



Meadowlands Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY249033
Inspection date	18 January 2007
Inspector	Gillian Sutherland
Setting Address	Meadow County Primary School, Dolphin Crescent, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 4SZ
Telephone number	school 0151 339 8218
E-mail	
Registered person	Meadowlands Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Meadowlands Pre-School was registered in 2002. It operates from an independent building within the grounds of Meadowlands Infant and Junior School, in Ellesmere Port. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. Children have access to designated outdoor play areas within the school grounds and also use the infant school hall at agreed times during the week.

The pre-school is open five days a week during term time. It is open from 09.00 to 15.00 each day. There are currently 64 children on roll and of these, 48 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

There is also an out of school club which will operate from designated rooms within Meadowlands Infant School and this will provide care before and after school, term time only.

The pre-school employs 10 members of staff, seven of whom work directly with the children and all of those staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two of the staff team are also undertaking a Foundation Degree in Early Years.

The setting receives support and advice from the Early Years Coordinator at Sure Start.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment, where they participate in a varied range of activities which promote their physical skills and development. Each day children access physical play activities, using the indoor play space in the pre-school building. They also enjoy going to the infant school hall where they use different equipment and participate in more vigorous games. Weather permitting, pre-school children can access the outdoor play areas. In the larger play spaces they eagerly play with hoops and bean bags and enjoy using their coloured parachute and wheeled toys. During their creative activities children's fine motor skills are being developed as they confidently use scissors, small shape cutters, glue spreaders and a varied range of pencils and brushes.

Children play in a very clean environment, where all children develop a good understanding of personal hygiene as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. They understand through pictures in the playroom and toilet area the importance of washing their hands before snack and lunch times. Children are able to access the toilets independently as these are sited just off the main playroom and here children access antibacterial soap from child friendly soap dispensers and use paper towels to dry their hands with.

To ensure children are protected and well cared for, at least one staff member holding a current first aid certificate is on duty at all times and accurate accident and medication records are maintained.

The pre-school takes very positive steps to promote healthy eating. The pre-school's philosophy is that healthy snacks foster good eating habits and children are offered a varied range of healthy snacks, with staff paying particular concern to ensure they are low in sugar and salt. The snack time itself ensures that children participate in this, as two children at each session are chosen to be the 'helping hands' for that snack time. They help to set out the snack table and then sound the chimes to let other children know snacks are being served. Children come and help themselves to whatever they want and the selection of foods include fresh fruit, digestive biscuits, crumpets and cheese. Children also pour themselves a drink and take it to a table sit with their friends and enjoy their snack. At lunchtimes parents provide a packed lunch for their child and advice is given to them by the pre-school staff regarding healthy foods and suitable storage. Children have access to drinking water at any time during the session.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are relaxed and happy as they enter the pre-school. They are greeted warmly by the staff and quickly settle into the pre-school's activity programme. All areas accessed by children are bright and well decorated with their art work and a range of different posters and pictures. The space within the pre-school building is designed in such a way that children can move round freely and self-select the toys and resources they want to play with and the activities they want to participate in. The layout also enables children to be independent, as they can go to the toilet and access hand washing facilities at any time during the session.

Children's safety is well promoted through daily risk assessments, where staff meticulously check all areas and record their findings on a record chart. Good procedures are in place regarding the collection of children, as the pre-school uses a password system and parents have to complete the required documentation if anyone other than themselves is collecting their child.

Children also learn to keep themselves safe when not in pre-school as they access road safety play equipment, for example, zebra crossing and traffic signs. Their music session also includes songs about road safety and the changing colours of the traffic lights, thus ensuring children learn when it is safe to cross the road.

Effective fire safety procedures are in place and staff ensure that all children learn how to evacuate the building quickly and safely. Fire drill practises take place at regular intervals and a record is maintained of when these are carried out.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are able to recognise signs of abuse and know which agencies to contact should they have any concerns about a child in their care. The pre-school manager is the named person for safeguarding children and, through attending training, is kept up to date with any changes, for example, the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in pre-school and are confident and engaged in purposeful play. Children participate in free and structured play sessions and they establish good relationships with the staff and each other. Children enjoy and eagerly participate in registration time as they sit in a circle with the pre-school staff, say hello to everyone, share any 'news' with each other and are proud to show any articles of interest they have brought into pre-school.

Children actively make choices as to what activities they want to participate in and the resources they want to play with. They can freely access a book of their choice from a large selection, all of which are stored in an easy to reach book storage system.

