



## **Midcounties Co-operative**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY282250
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 June 2006
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Midcounties Co-Operative Society
<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 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?

Imagine Co-operative Childcare opened in 2004 and is managed by the Midcounties Co-operative Society. It is one of five nurseries and a small children's centre, owned by the organisation. It operates from a purpose-built, single-storey building next to the Co-op Store in the town of Stroud. The nursery is funded by Sure Start and has four play rooms, a kitchen, a milk kitchen, communal play area and associated facilities. There are two enclosed outdoor areas with patio and impact-absorbent

surfaces for outdoor activities.

A maximum of 69 children from birth to eight years may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 118 children on roll, of these 38 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery is open each week day between 07.30 and 18.00 hours, all-year-round. Children attend for a variety of sessions. It is a Neighbourhood Nursery and serves the local community.

The nursery employs a team of 14 full-time staff and five part-time staff. Most of the staff, including the manager and teacher, hold recognised early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual physical and nutritional needs are met. Babies and children play within a clean, well-maintained environment. Staff wipe tables before and after snack time and keep the toilets hygienic for use. Children take part in routine activities that help them to learn about good health and encourage children to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene. The staff support all children well in their quest for independent personal care. Toddlers and children routinely wash their hands before eating. Staff wipe babies' hands before they eat. Children also wipe their hands and faces after meals, with individual flannels, and enthusiastically brush their teeth under the direction of an adult. Children monitor themselves as they do this in the child-level mirrors, above the nursery wash basins. Babies' and toddlers' comfort is ensured through regular nappy changing. The nursery has suitable nappy changing procedures but these are not always effectively implemented by staff. On these occasions children are exposed to risks of cross-infection.

The group has effective procedures for dealing with sickness or injury and a high percentage of staff hold up-to-date first aid training certificates. Children requiring medication are cared for appropriately. For example, staff have received training to deal with anaphylactic shock, including how to administer an Epi-pen. Permission to administer medication is obtained from parents and clear records of any medication given are maintained.

Children are protected from the sun. They learn the importance of this and are familiar with the routine of applying sun cream and wearing a hat when they go outside in fine weather.

Some of the babies and toddlers sleep during the day. Arrangements for sleeping promote restful sleep. Each has an allocated cot or sleep mat and individual bedding. Staff remain in close proximity to sleeping children to monitor them and ensure their safety.

Outside play is incorporated into the daily routine for older children and toddlers. Here they are able to enjoy fresh air and exercise. Babies are taken outside

infrequently despite having their own secure play area. They are only taken out for walks in the local community when low numbers enable staff to do so. Inside babies roll, crawl, pull themselves up to stand and use resources to support themselves as they practise walking. Toddlers and older children are able to develop their physical skills, both inside and outside. Children of all ages move in a variety of ways, negotiating their play space safely. For example, a group of four-year-olds chased one another outside as they engage in an imaginary game of super heroes. Children are able to use a good variety of physical play equipment. They use the climbing structure competently and enjoy demonstrating their skills as they complete an obstacle course. They balance, using outstretched arms for support as they cross a balance beam, jump over a bar, step into hoops and complete the course with a carefully executed sideways or forward roll. They also have opportunities to develop ball skills. Children use tools, such as cutlery and scissors safely. They also learn how to work together to carry heavier objects safely. For example, when helping to tidy away resources.

Children are well nourished. They have balanced, nutritious lunch and tea-time menus. Children with special dietary requirements are offered alternative meals to suit their needs. Children are offered fruit as part of their snacks, encouraging healthy eating. Older children have labelled water bottles which they can access as they wish, to ensure that they are never thirsty.

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

The provision is good.

The provision is good. Children are cared for within an environment which is both safe and secure. Risk of accidental injury is minimised by the thorough and well documented risk assessment of potential hazards within both the indoor and outdoor areas. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure children's safety. An effective security system is installed to ensure that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and unwanted visitors cannot gain access. Staff are vigilant in their approach to safety and supervision.

