

Madresfield Early Years Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205288
Inspection date	31 October 2006
Inspector	Rachel Wyatt
Setting Address	Hayswood Farm, Madresfield Village, Madresfield, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 5AA
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Registered person	Madresfield Early Years Centre Ltd
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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Madresfield Early Years Centre opened in 1994 for the care of pre-school children. There is also an education facility up to key stage 1, which is separately registered as an independent school. The centre is privately owned with a management committee, which includes parent representatives. The centre and school are located in converted farm buildings on two levels in Madresfield, a village near Malvern, Worcestershire. The setting is a Children's Centre providing daily Stay and Play sessions, as well as 12 parent and toddler sessions each week, and outreach services. The centre serves a wide rural community, with families travelling up to 20 miles to attend support groups, training, clubs and classes as well as day care.

Children access 18 rooms, as well as extensive outdoor facilities. There are staff facilities, utility spaces, an office, study and catering facilities. Separate parking is provided for staff and families. Woodland School is run at three woodland sites and in a specialist woodland classroom suite. Fourteen staff are trained as Forest School leaders or assistants. A maximum of 170 children may attend the centre at any one time.

There are currently 179 children under 8 years on roll. This includes 69 children in receipt of nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions throughout the Children's Centre. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

Care is provided throughout several departments. Children aged up to three years attend either the crèche facility which is open from 08:30 to 15:00 or full day care in the Kingfisher room, which is open from 08:00 to 18:00. Rainbow's End Nursery for rising three year olds is open from 08:00 to 18:00 and Barn Owls is for children rising four years is open 09:00 to 15:00. The setting also runs a before and after school clubs from 08:00 to 09:00 and 15:00 to 18:00 and collects from a variety of local schools. Holiday play schemes operate through out half terms and holiday periods.

Forty six full and part-time staff work directly with the children. Ninety percent of the staff hold a relevant childcare, teaching or nursing qualification. Six staff are currently working towards a relevant childcare qualification to National Vocational Qualifications levels 2 or 3 or graduate level. Three members of staff are involved in post graduate early years studies. Many administrative, maintenance, catering and peripatetic staff also support the setting. The centre receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority. Representatives from the setting attend local partnership and providers' forums, as well as Children's Centre meetings. The centre is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association and the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are looked after in areas that are organised to promote their comfort and welfare to a high standard. Staff ensure that all rooms, including kitchen and toilet areas, are clean and well maintained. Children help with this, assisting with some toy cleaning, and expertly washing up and wiping tables after most enjoyable and informative cookery sessions. In all departments there are cosy areas where children relax, look at books or play quietly. Babies' and younger children's sleep and rest routines are carefully followed in line with their parents' wishes.

Children's independence in seeing to their personal care progresses very well. Their self-reliance is encouraged by sensitive adult support, and through using the inviting child-friendly toilet and hand washing areas located throughout the Early Years Centre. Babies and toddlers' comfort is assured through well-organised nappy change routines. Potty training is introduced according to parents' wishes and when children are ready. Children increasingly become more involved in managing other aspects of their self-care, such as dressing and undressing, as they get ready for outside play, Woodland School, or other physical activities, such as gymnastics.

Children's health and well-being is consistently effectively fostered because staff are provided with detailed records relating to each child's care, health and medical history. Children's specific dietary or medication requirements are clearly understood and acted on by staff. Should children become unwell, have an accident or require medication they receive prompt, sensitively managed treatment, in line with the setting's guidelines. Parents are kept well informed and all relevant records are maintained. Staff are well prepared for ensuring children's welfare in any medical emergency, as many have appropriate first aid training. Suitable first aid equipment and relevant

guidance are all to hand throughout the centre. Parents give informed consent to medical advice and treatment being obtained for their children in an emergency.

Children are extremely confident and competent physically. They all benefit from the centre's excellent outdoor facilities and wide ranging physical activities. Babies and children enjoy regular outside play and walks. ECO club, Woodland school, gardening and varied adventure play provide children with physical challenges and opportunities to appreciate many aspects of their local environment. From a young age children become physically adept, whether using different apparatus, steering wheeled toys, moving freely or balancing on their own made structures. Children also become well aware of other aspects of a healthy lifestyle through topics, such as 'Ourselves', and taking part in cooking activities.

