



Maulden Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219125
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Registered person	Maulden Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Maulden Pre-School opened in 1977 and operates from three rooms in the church hall in the village of Maulden, close to Ampthill, in Bedfordshire. The church hall is on two levels with a large room upstairs and two smaller rooms downstairs. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 20 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group opens five mornings a week during school term. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45.

There are currently 34 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and the setting serves the local area. The group supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and can support those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. Three of the staff, including the play leader, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is working towards a recognised child care qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-organised and clean environment. Their special requirements with regard to health and diet are well documented and they are offered healthy and nutritious snacks. These include foods like cheese crackers, yoghurt and fresh fruit such as pineapples and cherry tomatoes. The weekly menu is shared with parents to ensure children's preferences are met and healthy options are offered. Snack time is viewed as a social event, with children and staff using the time to discuss current topics and events. However, children are not always encouraged to pour their own drinks at this time or to serve themselves when appropriate, limiting their independence in this area. The children are learning good hygiene practices, for example, they wash their hands before snack and regularly have opportunities to discuss the relevance of this through visual posters and discussions with staff as to the importance of not eating food dropped on the floor because of germs.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities which contribute to their good health. They develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills and co-ordination as they participate in adult-led activities such as indoor music and movement sessions, outdoor races, obstacle courses and action rhymes. The children also regularly use the outdoor play area where they enjoy playing on the slide, peddling bicycles, balancing on stilts and using the skipping ropes and trampoline. Children's independence is promoted and they are developing an understanding of their own needs, for example, pouring their own drinks during the play sessions and visiting the bathroom independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and cheerful environment where their work and photographs are displayed and resources are appealingly arranged and easily accessible. Their safety is prioritised as staff carry out daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. However, the children's safety is compromised as they have access to the heaters and hazardous plants in the outdoor play area. Children have a good understanding about taking responsibility and keeping themselves and others safe. They are consistently given clear explanations by staff and understand the importance of turn-taking, not running indoors and tidying toys away in order to prevent accidents. The children are actively encouraged in their understanding of road and fire safety through practising traffic awareness on walks around the village, setting up roadways in the garden with traffic light and stories reflecting fire procedures and discussing the importance of what to do if they find a box of matches.

Children's safety is further promoted by the provision of appropriate equipment such as storage containers situated within easy reach of children allowing them free access to play materials such as crayons and pencils. Children independently select toys and activities from a range of good quality play materials. Staff regularly check these to ensure that they are clean and safe, accessing additional guidance in this area through reference to their health and safety policy, good practice leaflets and details of organisations such as Riddor. Children's welfare is prioritised as most staff have been on child protection training and have a good understanding of the procedure and are able to identify and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled. There is a securing 'settling in' process which is carried out at the children's pace and gives the key workers time to get to know and understand the children's particular needs and their ways of learning. Staff are calm and confident, planning ahead to ensure that children receive individual attention and support when they need it. The children come in eagerly and are keen to participate in the activities and play opportunities. They are confident in their relationships with staff and are beginning to build relationships with each other. Their personal development and self-confidence are promoted through appropriate support and encouragement from staff.

Children are in a stimulating environment where they are able to easily access play resources and there are colourful posters and displays of their work. They confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Staff know the children well and make good use of open questions and discussions to encourage them to think further and extend their learning. Children can participate in all activities because high staff ratios mean that these can be adapted to suit each child's individual developmental needs and capabilities. An example of this is children participating in an activity where they cut out ladybirds, linked to their topic of 'Bugs'; younger children are encouraged to snip the edges and discuss the colour they need to crayon them in, whilst older children cut with more confidence and discuss what letter ladybird begins with and the number of spots on their wings.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, and use appropriate teaching methods. This enables them to ensure that children spend their time purposefully and that all areas of the curriculum are covered. Staff are skilled in observing and monitoring the children throughout the session and there are few missed opportunities to develop the children's learning. An example of this is children playing in the sand; identifying shapes. They were given encouragement and fresh direction to devise a treasure hunt, to find a particular shape. The children enjoyed this and developed their own hide and seek game where one child was asked to close their eyes whilst the others hid the shapes.