Children learn about keeping themselves safe. Vigilant supervision and clear explanation extends young children's understanding of safety issues. For example, children know how to execute a forward roll safely, only on a safety mat or impact absorbent surface. Fire drills are regularly undertaken. This familiarises children with emergency evacuation procedures. Staff remind children not to misuse equipment in a way that compromises the safety of others. Children develop good independence as they access resources freely for themselves. These are stored invitingly on tables, the floor, on low shelves and in attractive labelled drawers and boxes, to aid individual choice. Children's pictures and paintings are attractively displayed around the room, creating a colourful and welcoming environment for children.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted through staff knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and procedures.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at nursery and are supported well by the staff as they play and learn. Children of all ages happily engage in the activities on offer. They enjoy both adult-led and freely chosen activities. They are helped to acquire new knowledge and skills and to make positive relationships with their peers and adults. Staff are beginning to use the Birth to three framework for assessment and planning. Not all staff are clear how to use observation and assessment effectively to inform future planning, to further children's development.

Babies and toddlers enjoy sensory experiences, such as handling 'gloop', play dough, shaving foam and water. They are able to paint and play with sand. They can also choose to play with activity toys stored at floor level in clear-sided containers, to aid their selection. They have some opportunities to investigate the contents of a treasure basket, including natural objects, but rarely explore the outdoor natural environment. Babies do not routinely go out into the wider community to enhance their life experiences. Children's experiences within their play space are positive because of the skills of the staff caring for them. Playfulness is encouraged and staff have fun with the babies, making games and joining in child-initiated play. Babies and toddlers hear rhymes and spoken word and listen to a variety of music. Toddlers use simple words and gestures to communicate and staff introduce new words to extend their vocabulary. Toddlers enjoy stories and investigating the imaginary play resources available to them.

The two to three-year-olds who attend are full of enthusiasm and often run between activities to ensure that they are able to do all the things they want to. They are keen to paint and use their imagination. They are able to experience a variety of activities. Staff encourage listening and responding during group activities such as story-time. Staff working with this group have a good knowledge of each child and use that knowledge within planned activities to further their development. More able children have opportunities to spend time with the older age group to engage in more challenging activities, as appropriate. Children can select resources for themselves from low-level storage. Children utilise resources imaginatively and seek adult involvement in their play as they wish.

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the staff's childcare experience and good understanding of how children learn. Staff interaction and questioning encourages children to think as they take part in both self-initiated and adult-led play activities. Staff observe and assess children as they play and learn. These observational notes and assessments are not used effectively to identify individual learning styles and progress. Staff rely primarily upon their mental knowledge of children's abilities to inform future plans. Resources, such as writing implements, books and imaginative play resources, are readily available to children. Work has begun to create a more attractive outdoor play area. Pre-school and older under three-year-old children have access to a range of physical play resources, sand and play houses. Wind-chimes and mobiles, a wall-mounted xylophone, scented plants and windmills, help to create a visually

attractive environment and one that can be explored with different senses.

Children mostly show good levels of concentration for both self-selected and adult-led activities. For example, three and four-year-olds sit threading beads onto laces and create peg patterns until there is no more room for beads on the lace, or pegs on the board.

Children are developing confident communication skills. Most are happy to talk in large and small groups, to both familiar and unfamiliar adults. The three and four-year-olds use language to communicate ideas, share news, talk about their families, recall past experiences and also to talk through what they are doing. Staff give them time to talk and listen to them. Children listen intently to stories told to them as a large or small group, or as an individual. They look at books together and talk about what they see. Children benefit from opportunities to make marks, paint, draw and crayon. More able children are keen to write their own names but are not helped to form letters correctly.

Children can see numerals within the play environment and show some interest in counting. They use mathematical language, such as 'big', 'small', 'full' and 'empty'. They can sort objects by colour and shape, matching objects to complete computer programs. They are able to recreate patterns, for example, reproducing a sequence of coloured and shaped beads at the threading activity. More able children are not always challenged mathematically. They are presented with few problems to solve or calculations.

