

Mentmore Under 5's

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219149
Inspection date	27 September 2007
Inspector	Gillian Charlesworth
Setting Address	The Pavillion, Mentmore Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 2NZ
Telephone number	07845 971542
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Registered person	Mentmore Under 5s
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Mentmore Road Under 5's Playgroup opened in 1978 and was registered in 1992. It operates from the sports pavilion on the Mentmore Road playing fields in Leighton Buzzard and serves the local and wider neighbouring areas. The group has use of one main room and has access to a kitchen and toilet facilities. They also have access to outdoor playing facilities.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open on Monday to Friday from 09:30 to 12:00 during term time only. Children can attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently 31 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 22 funded three-year-olds and one funded four-year-old. The setting is able to support children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One child who speaks English as an additional language attends the setting.

The setting employs six permanent staff and one relief staff who work with the children. Four staff have recognised early years qualifications and a further one relief member of staff is

currently working towards a Level 2. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide variety of nutritious and healthy snacks. A snack menu is displayed for parents and has been thoughtfully planned to offer a range of tastes and textures and reflect the backgrounds of those attending. For example, toast, crackers with cheese, fruit or vegetables with dips, yoghurt, noodles, poppadums and chutney. Snack time is a social occasion and children can take their time eating and peeling whole oranges and bananas. They show positive attitudes when exotic fruit, such as mango is offered and are keen to try it and ask for more. Effective procedures ensure that their health and dietary needs are well met. Children can choose to drink milk or water at snack time and are encouraged to pour these independently.

Children have varied opportunities to physically grow and develop indoors and outdoors. For example, adults lead music and movement sessions indoors for those who wish to join in galloping or tip-toeing to music. Children move freely between indoors and outside when activities are available outside. They sometimes use the adjoining tennis courts to play actively and have opportunities to join in local walks to feed the ducks. They enjoy the fresh air as they describe the wind on their faces. Children have appropriate periods of rest according to their needs because they can relax on bean bags and read books at their leisure. This all contributes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Hygiene routines promote children's health well. All children are consistently encouraged to wash their hands in groups before snack time. They can independently access a bowl of water to wash their hands after messy play activities. They are keen to develop self-care skills and spontaneously clean up milk spillages with colour coded cleaning cloths. Children's health is suitably protected from the risks of cross-infection through written sickness policies and procedures that are displayed or shared with parents. Arrangements to ensure that children have appropriate first-aid treatment and medication are effective.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are at ease in their surroundings that are light, bright and spacious. Practitioners work hard to make the ageing premises attractive by displaying photographs, examples of children's work and posters in English and other languages. Security is given high priority as arrivals and departures are closely monitored and doors are kept locked during the session. Children enjoy moving freely between the resources that are set out for them each day and can choose according to their interests. The computer is particularly popular. Many children are confident to ask for further materials to extend their play, such as walkie-talkies.

Procedures have been thoughtfully devised to ensure that children can play safely and are kept safe from harm. Some practitioners have undergone training in 'Health and Safety' to underpin the management of the majority of risks. Appropriate daily checks are completed, a system is in place for the reporting of maintenance issues and there is a wide range of risk assessments that work in practice. These cover indoors, outdoors, outings, staff and students. Practitioners are on hand to supervise children and topics, such as 'safety in the sun', 'stranger danger', and

'getting lost' help them to begin to learn how to keep themselves safe. Children can ably explain evacuation procedures that are practised regularly. Checks on fire safety equipment are recorded for monitoring purposes.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and protected. Practitioners are committed to work with outside agencies for the protection of children, share records, uphold confidentiality and support families. They are aware of and are confident to use the child protection policy that has recently been updated in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Senior practitioners and others have completed training in child protection and are committed to updating their knowledge of 'safeguarding children' to extend and update their understanding of procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are at ease and happy in the calm but busy setting and relish their time there. They are well occupied and arrive keenly, immediately make choices from the resources available. Those who are less confident are comforted by key workers and given plenty of attention. Purposeful eye-level conversations reassure them. Children are developing high levels of confidence and self-esteem and approach practitioners to share their delights and achievements. For example, proudly showing drawings they have copied from a picture of a hedgehog.

Children can follow their interests and enjoy choosing freely from the wide range of resource-led activities. They use telephones to communicate imaginatively and confidently express themselves when establishing roles during imaginative play using cars and tractors in the sand tray. Children are drawn to the hairdressing resources when they arrive and practise grooming techniques based on a planned topic 'All about me'. The majority enjoy listening to stories in small and large groups and most are attentive throughout, making comments and observations on the illustrations.

