

Mulberry Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109900
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Inspector	Jacqueline Munden
Setting Address	Community Centre, Pilgrims Close, Valley Park, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO53 4ST
Telephone number	02380261616
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Registered person	Mulberry 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?

Mulberry Preschool opened in 1989. It operates from a hall in the local community centre in Chandlers Ford, Hampshire. The preschool is managed by a voluntary committee of parents. Children attend from the immediate local area.

A maximum of 26 children aged from two to under five years may attend the pre-school at any one time. The preschool opens five days a week in term time. Sessions are from 09.15 to 11.45 on Monday to Friday with afternoon sessions on Monday and Tuesday from 12.30 to 15.00. Children attend for a variety of sessions. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 62 children on roll including 48 funded three and four year olds. The pre-school supports a number of children with learning difficulties and or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

There are nine members of staff employed to work with children. Of these six hold relevant childcare qualifications and all hold current first aid certificates.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff are active in promoting hygiene practices to ensure children's health is maintained. They have effective routines in place to clean tables before eating and ensure the cleanliness of the shared areas of the building. Effective nappy changing procedures ensure children's privacy and protect children from the spread of infection as staff wear gloves, clean the changing mat between uses and dispose of nappies hygienically. Children understand the need to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

Accurate records are maintained regarding children's health, accidents and medication that is administered. Staff are able to respond to medical emergencies well as they are all trained in first aid and in the use of an epipen. Relevant parental consent is in place to seek emergency treatment.

Children take part in many regular activities which promote their physical development both in and outdoors. Staff ensure full use is made of the outdoor area to allow children to develop their skills and to get fresh air. Children are keen to go out to play and explore. They enjoy using wheeled toys, balls and the water trough. Children move confidently and safely as they climb and slide on the indoor frame; staff provide different equipment to extend their skills such as a rope ladder. Children learn to take risks under the close supervision of staff. For example, they explore different ways of descending the slide, backwards and on their tummies. As a result children are very confident and able in controlling their bodies and keen to participate. Younger children who find this more difficult are well supported by staff. Children learn about their bodies as they get hot and need a drink after dancing to music.

Children enjoy nutritious and healthy snacks and drinks. They regularly have fruit, breadsticks, milk and water. The café style system encourages children to learn social skills as they chat about what foods are good for them. However, independence is not fully promoted as they do not select what they will have or clear away after themselves. Drinking water is always available in the hall. Information about children's dietary requirements are obtained from parents and staff are kept informed of these ensuing children's needs are met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, secure, warm and welcoming environment. The pre-school shares use of the premises but ensures children are safe. Staff monitor access to the hall they use and follow a strict procedure to ensure children cannot leave unsupervised; they escort children to the toilet. Children and staff are involved in regular fire drills although full details of these are not recorded. Staff conduct daily risk assessments to ensure hazards are identified and dealt with appropriately. Children learn to keep themselves safe as staff remind them not to run indoors and to stand away from the climbing frame when waiting for their turn.

Children enjoy using the secure outdoor play area. Play equipment is clean and in a good, safe condition. Although staff have to pack away all the equipment every day as the hall is used by other members of the community, they show a huge commitment to ensuring the environment is attractive when children arrive. They display posters and children's art work on the walls.

The selection of play equipment placed out for children to use is easily accessible, allowing children to make independent choices.

Children are well protected and safeguarded from harm because staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and how to implement the settings policy and local procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the setting and take part in many interesting activities which support learning in all areas. They relate well to adults and ask questions as they play. Staff respond with encouragement and praise which promotes children's confidence and self-esteem enabling them to take a positive role in their own learning. They are encouraged to be independent and develop socially choosing their own activities. Younger children benefit from the staff's knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework which is used to plan activities for them. These children benefit as they take part in the planned activities for older, funded children. Observations are made of their progress and which are shared with parents. Staff are skilled in adapting these activities to meet the developmental needs of all children. Younger children learn how to mould simple shapes in the dough by squeezing and squashing it with their hands as older children learn to cut it with scissors and tools. They particularly enjoy being outdoors exploring the activities that are available. For example, 'painting' the fence with a brush and a bucket of water and building with the large soft shapes. All children happily participate in planned activities but equally enjoy initiating their own learning when the opportunity arises.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good and children are making sound progress in all areas of learning. This is because staff have a working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and know individual children very well. Staff use their time well during one-to-one and small group interactions; large group times are well managed for children's learning. For example, they work with smaller groups to promote learning about letter sounds and larger groups for singing and rhymes. They make the setting interesting for children often changing the layout and resources to maintain interest. The free flow use of the outdoor area makes it an extension of the learning environment. Staff make written plans of activities linked to the areas of learning, although the plans do not always show how language and literacy will be promoted. But the continuous curriculum of activities to promote the learning of letters, their sounds and mark making is so effective, children make good progress in this as well as the other areas of learning. Staff make observations and complete children's assessment records. These are then used effectively to plan for the next stage in children's development. Staff receive support from the area inclusion officer. Staff are well trained and they are well motivated to update their training. Staff use effective strategies for teaching children and make learning interesting. They encourage learning by asking probing questions and offer good explanations when required and use visual aids to maintain children's interest when singing and joining in number rhymes. Children have access to a good range of resources. These are laid out in different areas of the hall. For example, role play, book corner and writing areas are all available. They are confident speakers and well motivated to participate and co-operate. They have good levels of concentration and take part in individual tasks and those in a larger group equally well.

