covered. There are clearly defined procedures in place for emergency evacuation of the buildings and these are known to all staff. Children learn to protect themselves in an emergency because they have regular opportunities to practise the procedures and staff have practised fetching sleeping babies from the upstairs room in the Cottage Nursery. Children learn to keep themselves safe indoors because they understand why it is dangerous to run around and they are taught how to use tools such as knives safely when taking part in regular cooking activities.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of the symptoms of child abuse and the procedures to follow if they were to have concerns about a child in their care. The school has a clear policy in place and all staff have recently attended in-house training to update their knowledge of the procedures. Children develop their awareness of their personal safety because staff encourage them to become confident to be able to speak for themselves. Children enjoy outside visitors such as the police who talk to them about their safety when they are out and about.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children of all ages settle extremely well in the happy family environment that is created throughout this part of the school. The youngest babies receive care in the Cottage Nursery. They quickly develop close relationships with their staff and thrive in the lovely atmosphere where staff are adept at meeting the needs of each child in their care. They enjoy playing with a wide range of sensory toys including treasure baskets containing different textures for them to explore. They have lovely opportunities to explore a wide range of media including paint, cornflour and water and baked beans. Staff keep detailed records of children's progress and use these to inform their development profile and the reports given to parents each term.

When children are approximately 18 months old they transfer to the kindergarten. They receive care in three separate base rooms according to their age. They have good opportunities to develop a love of books and improve their communication skills because they regularly listen to stories and join in favourite songs and rhymes. Staff interact well with the children so that they become confident communicators. Children make good progress because staff in each room plan appropriate activities linked to different areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

For example, two-year-olds listen to favourite stories such as 'Whatever next'. They practise mark making as they colour pictures of the bear and develop their imagination as they put on boots and helmets and pretend to go to space. Staff observe and record children's progress.

Children attending the after school facility welcome time to relax with their friends. They have tea together and then enjoy a good range of options for free play or choose to take part in the structured activity on offer. These include craft activities such as clay modelling or making hearts for Valentine's Day. Older children enjoy imaginative play and make up their own puppet shows using finger puppets. Younger children enthusiastically use the dressing up clothes to act out favourite stories such as 'Cinderella' or they play table top games.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals. In some areas of the curriculum such as creative development and personal, social and emotional development their progress is outstanding. This is because staff know each child extremely well and also have a good knowledge of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage so they understand the breadth of learning that children obtain from different activities. The planning shows the early learning goals for each activity but staff have a clear awareness of the relevant stepping stones for the younger or less able children. Staff make regular assessments of children's progress in their personal observation books. They meet together each week to discuss their observations and the outcomes of the different planned activities. They use this information to identify the next steps in learning for children and plan next week's activities to support individual children's needs. Children are enthusiastic learners because staff use their time well and are fully involved in their play and learning. Staff make good use of spontaneous learning opportunities to encourage children to express themselves and extend their learning. Children for whom English is an additional language make excellent progress but there are no written guidelines for the support of such children and their families.

Children in the Foundation Stage become independent learners. They confidently select different activities as they move freely between the designated areas for literacy, numeracy and creative activities. Staff provide well-resourced activities, many of which are linked to the current theme. For example, children listen to the story of 'Old Bear'. They develop their recall skills as they talk to a member of staff about the story and make a puppet of their favourite character. They self-select materials for their puppets from the wide range of media provided by staff and confidently use tools to cut up the paper or material. They develop their imaginative play as they use the role play area as a toy shop. They write with a purpose as they make receipts for customers buying the toys. They use mathematical skills in practical situations as they decide how much different toys cost and use coins to pay for them. Older children take on different roles in the shop such as tidying the shop or serving customers and demonstrate a very high degree of cooperation as they play together.

Children enjoy regular cooking activities. They talk about healthy eating and make healthy foods such as fruit kebabs as well as foods linked to festivals such as snowmen biscuits for Christmas. Children use a range of tools such as knives and spoons with increasing control. They look at similarities and differences as they see what happens to food materials such as pasta and jelly after they have been cooked or prepared. They develop mathematical understanding as they try to make sequential patterns with the different types of fruit on the kebabs.

