



Metheringham Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	253567
Inspection date	18 October 2006
Inspector	Christine Hands
Setting Address	The Village Hall, Fen Road, Metheringham, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN4 3AA
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Registered person	Metheringham Pre-School Committee
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Metheringham Pre-school opened in 1967. It operates from the village hall in Metheringham. The hall is a shared building although the group has the sole use of the premises during playgroup hours. The pre-school serves the village of Metheringham and other villages in the surrounding area.

The group offers one session each day for a maximum of 30 children between the age of two and a half and five years. There are currently 31 children on roll. Of these children 21 are funded three year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Staff at the pre-school have experience of caring for children with special needs.

The pre-school opens each day during school term time at 9.00am until 11.30.

The pre-school has joint leaders both of whom are qualified and one of whom will always be available on a supernumerary basis. There are seven members of staff, all of whom hold child care qualifications. The pre-school is a registered charity and is committee run. It has a close partnership with the local school and has teacher support from the EYDCP. The pre-school is implementing the High Scope approach to learning as part of their educational practice.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff have robust procedures in place to ensure that the premises are clean and hygienic before the start of each session. Children's health is very well promoted as staff promote comprehensive hygiene procedures. This encourages children to learn how germs are spread and to adopt personal hygiene routines, such as washing and drying their hands before eating their snacks and using tissues appropriately. Children's health needs are met because staff follow clear guidelines when children are taken ill during the day and the pre-school has a policy not to accept children when they are ill, which minimises the risk of infection for other children.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills as they eagerly take part in regular activities within the pre-school room such as climbing, balancing, throwing and catching balls, hopping, skipping, crawling through pieces of equipment and dance. On occasions they also spend some time out in the local community such as going for walks to collect leaves and other natural objects which they use for an activity once they have returned to the hall. This enables children to have some time out in the fresh air as well as promoting their enthusiasm for the future activity.

Children are well nourished and have varied opportunities to learn about healthy eating through discussion as well as a variety of activities. They use a café system for snacks, and when they want a drink and something to eat they collect a bowl and a cup, sit at a table and help themselves to a selection of banana, apple, cucumber, carrot or breadsticks. Conversation during this time is excellent. All food is freshly prepared and staff ensure that it meets the dietary needs of all children attending. Children have access to drinking water throughout the session to meet their individual needs. Staff talk to children about the importance of eating a healthy diet and the effect both this and taking regular drinks has on their general health. Whilst talking to children about snacks one child said 'milk is good for you, it makes your bones and teeth strong' which shows her awareness that different foods are needed to help with developing a healthy body.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is regarded as being incredibly important and staff take excellent steps to ensure that both the environment and the equipment meet with health and safety requirements. A member of staff has undertaken training in this area and has passed her knowledge on to other members of staff. Detailed risk assessments are carried out prior to children arriving on the premises as well as being ongoing during the session. Children use a wide range of

equipment, resources and toys that are suitable to their age and stage of development and have been checked for safety. Play areas are laid out well to provide a stimulating, exciting environment where children delight in playing and exploring. Staff undertake visits to outdoor areas prior to the children being taken there enabling them to talk to children about any areas that need extra care and allows them a sense of responsibility. Staff to child ratios are excellent especially on outings and all staff hold a current first aid certificate. Parental consent is obtained prior to children being taken off the premises and written permission for staff to obtain emergency medical advice or treatment has been obtained. This ensures that in the case of an accident immediate action can be taken. Staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and these are regularly undertaken and recorded. During an activity where a group of children were playing in the home corner, one child approached the supervisor and said that there was a fire. On being questioned about the location the supervisor sounded the fire alarm and an impromptu fire evacuation took place. This is an excellent example of the understanding that the children have with regard to the dangers of fire.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe because staff encourage them to take some responsibility for their own safety. They know what can happen if they run indoors unless in a specifically designated area as one child told a group not to run around with the buggies or they would hurt themselves. Children know about road safety and what they should do when walking along by the road. Children are well protected because staff have a very good understanding of their role in child protection matters and have a good understanding of the importance of recording accurate information and passing on any concerns to the relevant authorities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle very well at the pre-school due to the warm welcome both they and their parents receive as they arrive. The rooms are well organised to provide an environment that captures children's interest, fostering an atmosphere of excitement and wonder. The pre-school is decorated with displays to attract children's interest and provide areas for discussion with both parents and staff. Children are confident and gaining in independence through the opportunities to develop their imaginations and creativity. At present staff do not use the 'Birth to three matters' framework but adjust the activities provided for the older children to ensure they meet their needs. All children benefit fully from taking part in a wide variety of physical activities including dance, exercise, throwing and catching balls, balancing and games.