Children enjoy their story time and use books appropriately. They use language to organise their role play and talk about their drawings. They practise reading skills when they identify

their names at registration and at snack time. Children flock to the writing table and have free access to writing materials here and in many other areas of play in the setting. For example, children are confident to write shopping lists in the home corner and write invitations to a party. Many can, or are beginning to write their names and are encouraged to make entries into their daily diaries. Some more able children write about a trip to the local area and illustrate this with detailed observational drawings. For example, a child draws a road sign and another traffic lights. Staff show they are skilled in extending children's learning as another child that has picked some lavender whilst out walking, sticks it in to her diary and writes about it. Other children at the table learn about their senses as they are invited to smell it. Children have many opportunities to learn about letters and the sounds they make as they talk about the days of the week at circle time. Each child has a 'sound bag'. This is taken home and brought back with objects that begin with a given sound. A small group then look at what each child has brought in, stimulating conversation, extending vocabulary and concentration levels.

Many children count well, some up to ten and well beyond. They take part in activities to explore and sort colour, shape and size. They are beginning to use mathematical language during activities such as water play as they talk about the jugs being full and half full. Staff make the most of unplanned opportunities to encourage children to solve problems and use calculation. For example, when writing the party invitations children work out how many are needed and then work out how many when two more children want to come.

Children explore and investigate with a range of materials and resources. They look at a spider in its web when out walking. Children are gaining in confidence when using IT equipment and complete simple programmes on the computer. They work the cassette player independently, selecting the songs or stories they wish. They build and construct with varying resources being accessible to them in and outdoors. Children wear the builders hard hats as they construct with large shapes outside. Children enjoy the free access to the easels for painting and resources for craft work. Children use their imaginations well during role play and join in the music sessions with enthusiasm using the instruments with care. Children's small muscles are developing well as they use a wide range of equipment such as pencils, scissors and puzzles. Large muscles are developed through taking part in many physical activities each day. They use tools with skill as they roll cut and mould dough.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the pre-school. They are highly valued and their individual needs well met. Children develop good relationships with staff who work closely with parents to ensure children's needs are met. Parents are given a wide range of policies and procedures regarding the care of children. There is a complaints procedure and log in place; this is in the process of being updated by the committee to ensure it fully informs parents of the process of making a complaint. Children's good behaviour is promoted by staff who praise them at every opportunity. Staff act as good role models. They are calm, polite and positive in their approach which helps children gain confidence and self-esteem. Staff use effective strategies to encourage children to share and take turns with resources. For example, a sand timer is used to signify when it is the next child's turn with the computer. They provide additional support for the children who are new and are still learning to settle into the pre-school. Adult carers are encouraged to stay to help them settle.

Children with learning difficulties and or disabilities are supported well in the setting. Trained staff work with parents and other agencies to provide good support and activities to aid them.

Staff make resources to meet their individual learning needs. Children who speak English as an additional language are also welcomed and included at the setting.

Children are generally included in the life of the setting well as they select activities, help to tidy up, and have equal access to the toys and resources. However, children's independence is not fully promoted in their self care as they are not encouraged to serve or clear away after themselves at snack time. Children talk with staff about the daily routines and rules of the pre-school and about their families and events in their lives. Children become involved in the community through visitors to the setting including the police and dental health professional. Children benefit from walks in the local area. They learn about other cultures through planned activities celebrating festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year in which some parents are also involved. Children have access to dual language books and play equipment that promotes diversity such as dressing up clothes in the role play areas. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Relationships between staff and parents are warm and friendly. Settling in procedures are in place and parents are welcomed into the setting. Staff communicate effectively with parents sharing information at collection and informal meetings if requested. Parents speak positively and knowingly about the setting. They feel they are well informed about routines and activities, and receive information about the Foundation Stage. Parents are informed of the planned topics and areas of children learning through the regular newsletters and of their child's progress through development folders. Parents are involved in their children's learning as they are invited to add comments to these records and through helping in the setting on a regular basis and by bringing objects relating to topics in to the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee of parents who meet regularly and work closely with staff to ensure children are cared for well. They are in the process of updating policies and procedures to ensure they meet regulation and that children's health, safety and welfare are promoted at all times. This includes an effective procedure for the vetting and appointing of staff and committee members ensuring children are safeguarded. Records of visitors and students are maintained appropriately but the register for children and staff is not. Children benefit from the high staff ratio who are deployed well. They are knowledgeable and experienced and work very well together to meet the needs of children. Most hold suitable childcare qualifications and all are committed to improving their skills by attending further training and sharing expertise with each other at the regular team meetings. This includes training in the Birth to three matters framework, child protection and special needs. Staff have regular appraisals to identify any training needs although the supervisor is yet to have hers. Space and resources are well organised both in and outside the setting despite having to set up each day. Children are encouraged to move around and choose their own activities. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage and are experienced in working with pre school aged children. Management and staff are committed to improving the education of children. Staff evaluate the activities they provide and the progress children make. They identify areas for improvement and develop action plans to help them improve their practice. For example, how to manage the noise levels at circle time to ensure all children can hear and learn appropriately.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Children Act inspection the group was asked to obtain parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment, to include the times of children's attendance in the register and to amend the complaints procedure.

The complaints procedure was updated at the time but since then the regulation has changed. The committee has made further changes and introduced the required log for any complaints it may receive but is in the process of updating the complaints policy further. The times of children's arrival is recorded by the parent/carer. Staff are not aware of their responsibility in maintaining this record. Staff can now respond to medical emergencies appropriately as parental consent is in place.

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 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):

- improve the system of recording the times of arrival and departure of children staff and visitors.

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):

- provide further opportunities to develop children's independence in everyday situations.

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