



## Millmead Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | EY330525  |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 11 July 2006  |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Susan Dorothy Collins / Stuart Busbridge                  |
| <b>Setting Address</b>         | Dane Valley Road, Margate, Kent, CT9 3RU                  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01843 280555  |
| <b>E-mail</b>                  | admin@surestartmillmead.org.uk                            |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | Millmead Children's Centre Partnership Ltd                |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Integrated  |
| <b>Type of care</b>            | Full day care, Sessional care, Out of School care, Crèche |

## 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 satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Millmead Early Years Centre was built in 2003 to serve the local area of Millmead in Margate. In June 2004 it became a designated children's centre and extended its boundaries to the St. Peters area in Broadstairs. In 2005 it incorporated as Millmead Children's Centre Partnership Ltd (MCCPL), a Community Mutual Trust with a new registration completed in early 2006. The management board of directors oversees the running of the centre.

The purpose-built Surestart centre is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 and occasional weekends, for 50 weeks of the year. There is a day nursery offering both full and part-time places, an out of school club and a variety of courses and drop-in support groups for parents, carers and their families. There is a crèche available for parents and carers attending courses and support groups. There are currently 89 children aged three months to five years on roll in the day nursery; of these children 32 receive free early education. MCCPL took over management responsibility for the out of school club in February 2006, they offer a maximum of 24 places, with 31 children on roll for the out of school club and 41 for the holiday club. The nursery and out of school club currently support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is housed in a self-contained unit within the centre, which comprises of six rooms including an office, and an enclosed outdoor area. It has its own entrance system, which is accessed via the centre. There are 17 staff who work with the children in the day nursery. All but one have early years qualifications to level 2 or 3. One member of staff is working towards an Honours degree in early childhood studies. There is an Early Years Advisory Teacher located in the centre who provides line management and support to the nursery. The nursery has a very flexible approach to the hours children attend within the day.

The out of school club takes place in a separate room within the centre. There are five staff who work with the children, two of whom are qualified. Children attend the out of school club from 15.00 to 18.00. Most children are collected by staff from schools within the local area and return to the centre using a walking bus, others are brought by their parents. There is also a holiday play scheme, which operates similar hours to the day nursery.

The nursery is working towards the Kent Kitemark quality assurance scheme and the centre hold the Investors in People certificate.

The inspection was carried out by a team of inspectors, Sue Collins, Stuart Busbridge and Mary Van De Peer.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are offered a good selection of healthy and nutritious food which they enjoy. They are provided with fruit and drinks, such as milk, water and fruit juice, during snack times. They have individual cups and plates to help avoid cross-contamination. Older children are able to help themselves to water and cartons of milk from the fridge, throughout each session. Children's individual dietary needs are well-catered for. They are beginning to have an awareness of healthy eating issues.

Children are aware of the importance of effective personal hygiene procedures. They wash their hands before meals, after using the toilet or playing with messy play activities. Many members of staff have attended first aid training. Accident and

medication administration records are kept appropriately. If children sustain any minor injuries, they are dealt with effectively.

Physical development is good. Children use a good range of energetic, physical activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They are developing self-confidence in all their physical skills. Children are able to play with a wide range of indoor and outdoor toys and equipment, from climbing frames, play tunnels, balls and water to using musical instruments, building tracks, painting and doing puzzles. The outdoor areas are superb and provide an excellent range of experiences for all the children. Children are becoming aware of safety issues surrounding the use of large equipment, for example they know they need to wait their turn to avoid hurting each other. Children greatly enjoy their physical play.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's care in both the nursery and out of school club is significantly enhanced by the very well designed purpose-built building. It provides a bright, clean and very well maintained environment. The layout of all the play areas is exceptionally child-friendly throughout. For example, child care areas have their own child-sized toilets and washbasins. Each has its own access to the extremely well designed, interesting and stimulating outside areas. There are very thorough procedures for 'lost and uncollected children' and an individual password system, which mean that children have excellent protection from people they do not know. Excellent organisation and storage of the high quality toys and equipment, enables children to play and move around safely and freely. They can independently access a wide range of interesting activities from tables, trays and boxes all at child-height. The resources that the children use are safe, they are checked daily for breakages and cleaned on a regular basis. The outdoor play areas are an excellent resource. There are shady areas when the sun is out, such as the willow arch where children sit and play with their friends such as, having a pretend picnic. Children have everything they need to make outdoor play a safe, stimulating and happy experience.

Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised because staff are vigilant and use very effective risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. High fences with bolted gates surround the outside areas keep children safe. There are both high and low internal door handles to prevent children from wandering into areas that may pose a risk, such as the office. Staff have a very good understanding of how to achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits. This allows children to learn some sense of danger and knowledge about how to protect themselves from harm. The emergency evacuation procedure is extremely well thought out and all staff have a very clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Children are very well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and issues. They consistently give the utmost priority to the children's welfare and happiness.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are happy and contented, settle quickly when they arrive and have fun at the nursery and out of school club. Younger children and babies receive extremely good support from the staff and are increasingly self-assured. A successful keyworker system helps ensure strong relationships between children, their parents and the staff. It also helps staff to identify children's individual needs and planning for them. Most children have their needs met well, but on occasions, the older and more able children in receipt of early education become bored as staff do not plan activities in sufficient detail to ensure they will be challenging and interesting for these children.

The very young children enjoy their time in the nursery. Much of the wall space is decorated with children's work and photographs of children enjoying activities, as well as brightly coloured information posters, all helping to make the atmosphere homely, friendly and welcoming. The staff are appropriately skilled and have a sound understanding of early years development, using guidance such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan an interesting range of activities for the babies and young children. The staff are sensitive towards their individual needs. Two-year-olds are quite confident in the setting and in their relationships with each other and the staff. They play happily alongside the other children, are learning to take turns and respond to each other as they build roads and planes from inter-locking construction kits. Good staff awareness and close, caring relationships, increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. The good quality adult-child interactions are very supportive of early communication skills, although on occasions staff do not communicate with the babies enough by asking questions such as 'what shall we do now?' 'shall we play with the sand?' and 'let's look at the book'. Children begin to make sense of the world and express their ideas as they play. The babies have an area that is adapted to meet their developing and changing needs. Most resources are at floor level, for example, sand is on a plastic sheet and babies enjoy the feel of it. Staff give good support to help babies learn about their environment and use treasure baskets well to enable babies and young children to experience both man-made and natural materials.

The after school care facility provides a quality service to several local schools. Most children travel from school to the club by the walking-bus, which is supervised by the staff and very popular. Children behave very well as they learn about and understand the importance of road safety. Other children arrive with their parents. Children are beginning to benefit from their participation in planning the activities and resources they want made available to them. They enjoy the freedom of being able to choose where they play. Indoors, there are games, art and craft activities and a quiet area to do homework or read a book. Outside there is a variety of activities such as balls, bikes and wheeled toys. Children behave well as they respond positively to rules they have written. Children have displayed the rules on the wall so they can remind each other from time to time how to behave. Some children are busy, with the assistance of the staff, designing their costumes for the local carnival, when they will take part in the Millmead Early Years Centre float with the theme of 'under the sea'.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most staff have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, although this is not reflected in the information made available to parents. Children are happy at nursery. They move around the setting confidently and select the activities they want to play with, both from what is laid out by the staff and those they select for themselves from the well-organised and labelled low level resources. Children have good relationships with the adults and their peers. They behave well and staff respond to any unwanted behaviour in a calm and sensitive manner. Staff act as good role models and join in the children's activities to support and extend learning, but do not always ask enough questions to make children think, solve problems for themselves and extend learning.

Children's speaking and listening skills are developing well. They confidently make valuable contributions to group discussions and most children happily listen to one another as they recall events and experiences. When children interrupt, they are reminded about turn taking and the need to listen to others. Children concentrate and persevere during most aspects of the day and respond well to opportunities to work in different sized groups and independently.

Children have opportunities to practise their early writing skills as they freely access the well resourced writing area, name their own work on occasions and use writing resources to support their role-play. Some children confidently recognise and can link sounds of letters in their name to letters in words around the room. There are posters showing familiar words in other languages. Children enjoy sharing books independently, in small groups with an adult and their friends and as a whole group. Children ask to tell the story and suggest other linked activities. Such as, when a member of staff started to read the story of the Gingerbread Man, a child asked if she would tell the story, which she did very confidently. The next day children made gingerbread for their tea. However, on other occasions, the whole group time is not well managed as some children lose interest and become a distraction, spoiling the experience for others. Singing rhymes give children the opportunity to count and calculate such as take one away. However, as children take part in everyday routines and activities staff do not ask sufficient questions and use mathematical language often enough to support, extend and enhance learning. Therefore, children do not think about and use mathematical language enough to gain a good understanding of shape, measure and calculation.

