

Murrow Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221874
Inspection date	16 January 2008
Inspector	Andrea Caroline Snowden
Setting Address	Murrow CP School, Murrow Bank, Murrow, Parson Drove, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 4HD
Telephone number	07952573973
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Registered person	The Trustees of Murrow 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Murrow Pre-school opened in 1992. It operates from two rooms within Murrow village primary school and serves the local community. The pre-school is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday morning between 08:50 and 11:20am and also offers an afternoon session on Monday between 12:30 and 15:00.

The pre-school is registered to care for 12 children under eight years at any one time and there are currently 13 children on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee of parents who employ a team of four childcare staff. The manager is suitably qualified, holding a Level 3 qualification, whilst two other staff hold a Level 2 qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a generally clean and suitably maintained environment. Staff seek information from parents before care commences to ensure that children's dietary and health needs are properly accommodated. There are effective hygiene practices in place to ensure the risk of illness is reduced and staff ensure parents are aware of their policy concerning the care of sick children to further reduce the risk of cross-infection. Staff are able to respond to accidents as they have the necessary first aid training and adequate equipment to ensure children are treated properly. Children with complex medical needs are appropriately cared for because staff seek training in order to administer medication effectively. Record keeping concerning accidents and the administration of medication is completed in line with the required standards.

Children routinely wash their hands after using the bathroom and before eating snack, but there is little positive reinforcement from staff through discussion. As a result children do not all learn the importance of good personal hygiene through their normal daily routines. Similarly, when children cough or sneeze, staff instruct them to 'put their hands over their mouths', but offer no explanations about why this is necessary and consequently children refuse to comply.

The setting takes positive steps to promote healthy eating. Children are offered a wide range of nutritious foods at snack times such as fresh fruits, salad vegetables, cheese and toast. Children pour their own drinks from small jugs, helping to promote their independence and sit in a large group with staff close by for assistance. Additionally, children are able to meet their own needs during their play by helping themselves to fresh drinking water when they are thirsty. Some staff help children understand the benefits of healthy eating, commenting that if they eat the fruit it will be 'one of your five a day'. Children have taken part in some activities in which healthy eating has been the topic and clearly some children have understood the benefits as they comment that eating the fruit will make them big and strong.

Children have regular access to fresh air and exercise, using the school playground or hall for physical play. They are eager to go outside and excitedly ask staff if they can go out after snack time. Children are beginning to learn about developing a healthy, active lifestyle. They recognise their own specific needs and are able to comment that they are cold or hungry and take action in order to meet these needs. Some activities are planned to begin to help children to understand how to take care of their bodies, for example, looking after their teeth.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children are being cared for in two interlinked rooms within the school which are being used as temporary accommodation until new premises are available. Staff have tried to create a cosy, child-centred environment in order for children to feel less insecure. Posters and friezes are displayed along with displays of children's work. The toilet facilities are not adjacent to the play rooms and so children are escorted to the bathrooms within the main school building to ensure their safety. Nappy changing facilities are poor and the changing mat is dirty. There are written safety procedures in place, although these have not been reviewed for over a year. The risk assessments carried out are too basic to ensure hazards to children are minimised and as a result their safety within the setting is compromised. The door can be easily opened by a

child enabling them to leave the building unsupervised, and low-level glass in the bottom panel of the internal doors is not safe. Additionally, there are no fire evacuation procedures displayed and therefore children's safety has the potential to be compromised in an emergency.

There is a variety of play equipment available and staff have sourced some items to ensure the different backgrounds of children attending the group is reflected. Toys are organised so that children can self-select in order to promote choice and independence, however, because of the lack of space, children are rarely seen selecting or replacing toys for themselves. When children do select the walking stilts there is insufficient space for them to use them safely as the floor space is littered with equipment. Children are observed climbing on chairs and over the corners of tables in order to reach a different area of the room and although staff remind them that this is not safe, they do not reorganise furniture to make movement easier. Additionally, staff do not always actively involve children in tidy-up time and as a result children have fewer opportunities to learn respect and care for their toys and environment.