Children are very well nourished. The setting works closely with parents to ensure children have varied meals and snacks, whether cooked on the premises or provided by parents. Food preparation areas are spotless and well organised. Children enjoyed tasty meals and snacks with a strong emphasis on providing fresh fruit and vegetables. They have plenty of milk or water to drink. Meal and snack times are relaxed, sociable events. Adults encourage children's independence, but sensitively give help where needed. Portions are manageable and children soon become adept at using child-size cutlery and drinking from suitable cups and beakers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is assured through the vigilance of staff, the high level of premises security and the application of robust risk assessments. As a result areas used by children are checked regularly and kept free from hazards, and buildings and equipment are effectively maintained.

Children use age-appropriate high quality toys, furniture and equipment. Children are also taught how to respond to varied challenges and risks. Fostering children's spatial awareness, turn taking and correct use of apparatus means that they rapidly become confident in managing a wide range of physical equipment and coping with the more adventurous aspects of the outdoor curriculum. Children are very well prepared for using different tools, such as saws, penknives and mallets in Woodland school. Staff ensure children handle and use these correctly as they cut branches and twigs and take part in many construction activities.

Children clearly understand the need to listen to staff and follow their instructions with regard to road safety and other safety matters. Children comment on safety as they move around the premises or whilst they play. They understand Woodland School rules and expectations. Staff are scrupulous about following the Forest School guidelines so that they are well prepared for each outing and have all necessary emergency equipment and contact details with them.

Children are protected from harm. Staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding children, in line with the setting's procedures and local guidance. Staff are alert to any unexplained injuries to children. They ensure collection and dropping of routines, including school collections, are well managed so that children leave with an authorised person.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy being at the Early Years Centre. Whichever department they attend, babies and children quickly settle and staff are attentive to those who need additional

reassurance. Planning for children under three and assessment procedures reflect the ethos of the Birth to three matters framework and allow for continuous progression to the Foundation Stage. Activities are child-centred and give children plenty of choice so they are busy and contented. They soon become quietly engrossed in imaginative domestic play or dressing up, in exploratory play with dough or wet sand, or investigating sound toys and treasure baskets. They take part in varied craft activities, painting and gluing. Simple puzzles and games are popular. Younger children and babies enjoy songs and sound activities, and listen attentively to stories.

Babies and toddlers are active and move with increasing confidence and control. The layout of their base rooms enables emergent walkers to safely travel around low-level units and furniture. Many opportunities for outside play soon encourages their confidence in scooting along on wheeled toys and improved balance as they join older peers on trying out the obstacle courses and 'roads' made from wooden blocks. Older toddlers try hop scotch and moving around in different ways, such as using streamers to catch the wind. ECO club activities, gardening and walks enable children to investigate and explore many features of the natural world.

Children attending the after school club and holiday play schemes relish being able to make decisions about their play and activities. They also thoroughly enjoy planned activities, such as decorating biscuits with unusual coloured icing, making 'ghostly' lollies and exploring corn flour silk for Halloween. They really like physical play activities in the outdoor areas and Woodland School. They play different games, such as cricket, football and baseball, and devise their own, such as the 'duck challenge'. They happily mix with their younger pre-school peers and, like them, particularly enjoy role play or exploring the sand.

Children get on well, playing well with their peers and with children from other departments, whom they meet up with for shared play times. Mixed age groups after school work well. Children from different schools meet up and make new friends, and they get on well with younger children. In all departments children's play is enriched by their warm rapport with the staff who take an active part in their activities.

Nursery education

Teaching and learning is outstanding. Children make rapid progress because staff have a clear vision of what they want children to achieve. This is reflected in their planning and in their teaching. An effective key worker system in Nursery and Barn Owls plus ongoing assessment throughout the centre ensures staff know children particularly well. In addition the setting of individual targets for all three and four-year-olds helps staff to plan and adapt activities accordingly. Children's learning is facilitated by the sensitive involvement of staff and their positive attitude so that the majority of children are consistently highly motivated, quite self-reliant and purposeful. Planning covers a range of very worthwhile topics which reflect the Foundation Stage areas of learning. Children's learning is enriched by the involvement of specialist teachers in physical activities, music, Woodland school and cookery, and through a range of visits and outings.