Children's imagination is promoted as they engage in a variety of role-play situations expressing their real and imagined experiences. They act out the role of a postal worker after a visit from a parent who is a 'postman'. They visit the vet with their pets following a series of visits from animals, such as chameleons and a budgerigar. An array of dressing up clothes supports the role-play, including those from other cultures such as a sari. Children enjoy planned opportunities to plant seeds and bulbs. They visit the allotment to see how the vegetables are growing and help harvest them to be used in their meals. A child explains that if they plant the seeds from the watermelon the member of staff is slicing for snack time, they will need to water them so they will grow, just like the bulbs she had planted earlier in the year. They experience a range of media and skilfully use tools to freely explore creativity and develop their design and making skills, but staff do not always extend the activity by asking challenging questions to make children think and progress learning.

Children learn about the wider world. A child retold his adventure when they visited London to see the Queen's home (Buckingham Palace) and that some children were frightened by the noise the soldiers made when they suddenly moved. After the visit children created a palace in the garden with crates, and a wall display of photographs and drawings. Children remember that display through photographs, as a display for the football world cup takes its place; this includes making a flag for each country taking part.

The outside area offers many activities for children to develop their large muscle skills, spatial awareness and consideration for others. They carefully ride wheeled toys around the paths, often carrying at least one and, on occasions, two passengers. Children climb, balance, swing and slide, talking about going under, balancing on top and kicking the ball through the hole. Children really enjoy the sports day with running, egg and spoon, sack jumping and throwing the beanbag activities. They are delighted that it replicates the sports day their older siblings had taken part in at their schools. Children are beginning to understand the concept of the time taken to run from start to finish using a stop watch and they predict which number hoop they will throw their beanbag into.

The staff meet weekly to evaluate the previous weeks focussed activities. They plan a focused activity for each area of learning for the coming week. They decide on activities that relate to the individual developmental needs of the children as identified in their progress and assessment portfolio. They identify an early stepping stone from the early learning goals as the learning intention for each activity, but do not consider additional learning intentions for older and more able children or give sufficient emphasis to mathematical development. No other activities are planned. Children self-select what they do each day from the range of available resources. Staff record which children take part in the focussed activities and any comments the individual child makes about the activity. Staff add these comments to the child's portfolios, along with regularly written observations and pieces of their work. Staff edit the work and relate it to the stepping stones. As children achieve a stepping stone, staff record this in their portfolio enabling their keyworker to identify gaps in their learning, areas they achieve well and their likes and dislikes. This helps ensure children progress in their learning, although on occasions staff's expectations are too low and do not offer sufficient challenge to ensure children reach their full potential. Parents are invited to add their own comments when they look at the portfolio. All children are given their portfolio when they leave the nursery. The children moving on to school have a record of transfer completed by the staff and they share it with the parents. Parents are encouraged to take the document home to consider and add their comments before returning it to the keyworker.

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

The provision is good.

Staff have a clear understanding of equal opportunities and implement the comprehensive policies effectively. Staff are friendly and approachable. They talk with the children and their families about events at home, this helps to build positive relationships. Each child is treated as an individual and staff work closely with all

parents to ensure the children's needs are being met. Children have equal access and time to participate in the range of activities provided. Staff make every effort to ensure children access the full range of activities even if they only attend for a few hours each week. Children enjoy a range of multi-cultural resources through planned and self-selected activities. These help to develop their understanding of the world around them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The nursery has clear procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language. The inclusion co-ordinator has attended training and has a good knowledge of her role and responsibilities. She works closely with the parents and other members of staff, and liaises very effectively with other agencies. Any specific programme the child is working through, such as speech and language activities, are always explained to staff to give continuity between the agency, home and the nursery, which helps support the child's progress and achievement.

Parents report that they are very happy with the nursery and out of school club. They are kept informed about their children's experiences and progress, verbally and for the younger children through a daily diary that informs them about their child's day. Parents are able to record their own comments and requirements in the diary. All children in the nursery have a progress and achievement portfolio which parents can see at any time and add their own comments. When parents register their child, at the nursery and out of school club, they are given a DVD and a leaflet that helps explain about the structure of the centre and what it is like for a child starting. Some of the information on the DVD is no longer accurate and it does not contain any information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parents can access information about the nursery's policies and procedures from a large file in the entrance hall. Parents receive a termly newsletter which tells them about events and activities. They are asked for their comments, suggestion and ideas as to how to enhance the smooth running of the nursery and out of school club.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funding for nursery education is satisfactory. All children benefit from the good relationships and informal contact between parents and staff. Parents share information about their child informally when they drop them off and collect them. In 'primrose area', details on a white board inform parents of what their child has eaten during the day and any other significant events. Parents can ask to see and discuss their child's assessment portfolio at any time and/or attend a formal parents evening at the end of term. Parents value the opportunity to add their comments to the portfolio, and for the children leaving to move to school, to their record of transfer. They are happy with the care and education their child receives, but some parents of the older children comment that their child sometimes talks about being bored with the activities. The information given to parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum, early learning goals and stepping stones is limited to a verbal introduction when their child moves into 'primrose area'. There is no meaningful written information to help parents understand the Foundation Stage curriculum and support their child's learning at home.