Children in the setting are protected by staff who understand the procedures to be followed in the event of suspected abuse. The designated member of staff has a clear understanding of the possible signs of abuse and is confident in taking action to protect children. Her training is regularly updated to ensure current legislation is adhered to and she ensures that the internal child protection procedure meets the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children come into the setting happily and quickly settle to activities of their choice. Staff greet them personally and ensure they are stationed at activities ready to support children. Staff work at children's levels and talk to the children about what they are doing, listening to their responses with interest. They talk about familiar topics with children in order to help them feel comfortable and emotionally secure. Children are becoming confident. Older children are extremely confident and move around the setting with ease, talking to visitors animatedly, whilst younger children are quiet and shy and need the support of an adult. Friendships have formed in the setting. Children ask staff the whereabouts of their friends and when they arrive they rush up to greet them with enthusiasm. Relationships between staff and children are generally good and there appears to be some warmth and rapport between some staff and some children. Interaction from staff is acceptable, although at times, specifically during outdoor play, this is not effective enough to support children in their play.

Children's independence is fostered in some areas of the setting, for example, they are encouraged to return painting aprons to the basket, pour their own drinks when they are thirsty and manage some self-care tasks for themselves. Children are involved in both child-led and adult-led activities. However, some adult-led activities are too limited to enable children to explore their own ideas and build on their curiosity as learners. Whilst making houses for the village map, children are given a box, with a roof already cut out and stuck on by staff. Children are passed a square of paper which they are encouraged to stick on the box as the window and say whereabouts on the map their house should be located. Whilst children engage in conversation about the type of house they live in and who they live next to, the creative element of the activity is lost. Additionally, display evidence suggests that children are often offered pre-cut shapes limiting their opportunities to express their ideas and develop imagination.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Although staff have a reasonable understanding of the Foundation Stage, their inability to effectively assess children's learning and plan for individual children and their next steps means that children are not making the progress they should. Additionally, because staff do not have sufficient knowledge about how young children learn, teaching methods are not adapted to meet the differing needs of more or less able children and staff expectations of children's ability is not high enough. As a result very able children go unchallenged and are observed wandering in the playroom unfocussed. Opportunities are missed throughout the day to reinforce children's learning through their routines and the continuous provision. Staff do offer some new experiences to children, for example, by offering cooked spaghetti as a malleable substance children are able to explore using all their senses. The environment is planned to encourage children to be self-sufficient, but because of the poor organisation children are hindered in this.

Curriculum planning is put together by the manager following an ideas session with other staff. Long term planning itself is satisfactory in that it covers all the early learning goals within a cycle, and systems are in place to ensure all areas of learning are covered. However, short term plans do not contain sufficient information to ensure staff provide children with appropriate opportunities and as a result children's individual stages of learning are not capitalised upon. The outdoor environment is not satisfactorily planned and as a result this time is used for children to 'let off steam' rather than used effectively to promote and develop children's physical skills. Observations of children are made and recorded, but this information is not used to inform future planning in order to ensure children make progress.

Children talk to staff about their home life and about what they have been doing with their families. Some children are able to manage their coats, whilst staff intervene with some children before they have had a chance to try. Some children manage their own behaviour and show a level of self-control, whilst others struggle and become confrontational. Children engage in activities which promote their hand to eye co-ordination in readiness for writing skills. They thread onto laces and use pencils to colour in work-sheets, but there are limited opportunities for children to independently mark-make, for example, they are not encouraged to label their own work and there is not always ready access to writing materials. Children use language well to discuss activities amongst themselves and to negotiate how tasks should be completed. Although there are posters on the wall to encourage children to think about linking sounds and letters, staff miss opportunities to teach children this in the normal daily routine. Children enjoy group story times and listen carefully to the story being read, but they are not observed accessing the book corner independently. Children can count to 10 and beyond and they use mathematical language in their play and learning. Children describe the dinosaur with a big long neck and are able to name some shapes. Photographs show children using blocks to recreate patterns, matching colours and shapes. There are some opportunities for children to learn about calculation, but staff miss opportunities to engage children in this more frequently.