Children enjoy exploring and investigating different media. For example, they paint selecting colours for themselves; they experiment with dry sand, scooping and filling containers, watching closely as it drizzles from a tilted spade. Children gain a sense of time, following the nursery routine and growing activities. Children monitor the growth of their plants and grass seed, sharing their observations with staff. Children confidently operate a computer unaided. Many complete simple computer programs successfully. Three and four-year-olds design and build with a range of construction resources, on small-scale. Children are introduced to different cultures and festivals through themed activities.

Children engage well in imaginative play based on their first-hand experiences, for example, playing mums and babies, or visiting the pizza restaurant set up. Children assign roles as they organise their play. Inside and out children like to hide and utilise equipment as dens. For example, outside, children hide from 'the baddies' in the play house, tent or climbing structure covered with a sheet. They run between them to escape and some take on roles of super heroes, to do battle with their enemies. Such play inside is often inhibited by the adults who ask them to keep to designated areas in the room and to keep noise levels down.

Children safely and competently use a range of tools and equipment, for example pencils, scissors, glue sticks and cutlery. They demonstrate good hand-eye co-ordination as they go about their play, picking up small resources such as pegs, beads, jigsaw and construction pieces, manipulating them skilfully.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Practice ensures that children's personal, emotional and social development is promoted well. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are happy and enthusiastic in their play and learning. Most children come into the nursery and cannot wait to get busy. Children are all valued and made to feel welcome, as are parents and visitors. Children and staff relate well to one another and enjoy their time together. Babies snuggle up close to the adults caring for them for emotional support and staff are responsive to this. For example, babies receive cuddles and words of reassurance from staff. They share time playing with toys together and babies gain confidence to leave the adults and go off to explore the play environment.

Children are well-mannered, share and take-turns. Children and adults respect each other. Clear boundaries for behaviour are understood by the children. Adults have high expectations for behaviour and manage unacceptable behaviour in a way that is appropriate to each child's age and stage of development. A few pre-school children occasionally display challenging behaviour, as they are not fully stimulated and their particular learning styles are not fully catered for. Children's self-esteem is fostered well. They are encouraged to take pride in all their achievements and these are highly valued by staff. Children receive plenty of praise and encouragement. Staff offer this verbally or in the form of beaming smiles and cuddles. Their achievements are shared with their parents when they come to collect them, further fostering their self-esteem.

Children's independence is promoted. They are encouraged to try things for themselves, although help is at hand for those who need it. Children make choices in what activities they undertake and how they do things. They are keen to help staff with routine tasks, such as clearing up and handing out cups at snack-time.

Older children are helped to consider diversity through planned activities. They see few positive images of ethnicity, gender or disability, on display within the nursery, but can see them in a selection of books, dolls and small world figures. Boys and girls are able to participate in activities of their choosing, promoting non-stereotypical play.

The nursery staff have limited experience in caring for children with learning difficulties or disabilities. A new special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has been identified within the nursery, but she is not actively working in this role. This compromises the ability to ensure that all children meet their full potential. Training to ensure that the SENCO follows procedures in the revised Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, is planned.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Parents are welcomed into the nursery and have developed a sound partnership with staff. Parents receive good information about the provision prior to the enrolment of their children. Newsletters are then used as a means of keeping parents up to date with information. Children's individual needs are supported because staff have

gathered information from their parents initially and promote on-going two-way communication to ensure consistency of care. Staff work closely with babies' parents on matters relating to introduction of new foods, sleep arrangements and children's development. Parents have been briefly told about the introduction of the Birth to three matters framework. Parents of pre-school children can see Foundation Stage activity plans on display and staff answer any questions parents may have about the Foundation Stage curriculum. If parents attend planned parents' evenings, staff can explain about their children's progress in relation to developmental stepping stones. Those who do not attend cannot clearly see where their children are at in their learning from the children's assessment records. Parents are told about forthcoming themes and may be asked to send in associated items from home, but they are not actively encouraged to become involved in their child's learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children play happily in bright, cheerful playrooms. Indoor space is used well, enabling children to move freely between activities. The outdoor play spaces are under development and are not used to their full potential. The wealth of play and learning opportunities available outdoors are not encompassed into planning for the Foundation Stage and framework for under three-year-olds.