## Organisation

The organisation is good.

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

The registration certificate is clearly displayed. This includes details for the out of school club. The provider ensures that all staff are suitable to work with children through an effective recruitment and vetting procedure. Systems of storing records for the safe and efficient management of the setting are good, and ensure confidentiality is maintained. Staff benefit from a well-structured induction programme that they update to include changes to legislation. Staff are regularly monitored and supervised. All staff have an appraisal every three months to help ensure that their professional and personnel development and training needs are being met. All senior staff supervisors are qualified to level 3 and hold a first aid certificate. Most staff have relevant childcare qualifications to level 2 or 3. Two staff are working towards a national vocational qualification at level 2 and one senior member of staff is doing an Honours degree in early childhood studies and professional development.

All records, policies and procedures, which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision and for the children's well-being, are in place. However, the registration system for the nursery and the out of school club is not consistent. Separate recording systems to monitor children's arrival and departure are used. On some occasions, this has led to confusion on the numbers of children attending the provision at any one time as they do not contain an accurate record of the children present, especially at the end of the day as children go home.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory overall, with some good aspects. The nursery manager, centre manager and qualified teacher work closely together to ensure the smooth running of the nursery. The nursery manager has lots of experience, enthusiasm and commitment, which in turn helps to motivate staff. The nursery staff work well together as a team. They work with the on-site qualified teacher who supports them with some aspects of planning and recording of the children's progress and achievements in their portfolios. The children's portfolios are developing well, but the lack of planning for the older and more able children has not been sufficiently recognised. Insufficient detail in the planning means some activities can lack creativity and imagination to stimulate the enthusiasm of the children that have been in the nursery for a long time. Consequently, they become bored and uninterested, so little learning takes place. Most children enjoy the activities but due to planning only relating to the focussed activities and self-selection, children may not access the full curriculum but only what they are interested in. Staff are reliant on the entries in the children's portfolios to identify any gaps in learning. The qualified teacher has delivered behaviour management training across the nursery, which is reflected in the staff's very positive approach to managing children's behaviour. She has also spent a significant amount of her time working with the staff in Bluebell and Buttercup rooms to develop their 'Birth to three matters' framework, so limiting her time spent on developing and monitoring the planning for the foundation stage curriculum.

The nursery has successfully completed two modules of the five module Kent

Kitemark. They were finalists in the '2006 team of the year 4children' award. The centre holds the Investors in People certificate. They continue to review and evaluate their practice and look for effective ways to develop and improve in all areas.

#### Additional services

There are many highly valued and very well used services currently operating at the centre. Most have a direct impact on the outcomes for children using the nursery. The centre has completed an evaluation of some of the additional core services offered by them. They have begun to assess the impact these services are having on the children in the local community, especially linking healthy eating with children's health. The extensive range of services, including a cafeteria that promotes health eating and provides the meals served to the nursery children, are well coordinated and available to parents and children. There are effective links with the local community and outside agencies. For example, the local beat police officer often visits the children in the nursery to establish positive relationship and encourage links with them during their time at the centre. This link also extends into the out of school club helping children understand about their position and responsibilities within their community, and how to keep themselves safe from harm.

The good relationships between the on-site speech and language department and the nursery ensure children have prompt access to this service and good support from the nursery. This helps children to make very good progress with their speech and language development. This is reflected in the very small number of children receiving speech and language support at the time of the inspection. There is a good range of groups involving parents and members of the community, who use the facilities regularly. Parents are able to book their children into the nursery or crèche to enable them to participate in training and other activities held at the centre.

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

Not applicable.

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

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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 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 the systems to record children's attendance are consistent across the nursery and out of school club, and are accurate at all times children are present

### 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):

- consider revising the present information given to parents, so that it accurately reflects the nursery and out of school club, by giving parents information about policies and procedures, the Foundation Stage Curriculum and 'Birth to three matters'.
- plan and implement the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage curriculum in a creative and imaginative way to ensure older and more able children are interested, challenged and want to take part
- ensure mathematical development is given a high enough priority so that it features in everyday routines and activities, and that staff are well enough informed to be able to question and challenge children's mathematical thinking especially in calculation, shape and measure
- ensure all staff understand the importance of communicating with children of all ages, so that they ask questions that require a response to make children think and extend learning.(care and nursery education)

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)