Children use technology with confidence in both real and imaginative situations. They learn to use simple programs on the computer and work in pairs to create pictures using 'Fresco'. They play with programmable toys such as 'beebots' and they use the cash register when playing in the toy shop. They take part in maths activities at circle time. For example, they all help to sort a set of bears according to their colour and count the number of bears in each set. They look at the set of green bears and decide that they can divide them into large bears and small bears.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the good relationships that develop between parents and staff. Parents of children in the Cottage Nursery and the kindergarten receive detailed ongoing information about their child's care through a daily written record. This includes the toys their child has used, activities they have enjoyed, friendships they are forming and aspects of their care such as nappy changes, sleeps and what they have had to eat. The written record is in addition to regular conversations between staff and parents that ensure that staff are very well-informed about the children in their care. Parents receive the school brochure when they register their child and the whole school policy folder is readily available. However, this does not include all of the policies that are pertinent to the care of the younger children. Therefore, parents are not fully informed of factors that potentially impact on the children's well-being.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. The school brochure includes excellent detailed information about the six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage with pictures of children taking part in relevant activities. Parents have every opportunity to be fully involved in children's learning in the Foundation Stage. The planning is displayed in the entrance area and parents receive a weekly information sheet about the topics with ideas of items children can bring in from home. Parents are encouraged to come in and share areas of expertise with the children and they are invited to visit the school any Friday morning to see their children at play. This enables them to support children's learning at home extremely well. Children's links between home and school are further fostered because children take a book home each week to share with their parents and they take it in turns to take 'Adventure Ted' home for the weekend and write up a diary of what he does.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Their individuality is at the centre of the school's ethos. They develop a good awareness of our wider society because the school provides a range of toys such as puppets, dressing up clothes and books to support their learning. They learn about other cultures and religions as they take part in topics about other countries. For example, they enjoy a Mexican week when they do cloth printing to make their own ponchos, make Aztec hats, prepare salsa to eat in their weekly cooking activity and explore a box of Mexican toys provided by a parent. Children behave extremely well. Staff are excellent role models in their interactions with each other and with the children and have high expectations for children's behaviour. Children respond positively to these expectations and are kind and helpful. They learn to take turns and share toys well and older children are supportive of younger ones.

The group has not recently cared for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is an appropriate policy in place and staff recognise the importance of working closely with parents and professionals to ensure children's needs are met.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children flourish in the generally well-organised nursery environment and benefit greatly from the experience and expertise of the excellent team of staff who work with them. Staff ratios are always met and often exceeded in all groups. A very high percentage of staff are qualified with many of them having higher level early years or teaching qualifications. Staff appraisals are carried out annually and give staff opportunity to discuss their progress and opportunities for their continuing professional development.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because all adults have undergone checks with the Criminal Records Bureau and new staff receive comprehensive induction which ensures that they are familiar with the school's policies and procedures. However, children's care is potentially compromised because procedures to record the hours of attendance of children and staff are not robust because departure times are not consistently recorded. All of the required policies that contribute to children's health, safety and welfare are in place and there are effective procedures to ensure that they are regularly reviewed and updated.

Leadership and management of the funded children is good. Both the head teacher and the manager of the Kindergarten have a very clear vision for the provision of the nursery education. Children benefit greatly from their commitment to meet the needs of each individual in their care in a way that fosters children's confidence, motivates them to learn and develops confident, autonomous learners. The manager sets high standards and is a good role model to a large team of staff who work together to plan activities and deliver the curriculum. Staff have some opportunities to attend relevant training either in-house or external to further their professional development. Senior staff review their practice frequently and are proactive in embracing new initiatives such as planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection of care the school was recommended to develop training programmes to ensure minimum staffing qualifications are met in the out of school club, to improve staff knowledge of child protection policies and their access to children's personal details and to improve the security of the entrance gates. The point for consideration with regard to the nursery education was to improve the availability of more challenging outdoor play equipment.

Children are safeguarded because the gates leading on to the school drive are securely fastened with a padlock. Their personal information is now held both in the school office and in their base rooms so staff have ready access to the information. Children attending the out of school clubs benefit from the care of qualified staff because qualifications requirements are consistently met, although very few staff have accessed specific training in playwork. Children are protected because staff have a sound knowledge of the school's child protection procedures and these are in line with local authority guidance.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?**

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that parents have access to policies and procedures relevant to the care of children in the nursery, kindergarten and Out of school provision
- improve the recording of hours of attendance of children to ensure departure times for children in Kindergarten and in Out of school provision are consistently recorded and to ensure all staff departure times are consistently recorded.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop written procedures to show how children with English as an additional language will be supported.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)