



Mere Pre-School/Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY312232
Inspection date	03 March 2006
Inspector	Carole Argles
Setting Address	Mere School, Springfield Road, Mere, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 6EW
Telephone number	01747 863337
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Registered person	Mere Pre-School/Nursery
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Mere Pre-School Nursery moved to its present site in Mere School, Mere, Wiltshire in September 2005. It was previously known as Mere Playgroup and operated from the youth centre. The nursery operates from a classroom in the school and children have access to an outside play area. A maximum of 24 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 15:00, during school term times. The nursery is run by a voluntary parent management committee.

There are currently 39 children aged from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these, 26 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area, including the town and rural area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs. There are no children for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery employs four staff, of whom two hold appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children use premises, equipment and toys that are clean and hygienic. Staff have a good understanding of ways to reduce the spread of infection between children and take effective action. For example, they have a daily rota to ensure that all areas of the premises are kept clean and hygienic; they provide suitable hand washing facilities and have suitable policies in place for excluding children when they are ill. Staff have taken appropriate first aid training and have the required permissions and accident records in place. This contributes well to safeguarding children's health.

Children eat nutritious snacks, which include a variety of fresh fruit and cheese. They have drinking water readily available for them to take as required. Staff work closely with parents to make sure that any specific dietary needs are met and that all children can take part in activities, for example by ensuring suitable cooking ingredients are available. Staff promote children's good health by encouraging them to enjoy a wide range of wholesome foods. For example, children were discussing and sampling exotic fruit like mangoes and making a fruit salad.

Children have daily opportunities for exercise and frequently play outside. They move freely with control and coordination, and show a developing awareness of space as they sit and play together. They learn new skills, for example when playing outside with balls. Many children show good coordination as they jump, and they skilfully pedal and manoeuvre wheeled toys, such as tricycles. They enjoy moving to music, joining in enthusiastically with the actions. They are beginning to recognise their own needs. For example, they ask to take off their jumpers when they become hot during exercise and help themselves to a drink. They talk with staff about what helps to keep them healthy and about the importance of sleep and exercise. They learn good hygiene routines and always wash their hands before eating. This encourages children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children use a secure and well-maintained room within the school premises. The furniture, toys and equipment are of good quality and are safe and suitable for children. Staff make good use of the space so there is ample room for children to

play and move around safely. The nursery area is well laid out so children can access the cloakrooms independently. Staff have a good understanding of safety issues and take suitable precautions to ensure that children are safe. For example, they use a stair gate to prevent children from going into the kitchen area; they monitor entry to the premises and have sound procedures to ensure that only authorised adults collect children. There are suitable fire safety measures in place and children practise the fire drill regularly. During outside play, they usually play in an unfenced area to the front of the main school, adjacent to the drive. Fencing around a nearby pond is not fully secure. Although staff supervise children well in the outside area, these pose a risk to children's safety if staff are distracted.

Children begin to learn how to keep themselves safe through discussion with staff and planned activities. For example, they talk about road safety and about how to use equipment like scissors safely. Several children spontaneously showed concern and reminded a staff member to take care as she cut a pineapple in half with a large knife.

Staff have a sound understanding of child protection issues and understand the action they should take if they have concerns about the welfare of a child in their care. This contributes well to safeguarding children's welfare. However, the child protection procedure does not contain all the required information.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled, and have a friendly and relaxed relationship with staff. They go readily to staff for comfort and assistance. This provides security and reassurance for them. Staff give praise and encouragement freely to children, which promotes their self-esteem and confidence. There is plenty of conversation between them and this supports children's language development effectively. Staff plan and prepare a wide range of activities daily, and children are interested in the activities and usually keen to take part. However, some activities do not meet individual needs of all children. For example, group times are often too long and, as a result, some children lose interest. Staff rarely group children by ability, and some of the activities and ideas are too advanced for younger or less able children, who are unable to participate fully. Children are encouraged to bring in toys and objects of interest from home and enjoy telling staff and other children about them. This promotes their self-assurance as they are listened to attentively and their comments are respected.

There is a suitable range of toys and equipment which support most areas of children's learning and development well; although, at present, children do not have access to a computer. Many toys are stored where children can see and select them independently. This allows them to make choices about their play and follow their own interests. Staff provide other interesting resources to support the planned activities and this enhances children's experiences. For example, children were using a wide range of fruit and vegetables in their pretend play shop, examining them and finding about their texture, weight and smell.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children form good relationships with staff and their peers. Most children play cooperatively together and understand the routines and rules of the nursery. They are learning to share fairly and take turns, for example when playing board games. Many children show sustained interest in the activities and persistence as they learn new skills, for example using scissors. Staff organise interesting circle times for children, sometimes using a range of props. However, these times are often too long for younger children, who become restless. For example, many children requested to go to the cloakroom and this disturbed the concentration of the others. Children are developing independence with their personal care, for example putting on their coats and sometimes pouring their own drinks.

Children speak confidently with others; they talk about real events in their lives and have imaginary conversations on the phone. Children are developing good hand-eye coordination as they handle a wide variety of small objects like pegs and construction pieces and use simple tools. Children are interested in mark making and make good use of the writing table, drawing pictures and occasionally attempting to write their names. However, staff do not always take full advantage of their interest to help them to learn new skills. Children enjoy books, handling them with care, and often ask staff to read stories to them. However, there are insufficient activities that encourage children to begin to link sounds and letters, for example through discussion of rhyming words and sounds, or to begin to recognise familiar words.