Children's progress in all areas is balanced as staff use assessment methods which link the information gained from this to identify areas to be covered in future activities. However,

written assessments do not clearly show children's starting points, which could lead to a delay in highlighting potential areas of concern and assessing early progress. The weekly planning and assessment documents do not give sufficient detail to enable new staff to easily relate children's individual development to all areas of learning. This could lead to missed opportunities to promote their knowledge and learning.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in the wide range of activities. These include regular opportunities to participate in a variety of crafts, games, construction, imaginative play, threading, physical play and music sessions. Children's knowledge is further extended as they cover a variety of topics enabling them to look more closely at subjects such as 'Bugs' where they grow grass potato worms, make hand print butterflies and ladybird masks. Their knowledge is further reinforced by first hand experiences such as nature walks, stories and bug hunts in the local fields. Children interact well with others, confidently initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts, ideas and activities. An example of this is a group of children reading books together, discussing the sizes of the dinosaurs, the lions, where their claws were and how sharp these would be. They enjoy listening to stories and are beginning to understand that print carries meaning, handling books carefully and turning the pages correctly. Children are beginning to communicate through writing and have opportunities to practise writing and mark-making, for example, choosing pencils, crayons or chalks from the designated area and exploring the use of these. They recognise letters and older children are able to write their own names.

Children have a good understanding of the concept of numbers, for example, counting how many bears they have, piling them on the scales to see how many they need to balance them. They use mathematical language to describe what they are doing, for example, one more bear, not enough and how heavy or light the scales are. They understand and use positional and size language, for example, big and little. When involved in outdoor play and parachute games they recognise concepts such as under, over, higher and lower. They are gaining an awareness of their own culture and that of others through discussions and craft activities linked to festivals such as Divali and Christmas. Children participate in various activities such as large and small construction toys, puzzles and cutting which improve early writing skills and hand-eye co-ordination. Children are beginning to understand the use of technology through the use of table computer, cash registers, calculator and telephones. These are often used in play scenarios such as the doctor's surgery, food take-away, shops and vets. This promotes children's understanding in a practical way. Children enjoy joining in with favourite songs and rhymes and show an emerging awareness of rhythm, for example, playing musical instruments and singing nursery rhymes to the other children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to play an active part in the pre-school because staff value and respect them. This is demonstrated by the approach the staff use in welcoming each child individually at circle time and knowing their particular likes and dislikes regarding toys and activities. Children are offered an appropriate range of opportunities which promote their understanding of society and increase their awareness of other cultures and ways of life. These include

celebrations connected with Divali and Christmas. The children gain an appreciation of their immediate environment on local walks to the woods, village shop, post office and school. Their understanding of their world is further developed by the regular visitors who come to see them such as the fire man, lollipop person, ambulance driver and the police. Children are caring and considerate to each other and the staff. Their behaviour is good as they choose their activities and competently organise turn-taking and the sharing of bikes, books and games. They respond very well to staff, and the positive approach and good staff role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children who have special needs have their requirements clearly identified as there is a practical policy relating to this. The staff are skilled in implementing the policy and in identifying particular needs. They work sensitively with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. There is a strong commitment to involving parents fully in the setting and in their children's learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through home visits, daily dialogue, open mornings and regular newsletters. There is a welcome pack, policy folder and an informative notice board containing information about a number of issues including the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, the 'Birth to three matters' framework, health and safety, and Ofsted's regulations. Parent-helpers are encouraged at each session and are valued by both staff and children. The group actively seek parent's views, for example, through the use of a questionnaire, comments books and a suggestion box. This positive attitude ensures that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and high quality care can be provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their care is promoted by the setting's effective organisation and the care provided by experienced and qualified staff. The children benefit from the dedication and enthusiasm of staff and committee members and their wish to improve. There are robust procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. An effective staff induction process, regular appraisals and ongoing monitoring ensure that the pre-school's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied. However, the regulatory body has not been informed of changes to the operational plan such as a new contact telephone number and this would lead to important issues not being transmitted to the group as quickly as necessary. The children's security is compromised as visitors are not routinely documented as being on the premises and the written permission for the seeking of emergency treatment and advice is not sought. This would result in a delay in staff taking appropriate action in an emergency.

