

Inspection of St. Mary's Nursery

Western Avenue, Ashford, Kent TN23 1ND

Inspection date: 30 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

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 feel safe and valued in this warm and nurturing nursery. They arrive at the setting happy and leave their parents with ease. The provider ensures that the children's well-being and enjoyment are at the heart of everything the nursery does.

Children are welcomed with a variety of activities on offer to them. They engage in activities of their own choosing and become immediately engrossed in play from the moment they arrive at the setting. For example, children engage at the creative table, creating individual artwork that develops their imagination and creativity.

Children benefit from regular access to outdoor play, and they explore the outside area with confidence and independence.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff consistently support children to understand and respect the rules and boundaries for play and learning. They use visual signs and gestures to support communication and enable children to manage their feelings positively. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and skilfully take every opportunity to praise their efforts. Staff are positive role models. They demonstrate cutting skills at snack time and discuss the new recycling food bin and the need to care for the world we live in. This motivates children to join in, become involved and try new foods.

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

- All staff establish secure and trusting relationships with children. This helps all children, including new starters, settle quickly into the setting. They enjoy positive interactions as they play happily. For example, children feel confident to share a reassuring cuddle and relaxing conversation with staff.
- All staff have positive partnerships with parents, who speak highly of them. Staff verbally share information about children's progress and send updates and photos using the children's online monitoring platform. The provider has a strong focus on supporting the families that use the setting. For example, they are part of the 'Fair Share' scheme and have developed a 'swap shop', which parents actively embrace.
- Staff challenge children's physical skills effectively throughout the day. For example, children work together to build bridges, confidently moving and balancing to develop their gross motor skills. They carefully use tongs in art activities and at snack time to develop their fine motor skills.
- Staff reflect on their own continuous development, recognising the significant progress they have made over time. Leaders ensure that professional development opportunities are suitably tailored to meet the needs of both staff

and children.

- Staff talk to the children about the value of their nutritious snack and help them to identify healthy foods. For example, during snack, staff discuss healthy food groups and portion size. Children independently select food with utensils and chop them on individual chopping boards. Staff encourage children to wash their hands regularly and explain the importance of doing so. This helps children develop good personal hygiene and self-care skills.
- The special educational needs coordinator works in partnership with parents and other agencies. This helps to ensure all children, including children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language, achieve their best possible outcomes. For example, signing is used consistently to support care routines and behaviour.
- Staff use songs effectively during transitions and changes in routine. For example, staff play a song when it is time to go outside. This gives children a chance to finish off their play and help tidy up.
- Overall, the curriculum builds effectively on what children already know and can do. Staff communicate positively and play alongside children to support them in their self-chosen play. All children demonstrate a highly positive attitude towards learning and are engaged in their own learning experiences. On occasion, staff do not fully support the extension of children's language in everyday conversations and discussions.

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 more consistently extend children's language during child-led play.

Setting details

Unique reference number	127605
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10412758
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	26
Name of registered person	St Marys Nursery Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP522766
Telephone number	01233 641503
Date of previous inspection	4 February 2020

Information about this early years setting

St. Mary's Nursery registered in 1994. It operates from a purpose-built setting in the centre of Ashford, Kent. It is open term time only, from 8.45am until 3.15pm, Monday to Friday. The nursery is led by a committee and employs four staff, all of whom hold qualifications at level 3 and above. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Collette Pridmore

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum they provide.
- The inspector spoke to staff and children at appropriate times throughout the day.
- The inspector and deputy manager carried out a joint observation of snack time.
- The inspector spoke with parents and gathered information through parents' feedback to gain their views of the setting.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.

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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