Children are developing strong social relationships with adults and peers. Older children are keen to communicate with each other and practitioners. As they recall their home experiences they are stimulated by practitioners' genuine responses and interactions. Children cooperate well as they sit together on the computer and talk about pictures they see on the monitor while one child takes control of the mouse. They show care and concern for one another offering pencils at the colouring table or giving a reassuring hug. The setting has regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and refers to this in their written planning and children's assessment records.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Practitioners have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and are confident to deviate from specific planned activities and follow children's immediate interests. For example, by providing a music and movement session on children's request, enabling them to enjoy moving their bodies in response to music. Practitioners are clear how children are progressing towards the early learning goals because assessment is well established and links closely to the stepping stones. Planning covers all six areas of learning and also links to the stepping stones. It is resource-led to provide for continuous learning opportunities although it is not always used as a guide. Consequently, fundamental daily resources such as dressing-up are overlooked which limits opportunities for children to engage in quality role play experiences.

Weekly activity planning sheets are detailed and link to current themes. They provide opportunities for a focussed, adult initiated activity each day. For example, those children who choose to, can begin to make a book 'All about me'. Consequently, they have emerging self-confidence to speak to practitioners about their experiences when they look at photographs provided from home. They begin to learn that print carries meaning as practitioners mount photographs and annotate their pictures. They develop their mark-making skills still further at the craft table when they draw groups of people to depict their families. However, planning does not show how activities in each area of learning are differentiated for individual children who are more or less able. Consequently, children receive general guidance and conversation rather than questioning and challenge. This potentially limits children's further progress towards the next steps in their learning and their sustained involvement in activities.

Practitioners make satisfactory use of time and resources. As children arrive, they are immediately drawn to the activities and choose according to their interests. This enables them to begin practising and refining their skills. Practitioners work directly with children for the majority of the time. When effective use is made of the environment, children can choose freely between indoor and outdoor learning during their free play session. They have opportunities to express themselves creatively on a large scale. For example, they enjoy stretching up to paint on a large sheet or exploring and investigating the properties of wet sand. Children develop a sense of time as they are prepared for changes to the routine for example, when music is played to tidy away. Sometimes, staff deployment leads to missed learning opportunities, for example after tidy-up time when children are not occupied for short periods. The use of environmental print and children's name labels reinforces children's understanding of print. At snack time children pour their own drinks, developing independence. They show a positive approach as they persevere and take their time, each carefully peeling a whole fruit.

Methods to help children learn are generally effective. Children build easy and trusting relationships with practitioners therefore they are confident and have high levels of self-esteem. They are encouraged to try new experiences and develop self care skills. For example, practitioners begin sweeping sand from the floor thus providing a positive role model for children. By offering the children a dustpan and brush or broom to continue the task, children's learning is extended. Some groups of children have opportunities to count and calculate at snack time but methods are not consistent therefore not all children are challenged. Children eagerly use the computer programmes and some can use a simple program while others show an interest in ICT.

The setting has regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and implements appropriate approaches for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some strategies are being developed to support those with English as an additional language and children can access a variety of books reflecting positive images of diversity and disability.

Practitioners manage children well and have high expectations for behaviour. They use positive methods, such as praise for children's achievements. For example, when children are tidying away and find a misplaced star sticker, they purposefully take it to place it in the drawer where stickers are stored. Children relate well to others and naturally work well together to resolve technology problems when a car is stuck in the lift of the garage. Children talk about meaningful experiences as practitioners listen and respond with interest which promotes their communication and language and dispositions to learn.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have a strong sense of belonging and are treated with equal concern. They bring cherished belongings from home which some keep with them for emotional reassurance while others know to place them in a designated container for return at the end of the session. Children can move between resources freely and select according to their immediate interests. They are treated respectfully and consulted, for example, in their choices at snack time. Children are invited to be 'helpers' which promotes feelings of pride and value. Their individual records provide information to effectively meet care and dietary needs and the setting ensures that aspects of children's individual family cultures are integrated into practice. For example, through promoting a diverse menu. Children learn about the local community and diversity. Parents are invited to the setting to share traditions and cultures in the group. For example, sharing experiences of Divali. The setting is proactive involving the community, for example, by asking the Fire Service to visit the setting. Posters are displayed in different languages and children have some opportunities to play with resources that reflect disability and ethnicity. The setting is aware that some children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Several practitioners have attended training in relation to special needs and work with parents to promote inclusion and ensure that individual needs are effectively met.

Children manage their own behaviour well and play alongside one another naturally and harmoniously. They show care, concern and affection for one another and, as one child offers another a piece of fruit, practitioners sensitively intervene to encourage wider participation, sharing and appreciation of others. Children have high levels of self-esteem and feel valued because practitioners respond to their conversations respectfully, offer constant praise and value their achievements. For example, when children keenly take responsibility for tidying toys away, rolling carpets and carefully folding newspaper.