Nursery Education

Children are happy in this environment and enjoy the activities provided. The pre-school follows the High Scope method of teaching and learning as far as is possible within the confines of a shared building and children are becoming confident with a positive approach towards learning. They behave well and are learning to accept responsibility for their own actions as well as being able to resolve conflict through the role models provided by the staff, as well as the excellent interaction and explanations provided. Children are involved, motivated and engaged in a broad range of developmentally appropriate activities. They are keen to offer their ideas and respond well to new activities when they are presented to them by staff.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are happy, confident learners and enjoy accessing activities independently. They are divided into key groups at the start and end of the sessions where they make decisions about which areas of the room they would like to play in and at the end having time to reflect on their morning. Children are making very good progress in all areas of learning due to the staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. For example, through the tactile experiences children have such as touching an ornamental hedgehog, conker shells and conkers, their interest is kept alive and they can remember the discussion around these objects. Children talk about hibernation and how squirrels store acorns for the winter. Through the planning and assessment system staff are fully aware of the abilities of the children and tailor activities to meet their individual needs. Staff have a clear understanding of the importance of asking appropriate questions which challenge and support children to extend their thought processes. Staff record spontaneous observations as well as those activity based enabling them to plan effectively to support individual children's progression towards the early learning goals. Observations are transferred to children's individual records of achievement to provide evidence of progress. Staff are clear about the children's starting points and are therefore able to monitor progress.

Through careful planning and the provision of activities that truly interest and enthuse the children they are learning about their own community as well as the wider world, and can talk about fruits grown in different countries, as well as being able to recognise and acknowledge difference. Staff allow children time for them to try to resolve conflict enabling them to develop negotiation skills.

Children are interested in the activities provided and motivated to learn through the excellent understanding of the staff in providing exciting new ideas. They enjoy group times and sit quietly and listen to what is being said whilst eagerly waiting their turn to answer a question. Putting their hands up and waiting proves difficult for some children who wave their hands in the air and shuffle around to make themselves as conspicuous as possible. Children are learning about the needs of others and one child presented a tissue to another child who had hurt himself. Children are gaining an understanding that print carries meaning as they see words written around the room as well in the books in the book corner. They are gaining a love of books and sit and read both independently and in small groups when one child is the 'teacher' and reads a story to the others. They recognise their own names and by exploring different sounds are beginning to be able to find other words that begin with the sound they hear. Most children are making an attempt at writing their own names whilst others are developing pre-writing skills. Children engage in very good levels of conversation both with peers and adults and discuss how things grow, for example when looking at acorns children were eager to say that when they dropped on the ground they burst open and grew into Oak trees. Children have a very good understanding of the uses of number and use these in every day situations such as the number of children who can sit at the snack table at any one time. One child putting dots on a piece of paper for decoration decided that the second colour should have the same amount so he counted to ensure that he had the same number on, he then added an extra dot to make the number correct. They understand size as observed when a child using modelling sand said, 'can you guess what I've made? It's bigger than a mouse'. The member of staff said that she couldn't guess so the child laughed and said 'it's an elephant'. A visitor arrived at the setting, a doll puppet from Jamaica who the children know as 'Jake'. On arrival he talked about