Children are interested in numbers and many are starting to count, correctly linking numbers to objects; some can recognise numerals to ten. They enjoy counting games and songs. However, older or more able children are rarely asked questions which encourage them to solve problems or extend their thinking and learning. Children learn and readily use the correct vocabulary to compare and describe the shape, size and position of objects. They begin to find out about the world around them. They observe changes during cooking activities and explore objects like fruit, vegetables and seeds, responding with interest. However, they have fewer opportunities to experiment with materials and objects to find out how things work. Children often go for walks in the local area, visiting the library or shops or feeding the ducks, and this helps them learn about their own community. They re-enact their home experiences and what they have seen in the well-equipped pretend play areas, often playing cooperatively with others. Children use the painting area freely but some adult-led creative activities allow children limited scope to use their imagination or try out their own ideas.

Staff work directly with children supporting them at the activities. They have a sound understanding of the early learning goals and use this to help them plan a wide range of activities which support most areas of children's learning. Staff monitor what children do, and assess and record their progress. They use this information to identify the next steps in a child's learning. However, at present, they do not always put these targets into action, for example by planning and providing activities or asking questions that extend thinking and learning of more able children. Staff treat children with respect and tell them what is happening next; for example, they warn them before it is time to tidy away activities. This helps children cope well with the changes and routines of the day.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are clear and consistent expectations for children's behaviour and most children behave very well. Generally, staff make good use of positive ways to manage children's behaviour, sometimes diffusing situations by distracting a child to another activity or giving them responsibility by asking for their help. Staff carefully explain to children why sometimes their behaviour is unwanted. They praise children freely, commenting on what they have done well and use reward systems including star charts and stickers. As a result, children develop a good self-esteem and learn to manage their own behaviour effectively.

There is a satisfactory range of books and resources to raise children's awareness of other cultures and abilities. They begin to find out about cultures and traditions of others during planned activities, for example when discussing Diwali or Chinese New Year. Staff make good use of stories to help children to consider the needs and feelings of others, for instance when discussing 'Ringo the Flamingo', a story about a bird who is different from other flamingos. This helps children to develop an accepting attitude towards diversity in society.

Staff talk with parents daily, exchanging information about children. They know children well, and value and respect their individual differences and needs. This ensures that children feel settled and comfortable. Staff monitor children's progress bringing any concerns about their development to their parent's attention so that they can obtain further advice. However, they do not keep records of any concerns or help they give to a child. Despite this, children who have special needs are well supported by staff, who ensure that they are able to take part in all activities.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents have a friendly relationship with staff and are able to serve on the management committee and have involvement with the running of the nursery. There is suitable settling in procedure for new children; staff and parents meet to exchange information and to allow a child to become familiar with the nursery before they start and this helps them settle quickly. Parents receive suitable information about the nursery's policies and procedures and the activities so they understand what staff provide for their child. This includes information about the Foundation stage curriculum. Parents exchange information with staff about their child's development and progress, and know they can see their child's records. However, at present, staff do not actively encourage them to discuss their child's progress towards the early learning goals more formally. Children benefit from their parents' involvement with their learning at home; they help them to find resources to bring connected with the themed activities or to talk about at circle times, and sometimes they help them to learn the words to new songs.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff create a bright and welcoming environment with attractive furniture and many displays so that children feel comfortable and settled. They have organised the premises to provide dedicated areas for activities, such as pretend and creative play, and have many resources stored so that children can access them independently.

Staff regularly attend training and the required qualification requirements are met. Appropriate staff child ratios are maintained. This ensures that children receive suitable levels of attention and support. Most of the required records, policies and procedures are in place to support children's care and welfare. However, some procedures, for instance for the recruitment and vetting of staff, although suitable, are not written down or do not contain all the required details. There is a suitable procedure to address and record any parental complaints.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The manager and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, and work well together so the sessions run smoothly for children. The committee and staff work together to continue to develop the nursery and children's learning. The nursery has recently moved to new premises and this has enhanced the experiences and learning opportunities for children. Staff and committee have identified further areas for development and drawing up plans to address these. Staff have begun to evaluate how well activities support children's learning and to record information to assist them in planning the next steps of their development. However, to date, this process is not fully effective. The newly elected committee are aware of their roles and responsibilities in monitoring the effectiveness of staff and the curriculum, and are beginning to establish procedures to implement these.

The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the provider agreed to improve the planning of activities to provide suitable levels of challenge for each child, based on regular monitoring of their progress; to develop procedures to monitor and evaluate the nursery education provision; and to develop the partnership between staff and parents by keeping them fully informed about their child's progress towards the early learning goals and by giving them opportunities to share what they know about their child.

Since the previous inspection, staff and the committee have developed systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and teaching. For example, during weekly meetings, staff consider how well the previous week's activities had supported children's learning and use this information in their future plans. Staff monitor, assess and record children's progress towards the early learning goals and have begun to identify and plan the next steps in their learning. However, they do not always implement these plans effectively by extending children's thinking and learning or ensuring they meet needs of all children. Staff appraisals are carried out and used to identify their development needs and staff regularly attend training. Children benefit from staff's increased knowledge and skills as it enables them to support their learning more effectively.

Children's development records are available for parents to see but few have taken up this opportunity. At present, staff do not actively encourage parents to discuss their child's development and progress towards the early learning goals. However, staff have plans in place to develop their partnership with parents by having pre-arranged meetings. Parents record what they know about their child and their development when their children enter the nursery. This ensures that staff are aware of their capabilities and needs so that children settle quickly. Currently, further information from parents is exchanged more informally.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- review the safety of the outside play area
- review the policies and procedures to ensure that they contain all the required details and reflect the current practice of the nursery.

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):

- review the planning of activities to ensure that children are given appropriate levels of challenge and encourage them to think and solve problems
- review the organisation of group times to ensure that the needs of all children are met (also applies to Childcare).

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