The nursery day is structured to make good use of available time and to provide a balance of activities for all children. The daily routine accommodates individual sleep patterns and feed requirements to ensure consistency of care. Children are familiar with the routine and it works well for all children. The organisation of children in groups works well. Minimum adult to child ratios are maintained throughout the day. All staff have good access to training, both in-house and external training. Students are appropriately supervised and supported. The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory. Systems are in place to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and cleared for work with the children. Staff induction is effective with ongoing training needs, career and personal progression routes highlighted in the staff appraisal system. The pre-school leader is very new to the role. She has made a positive start, has implemented some changes, and has developed a good relationship with her staff team. The educational programme provides a satisfactory range of experiences to enable children to make progress towards the early learning goals. The nursery manager and group leader have not yet developed an effective means of monitoring the delivery of the curriculum. Limited time is given to enable the leader and staff to plan together and to evaluate their practice.

Policies and procedures have been developed to ensure the smooth and consistent operation of the childcare. These are regularly reviewed by the nursery manager and the line-manager, within the Co-operative organisation. Unfortunately staff do not always implement these policies as expected and this compromises children's care. The nursery manager understands her responsibility to maintain a record of



complaints and ensures that all legally required documentation is well-maintained, stored confidentially and retained appropriately. Input is welcomed from the Local Authority to improve and refine methods employed in the care and education of the children.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection recommendations were made to: 1. ensure that all policy information is readily available to parents and that staff are well informed at all times; 2. develop further the observation and assessment systems to ensure, they link closely with planning so that children are sufficiently challenged to build on prior knowledge, and parents are kept informed about their child's progress; 3. provide opportunities for children to self select a wider range of age-appropriate resources to promote and extend learning, and ensure daily routines, and grouping of children, meet their individual needs to allow them full inclusion in all activities and a sense of achievement to completion.

In response to the recommendations a copy of nursery policies is readily available to parents, along with other useful information, within the nursery foyer. Policy extracts are also included in the information parents receive when they register their child. Children of all ages are able to self-select from a suitable range of resources. The nursery routine is applied flexibly when possible. The pre-school leader adapts their routine to accommodate child initiated activities and to ensure that children are given sufficient time to complete what they are doing. The use of observation and assessment remains under development. Information gathered is not used effectively to inform future planning, to ensure that children are sufficiently challenged and helped to move onto the next stage of their development. The recording methods do not clearly show parents children's progress over time.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Concerns were received on 16 November 2005 about the inappropriate use of safety restraints. This relates to National Standard 11: Behaviour.

A childcare inspector made an unannounced visit. The nursery's behaviour management policies and practices were discussed. The straps were seen and their use examined.

As a result of Ofsted's visit we raised three actions in relation to the nursery's behaviour management practice. The nursery has taken appropriate steps to address the shortfalls identified, including removing the straps.

The registered organisation remains qualified for registration.

## **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):

- ensure that staff effectively implement the nursery's hygiene policy, when changing nappies, to ensure that the risk of cross-infection is minimised
- utilise the outdoor play spaces effectively to enable children of all ages to enjoy regular outdoor play. Encompass the outdoor facilities as a learning environment for children (also applies to nursery education).

### **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):

- ensure that the designated special educational needs co-ordinator is familiar with the Code of Practice (2001) for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, and is able to support staff in their identification and support for children with a learning difficulty or disability (also applies to childcare).
- further improve assessments of children's progress. Ensure that observation and assessment of children's progress helps to identify where children are in their learning. Record information clearly to ensure that staff and parents can see children's progress. Make greater use of assessment to inform future planning, taking account of children's abilities and individual learning styles.

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