Procedures are established whereby parents can share their concerns and have them investigated and recorded appropriately. In addition, parents are consulted through formal questionnaires. Responses are particularly complimentary of the setting and, because parents are actively involved the setting, their comments for improvement are perceptive and helpful to further enhance experiences for children.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents are provided with a range of general information about the setting that includes a particularly attractive information pack that focuses on the care aspect of the setting rather than the nursery education. Consequently, parents are not sufficiently aware of the six areas of learning and the aims of the Foundation Stage to promote children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals at home. Parents share what they know about their children by completing an introductory profile when their child starts the setting and through ongoing informal discussions with key workers. This establishes starting points for their child's learning and serves as a tool to help practitioners informally get to know the children and develop strategies to support them. However, there are no strategies in place to encourage parents to be involved in the continuous assessment of their children's learning. This is because development records are only shared when the children leave the setting. A committee of parents have the opportunity to be involved in the management of the group, for example, by reviewing and developing policies and procedures, completing appraisals and managing bookings. They willingly participate in the successful parent rota, share family customs and festivals with the group and provide materials, such as photographs from home linked to relevant topics. This provides informal opportunities

for parents to be involved in their children's learning. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall children's needs are met. Children's welfare and development is generally safeguarded and protected. The setting completes and records vetting for all practitioners working directly with children and has suitable procedures to ensure that those who are not vetted are never left alone with the children. However, recruitment and induction procedures are inconsistent and not yet comprehensive. This has the potential to compromise children's welfare. Practitioners are committed to their role and to improving their knowledge to benefit experiences for children.

Children's experiences and enjoyment are generally fostered through the setting's management of space and time. Adult to child ratios are met and often exceeded overall. However, sometimes the organisation of children's groupings and the deployment of practitioners, limit the quality of support children receive. For example, at small group story time, during continuous indoor/outdoor play and following tidy-up time.

Documentation is conscientiously managed and in place for the safe and efficient management of children. Records are readily available for inspection and are well organised. All policies have recently been reviewed and signed by all practitioners to acknowledge their awareness and understanding.

The leadership and management of funded children is satisfactory. The leader is committed to her role and supports an enthusiastic staff team and, with the chairperson, completes systematic appraisals to support practitioners in their development. The input of local authority advisory practitioners, promote strategies to improve the care and nursery education. This gives the setting a vision to develop. For example, by encouraging children's independence at snack time and involving parents in self-evaluation of the outcomes for children in relation to care. However, the setting has not considered extending this to include monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage in line with the principles outlined in curriculum guidance. As a result, some aspects of the programme limit the partnerships with parents and the challenges set for children to help extend their learning further. Information is cascaded effectively to practitioners, parents and children through team meetings, informal discussions and a successful parent rota. Progress has been made in addressing the previously identified actions to benefit the children's learning overall.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that there is a range of resources which can be used to promote equality of opportunity; that procedures be developed for snack time.

The setting have addressed the areas for improvement and therefore improved the quality of care and nursery education for children. Resources, such as multi-cultural dolls, dual language books and those to promote positive images have been purchased and are often available to help children appreciate diversity. Parents are invited to be involved in festivals and an intimate care policy has been introduced to promote safe inclusion for those who are not yet toilet trained. At snack time, domestic tasks are defined for parent helpers to enable more emphasis on supporting children to pour their drinks independently. There are more choices of healthy snacks and children's participation is increased through daily nominated helpers.

The previous nursery education inspection recommended a review of the organisation of story time; to review the planning; to link the intentions for children's learning more closely to the stepping stones for more able children; and to provide more opportunities for children to view the written word and practise letter formation and phonics.

The organisation of some group times has been developed to provide for children to be more engaged in smaller groups at snack and story time and for shorter periods to reflect their capabilities. Planning has been introduced for individual children using targets to move children forward through adult-led activities. However, targets tend to focus on personal, social and emotional development rather than encompass all six areas of learning and consequently children are not always sufficiently challenged to take the next steps in their learning in other areas. Name cards and some environmental print has been introduced for children to view the written word. They use resources to make marks at the craft table and when role play is available. Through a weekly focus on a chosen letter of the alphabet, children begin to develop understanding of phonics.

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):

- improve staff deployment within the provision to ensure that children's needs are always met and well supported
- develop consistent and robust procedures for staff appointments, and induction training which includes health and safety and child protection policies and procedures in their first week of employment.

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):

- review the curriculum planning to show how activities are differentiated for more and less able children and provide sufficient challenge and questioning to move them to the next steps in their learning
- provide a variety of opportunities to keep parents fully informed about the curriculum and provide opportunities to share with and receive from parents information about children's achievements and targets
- develop a system to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education provision in accordance with the principles for early years education and self-assess areas for improvement.

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