Children make very good progress in all areas of learning. They are consistently interested and enthusiastic. Staff are adept at sustaining children's involvement and effectively support those who are less confident or able, or who find it difficult to concentrate. Staff ensure that children have time and the opportunity to follow up their ideas and interests. They ensure children have plenty of choice and their thinking and problem solving is actively encouraged through practical activities and good questioning. This helps children to make their own decisions about their

play and learning, so they confidently initiate activities, for example during role play or during Woodland School, when they use twigs to make a track and line up logs to form a train.

Children are articulate and express their ideas clearly. They enjoy books and well told, often amusing, stories and poems. Children understand the format of books, handling them well and showing an appreciation of how to behave as a reader. At story time they listen carefully and contribute positively to discussions and opportunities to act these out. Stories and poems are used well to support children's awareness of letter sounds and rhymes. Musical instruments are used creatively to support children's appreciation of syllables, for example during registration children tap out the response 'I am here' on a percussion instrument. During drama and music sessions staff in Barn Owls build on children's learning from specialist music sessions, for example when the 'orchestra' play a selection of instruments to reflect the different characters in a story.

Children's mark making and awareness of print are encouraged during set activities and free play, for example in the doctor's surgery role play area. Good use is made of visual and written prompts to help children identify their name, for example on their drawer used for their work and possessions. As a result most children can recognise their name. Many children can write their name with some older children currently copy writing simple words and phrases. Staff routinely record children's comments on their work or annotate their art and, when they are ready, children are encouraged to trace over or copy these words.

Children count very confidently and reliably, often beyond ten. Staff encourage counting and number recognition in practical contexts, such as checking the number of conkers they have collected, counting milk churns, comparing the numbers of boys and girls at registration, or finding out how many cubes they have sorted according to their colour. Simple number operations are introduced in a fun way. Older four-year-olds quickly work out how many spiders are left on the board if some go off to the garden, whilst younger children enjoy number rhymes. Children of all ages check their answers, by counting on their fingers or using counters or cubes, and through cross referencing to number lines.

Children's awareness of shape, size and quantities is very well fostered, for example during walks, Woodland School and cookery sessions. Children learn about length and height as they find twigs or cut twigs to match the length of a hand, or compare their height with the length of a corn stalk. They comment on shapes in nature, such as the triangle of grass at a road junction, and competently match coloured shapes during physical play session. During cookery, they routinely discuss quantities, weight and shapes.

Children have an exceptional awareness of the natural world. They are able to observe and investigate during excellent opportunities to explore their local environment. Children are inquisitive, looking in animal holes and under stones or earth to find worms or insects. They observe and record farming activities and, when they revisit the cut field, recall what they had seen. They plant seeds, watch them grow and harvest their own produce to take home. Older children record what they have grown and fruits they have picked in their work books. They learn to care for their environment and are very interested in the different animals looked after on the adjacent farm or at the setting. They use a range of tools and natural materials to build and construct, for example a bridge across a stream. Children are also adept at using construction toys and a variety of wooden blocks to make complex models and structures.

Children make rapid progress in all areas of physical development. Staff are alert to those who need help with pencil control or using scissors, so children have plenty of opportunities to

develop dexterity and strength. They manipulate dough, clay, wet and dry sand, and other natural materials, for example during gardening. They use scissors very regularly, enjoying cutting and collage work. Through a combination of varied regular outdoor activities and rewarding, often challenging, physical programmes, children become physically very competent. They develop very good spatial awareness, great confidence in movement, balancing and climbing and confidently use a wide range of apparatus.

Children are imaginative and creative. Three-year-olds and younger four-year-olds relish their inviting role play areas, acting out picnics, shops and caring for patients. All children's drawing and artwork is increasingly detailed and they enjoy commenting on what they have represented. Children's collage work and craft work is imaginative and often incorporates a range of materials, many of which they can self-select.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are discussed with parents, clearly documented and understood by all staff involved in their care and education. The setting's robust assessment procedures, including individual targets for children, ensures any concerns about a child's development or behaviour are promptly addressed. Staff work sensitively with parents, and other agencies where appropriate, to ensure children are well supported. Where individual education plans are agreed, these have realistic objectives which are regularly reviewed.