his flight, how long it was and that he was tired but that he had heard that there was going to be a fete in the village and he had come to see it. Children said that it was in two days time and that he could sit on the stall. 'Jake' explained that in Jamaica they have fetes but they are different. During this excellent interaction children quite happily talked about past and future events and were totally enthralled with the whole episode. Children enjoy their time during physical play as they climb over and crawl through a caterpillar, chase and catch balls and shoot them into a net. Children listen to and make music from a variety of different countries and cultures and are learning how they can use this to demonstrate different actions such as the wind blowing and leaves falling off a tree.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children and staff are very much part of a family group in this setting and feel a sense of belonging and being valued. They make their own choices and decisions and work harmoniously together both in small groups of their choice and within the larger setting. They are confident and are becoming aware of their own needs when they decide they would like to use the café for snack time and the needs of others when passing a tissue to a child who had hurt himself. Children learn how to take turns and share, playing board games and waiting in line to go onto the large equipment. Because staff know the children well they are able to provide equality of opportunity and ensure that there is no bias with regard to race, disability, culture or gender. They take into consideration that some children may need extra support in some areas and ensure that they are able to access this. Staff ensure they receive up to date information from parents and work alongside them and other professionals to ensure that the needs of all children are met with sensitivity.

Children behave very well and are aware of what is expected of them. Staff give clear instructions and use praise and encouragement effectively giving children a feeling of security. Staff give children the opportunity to resolve conflict between themselves and only when they are having difficulty doing so will they intervene. Even at this stage they support children to resolve any issues which enables the children to feel that they are listened to and their feelings are considered. Children are developing firm friendships within the group although these are not to the exclusion of others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding which promotes children's care, welfare and development. Before their child starts at the group parents are provided with an information pack explaining how the group works and the people involved as well as information regarding nursery education and the Foundation Stage. A notice board within the hall details the current topics and daily planning sheets encouraging parents to further develop their child's learning at home. Parents' views about their child's needs, interests and stage of development are sought when the child enters the pre-school and staff use this knowledge to assist in settling them in as well as a basis for their ongoing assessments. They regularly receive their children's assessment records and staff value any comments they may like to add. Parents spoken to appreciated this link which they considered to be helpful in understanding their child's achievements and understood that this information was used to inform future planning. Parents are aware that

they can speak to their child's key worker at any time and if they have any concerns about their child settling then they are welcome to stay during the session.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The pre-school is well organised and all staff hold relevant child care qualifications as well as keeping up to date with a variety of courses to further enhance the care they provide. There are procedures in place for the recruitment of staff, however all those currently working at the pre-school have done so for a number of years and offer stability to both children and parents. This is a strong staff group and ratios are high enabling children to receive individual support. Through weekly staff meetings staff become aware of any issues that need to be addressed and are also able to access some in-house training. The operational plan clearly demonstrates how the pre-school is organised, the deployment of staff and how training needs are met. Staff are fully committed to providing a good quality service and attend at least four training courses each year, however at present not all the knowledge gained from courses have been put into practice. All the documentation is in place to promote the welfare, care and learning of the children. These are held with regard to confidentiality.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The supervisors supported by the staff have a clear understanding of their roles and confidently and expertly carry these out ensuring that their practice enables children to make very good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff find exciting and innovative ways of presenting ideas and activities to children which make them memorable, enabling them to build on their knowledge in the future and develop positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was made to further develop systems for the regular exchange of information between parents and staff, for example parent's evenings or open days. Staff have looked carefully at this and now send home children's assessments and ask for comments from parents. Parents are then invited in to discuss this with their child's key worker. Parents are also made aware that they can come into the group at any time to talk to staff enabling all concerned to be aware of any changes to circumstances that may affect the children.

A point of consideration was made at the last education inspection which was to continue to develop evaluations to clearly show the objective of the activity, resources and the person who is responsible. Planning now clearly identifies all of this and all staff are aware of the objective which means they can use appropriate questioning and increase children's language. Evaluations have been developed to ensure that objectives have been met and staff record any amendments needed for the future.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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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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 knowledge obtained during training is put into practice and used to maximise opportunities for all children.

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