Relationships with staff are good as there is an effective key-worker system in place. The pre-school staff have some knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and are keen to develop this further as they attend additional training on this. Information about this

framework is included in the Parent Information Pack and also with pictorial evidence in the entrance hall of the pre-school.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals, due to the staff having an awareness of the six areas of learning. Effective planning and record keeping assists the staff to provide new and stimulating play activities. Staff responsible for the educational programme have some knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use this well to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are covered. Staff provide children with a varied range of activities which they thoroughly enjoy.

Children are confident communicators, as they engage readily in conversations. They interact with one another and with the staff caring for them as they talk about what they are doing throughout the daily routines. They approach visitors confidently, showing their ability to initiate relationships and to communicate with adults.

Children enjoy using the role play equipment. This was observed as one child accessed the 'tool box' and she was very keen to learn how to use the plastic pliers and how to drive the screws down. She was then equally keen to share the knowledge she had gained with a friend. This activity provides children with an opportunity to extend their use of language and their knowledge and understanding of the environment.

Children are able to recognise letters and their names, and some children can also write their name. Children have some opportunities for writing during free play and again through pre-planned activities. There are very limited opportunities however for children to freely access an appropriate writing area. The unit containing the writing materials is accessible, but appropriate seating and a table is not always easily accessible.

Children have a good understanding of number values and clearly enjoy singing number rhymes and songs, many of which contain an element of simple calculation. They also had to 'calculate' when a member of staff counted the number of children wanting to play with the fishing game and the number of fishing rods available. Children also develop their mathematical skills as they access the computer and play age appropriate games and puzzles.

All children are provided with many opportunities to promote their creativity, and their personal self-esteem is raised, as they proudly display and talk about their art and craft work. Children participate in a variety of craft activities which include the cutting out and painting of starfish to go on their underwater theme display. They also use wax candles to draw pictures on to some paper and then paint over the picture using different coloured paints and brushes.

Children's profiles and assessments were seen during the inspection visit and these are being used to indicate their progress and development. Staff observe children at play and use post-it notes to record achievements reached during their play. The planning of the activity programme is undertaken by the manager and staff, and details the activities that are planned on a short and long term basis. Staff observe and record children's progress as they play and link this

information to the stepping stones. However, this information is not currently used effectively to identify the next steps in children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children access the range of resources and equipment, providing they are appropriate for their age and ability. Staff are knowledgeable about children's individual needs. These are well met in practice by familiar and consistent, caring staff.

The children are developing a good understanding of their local community and the wider world through planned activities. They celebrate different festivals, such as Chinese New Year and the Indian festival Diwali. They have also had discussions about people with disabilities. The pre-school has many resources which help to promote an awareness of our diverse society.

Children's behaviour is generally good. They understand the need for safe boundaries and have an understanding of basic rules. This is supported by the behaviour management policy and the systems implemented by the staff. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff, for their efforts and achievements. They are polite, share the resources and take turns easily, showing consideration for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good quality information on their child and the setting, which includes daily verbal handovers on children's interests and achievements. Noticeboard displays and information given to parents ensure they are well informed about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Clear communication is established from the outset with parents. In addition, parents receive regular newsletters, attend parents evenings and the informative noticeboard keeps them well informed of any developments. Children's development and progress is observed, monitored and recorded, and parents are fully aware they have access to these records at any time.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Detailed policies and procedures are in place and these are available to parents at any time. All the legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is satisfactorily in place, including accident, medication and incident records. However, the local safeguarding children policy needs to include the telephone numbers of the police and social services, and any entries made into the safeguarding children documentation need to be dated, signed by the staff and countersigned by the parents.

The good staffing ratios improve the quality of care for all the children. Staff work with the children consistently on a daily basis, ensuring they are fully supported with their learning and development needs.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. Staff, children and parents all benefit from the well organised systems in place. The provider and staff ensure that parents

are informed of the activities on offer and this includes details of the current theme, to which the daily activities for children in the different age groups are linked. Staff keep themselves updated through regular access to training, and ongoing personal development is promoted. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection when two recommendations were raised, the pre-school staff ensure that the daily register includes the times of arrival and departure for the children cared for and their complaints procedure includes the contact details for the regulatory body Ofsted.

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 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 that the local safeguarding children policy includes the telephone numbers of the local police and social services and that any entries made are dated and signed by the member of staff and countersigned by the parents.

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):

- extend children's opportunities for free access to writing and mark making during the sessions
- further develop planning and assessments to ensure they identify the next steps in children's learning and that children are able to reach their full potential across all the stepping stones.

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