The setting has a commitment to ensuring activities and facilities are accessible to everyone attending the centre. This is reflected in the current programme to further improve physical access to all buildings, and in the flexible child care options and wide ranging activities available to families.

A range of displays, books toys and planned activities introduce children to aspects of diversity and give them opportunities to explore aspects of their own and others' lives, including festivals. They are also encouraged to have positive attitudes towards each other. Children listen to stories and take part in assemblies and discussions which focus on friendship and kindness. In their relationships they show concern, for example helping a member of staff to comfort an injured friend. Throughout all departments children are adept at tidying up and assisting with simple tasks.

Children are well behaved. They respond to the staff's requests and their high expectations especially with regard to their safety. Children work and play well together, taking turns and sharing, for example when they collaborate to build a low-level obstacle course from wooden blocks and planks. Their frequent opportunities for decision making and choice helps them to work out problems for themselves, to negotiate and get on with their peers and children of different ages. Staff are patient and calm, managing any inappropriate behaviour in line with the setting's behaviour management policy. They take prompt action to agree strategies and get support in managing any challenging behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents and carers are warmly welcomed into the setting. They really appreciate the very good relationships with staff established at the outset during initial visits to the centre and consolidated via daily exchanges of information about their children. They are given detailed information about the centre, via the prospectus, and regular newsletters which helps them to make choices regarding the range of day care facilities and other activities available to them.

In each department there is a wealth of information for parents via photographic displays, information about the Birth to three matters framework or the Foundation Stage, plus examples of children's work. A full set of the setting's policies is located in every department for parents' and carers' referral and audio tape copies are also available on loan.

Parents receive very regular feedback about their child's activities and routines. Many parents look at and comment in their child's 'red book' which details assessments and their progress. Parents are encouraged to contribute their ideas and views on the provision. They are involved in the management committee and parent representatives attend full staff meetings. Parents can also express their views and make recommendations via formal evaluations and a suggestions box. Complaints procedures and records reflect the National Standards and ensure parents are clear about their rights.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. They are well informed about the intentions and expectations of the Foundation Stage, through the prospectus, displays and photographic evidence and explanations of the assessment process. They can contribute and regularly review their children's progress as they are encouraged to take their child's 'red book' home. They have opportunities to meet staff to formally discuss their children's progress and receive written reports at different times. Parents actively contribute to children's activities, such as helping with cookery sessions or coming in to read a story to the children. Taking 'Tigger' the hamster home gives children from Barn Owls and their families opportunities to help to care for one of the setting's pets. Older children take home books for shared reading with their parents.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care, learning and play are very well supported by excellent organisation. The proprietor's energetic leadership and the staff's enthusiasm, and their consistent robust responses to their ongoing development plans and evaluations ensures that children and their families have high quality day care. Thorough recruitment, vetting and appraisal procedures ensure that staff are suitable, very able and highly motivated.

Children experience rewarding activities and consistent care and attention, as managers and staff communicate and work so well together. Adults clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Children are grouped well and staff are deployed effectively. As a result children's comfort, safety and security is assured and sessions run smoothly. Children's care and welfare is supported by clearly recorded, well organised documentation. A clear operational plan, plus associated comprehensive policies and relevant guidance support the staff's practice.

The leadership and management of funded children is outstanding. Managers and staff are committed to ensuring children's nursery education is of high quality. Children are motivated to take part in activities as learning areas are inviting, activities carefully thought out and very well resourced. The setting's development plan is used very effectively to highlight areas of improvement in all areas, including the Foundation Stage. Recent initiatives have had a positive impact, for example, on the assessment of Nursery children's individual learning needs, and the increased use of music to support Barn Owl children's learning. Activities and children's responses are consistently evaluated by staff and are used effectively to inform future planning and practice. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting received 2 recommendations regarding attendance and medication records. Children's safety and welfare is supported throughout all departments by the consistent effective recording of both children's attendance and any medication administered.

At the last nursery education inspection, the centre received one point for consideration; to extend opportunities for children to use their imagination in art and design. Children have many worthwhile opportunities to initiate and develop their own creative ideas and artwork. They select from a range of materials to create their own collages and pictures, and their drawings and paintings are realistic and detailed. They initiate their own designs and routinely represent their ideas in two and three dimensional form, such as the Barn Owl's room layout, or the Nursery children's train made from logs.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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