Children's play opportunities are reinforced by the good organisation of space, allowing them the freedom to move safely and independently indoors or outside and from one activity to another. Thoughtful organisation of all areas ensures that children are offered a wide range of activities and opportunities. For example, children have space for messy play, floor activities and a large hall for gross motor play, allowing them space to play the parachute game, or for quiet activities such as story time.

Leadership and management is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the play leader and committee has of their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that they are aware of all regulations. The play leader acts as a good role model, attending additional training and demonstrating her enthusiasm and enjoyment of her daily work with children. Staff feel motivated and this creates a positive atmosphere within the setting. All sessions are soundly planned, with a balanced range of activities throughout the session. Children are given sufficient time and resources to enable them to complete their activities and tasks. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments and monitoring. Staff pay attention to the planning of future work, ensuring that the needs of individuals are met and the development of all children is promoted.

Improvements since the last inspection

The pre-school was asked at the last inspection to review and update documentation, in particular the complaints policy and the operational plan, to ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water at all times and to ensure that staff have access to training on special educational needs. The group was also asked to ensure that staff have appropriate documentation to support any child protection concerns and update this policy to relate to new guidelines. The group was asked to make full use of all the rooms available to provide the children with different activities and to meet any recommendations made by the Fire Safety Officer with reference to the use of the fire door.

The pre-school has updated and reviewed their policies and operational procedure. The complaint's policy includes the regulator's details, there is a complaint's log, and other policies within the operational plan have been updated and these are available to the parents. The staff have attended additional training on child protection and special needs and have the relevant details readily available. The group has ensured that children have fresh drinking water by organising a table, jug and mugs to be available at all times. The group also agreed with the fire department that the fire door may be used to access the garden and is kept clear of toys. All three play areas are organised to develop children's play experiences.

With regard to the provision of funded nursery education, the group was asked to increase staff's knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals to develop their ability to extend children's learning, to develop the planning of the curriculum to ensure plans link to the six areas of learning and to provide more time for children to learn and develop mathematical skills and ideas and use language such as bigger, smaller, add one more and take one away. The group was also asked to use the information from the children's assessments to inform planning and to provide opportunities for parents to receive information about their child's progress and development.

Most of the staff have attended training relating to the curriculum and the early learning goals. The planning includes identified links with the six areas of learning and children have time and adult support to develop mathematical thought, concepts and language such as bigger, one more, smaller and simple subtraction. The key worker system and individual assessment forms are discussed regularly and these are used to feed planning. Parents are invited to open mornings to discuss their children's progress and have daily opportunities to speak to their key workers. They are also kept informed through newsletters, an informative notice board and parent's

folder which include details of the six areas of learning, 'Birth to three matters' framework and other related matters. These measures further improved children's security, safety, learning and well-being.

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.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- develop procedures at snack times to encourage children's independence such as pouring their own drinks at this time or to serve themselves when appropriate
- improve the children's safety by ensuring they cannot access the fire heaters and hazardous plants such as brambles, stinging nettles, prickly plants and berries
- ensure that there is written permission from parents to the seeking of emergency treatment or advice, that visitor's presence is documented and the regulator is kept up to date with changes such as new telephone numbers.

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):

- further develop the methods for assessing children so that these show their starting point so that progress can be charted and any issues highlighted at an early stage
- continue to develop the activity planning procedure so that this clearly demonstrates how the activity will be adapted, how it is evaluated and how this information will feed future planning

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