Children engage in activities to promote their knowledge and understanding of the world. They design and make models from construction kits and use electronic equipment well. They show great control with the mouse and are able to operate simple programmes on the computer. They investigate the old cameras by flicking open and closed the lens cover. Children's awareness of the natural world is promoted through visits to the setting. Animal handlers have brought in sheep which children have fed and by growing carrots in a clear tank children have been able to look at the root structure and growth. Children are introduced to different cultures and backgrounds. Children's creative development is poorly supported. Their imagination is not well fostered because of the difficulty in providing an easily accessible role play area and opportunities to listen to and play music are limited. They paint at the easel, mixing colours

and have used glue to stick together pre-cut shapes on the snowmen. They use their senses to describe objects and textures, but are generally given too few opportunities to select art materials for themselves and use their ideas and imagination to create their own work. Children are developing physically because they race around the playground on ride on toys or scooters, and they have had to learn a sense of space in order to prevent collisions. They demonstrate that they are able to manage their bodies as they join in the ring games as they mostly run backwards. The use of small tools is limited in the setting, for example, children are not observed using scissors.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have put systems in place to try to ensure they receive as much information as possible about children before they start at the setting. As a result they are able to meet some children's personal care needs quite well. Staff endeavour to work with those parents who are hard to reach to find out about their child and any specific requirements. Children are beginning to develop an understanding of our diverse society as staff have introduced them to different religious celebrations and have invited parents whose first language is not English into the setting to sing songs in their mother tongue. Children with specific needs are generally supported and some receive one to one support from the special needs co-ordinator. She demonstrates an acceptable level of understanding of the procedures necessary to give children appropriate opportunities and some children have made good progress following their individual education plans. However, on occasions activities offered to children with identified needs are not appropriate and do not enhance their development.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are able to make staff aware of their feelings and some children show caring attitudes towards other children, for example, by helping younger children to serve their snack. Some children are able to recognise the difference between right and wrong and some manage their behaviour appropriately. Children's social development is encouraged as staff help create times to chat at the snack table or whilst carrying out activities. Children's family backgrounds are respected and shared in the group and children have opportunities to broaden their experiences, for example, by taking part in wedding celebrations at the local church.

There is a written behaviour management policy in place which parents are able to see when they join the setting. However, the positive strategies described in the policy are not always observed in practice. Generally staff do explain to children why their behaviour is unacceptable in order to help them learn what is right and wrong and their self-esteem is developed with positive comments such as 'you're very good'. However, this is not a consistent message from all staff, and at times children are simply told that they are 'silly' and they should 'do it properly', without any supporting explanations. This has a detrimental impact on their ability to understand boundaries and on their self-esteem. Furthermore, when children occasionally display intimidating behaviour, staff do not intervene in order to correct the behaviour or support the victim.

Parents are involved in the running of the setting and are able to settle their children until they feel secure. The notice board has some information for parents and a small envelope is available for parents to contribute any suggestions they might have. The written information given to parents is quite comprehensive and gives an insight into the running of the setting and what parents might expect. However, there are a number of factual errors and incorrect information which has the potential to mislead parents. There is a system in place to address concerns raised

by parents and they are given a comprehensive complaints procedure, however the contact information in this procedure is also out of date. There is some time at the beginning and end of the sessions for parents to exchange information with staff, but often this time is rushed or tense because of misunderstandings from school staff about whether parents should have access to the setting or wait at the playground gate.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents speak positively about the staff explaining that they have found them approachable and supportive. They say that they are able to explain to staff what their child has been doing at home in order for staff to build on this at pre-school, however, there is little evidence from children's assessments that staff have acted on this. Children bring books in from home which they have enjoyed to share with their pre-school peers. There is very little information for parents about the Foundation Stage and printed information in the prospectus is inaccurate. Parents are aware that staff make observations on their children, but do not have regular access to their children's assessment records and as a result are not well informed about the progress their child is making.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children are cared for by a staff team who have been in post a number of years and who are suitably qualified and vetted to work with young children. Some staff show enthusiasm for further training in order to improve the quality of care and education offered. However, the lack of leadership and a comprehensive operational plan means that the setting is coasting with regard to meeting the National Standards and providing appropriate care and education for children. Documentation, including the daily register, is not maintained in a manner which ensures the efficient and safe management of the setting and as a result children's care, welfare and learning are significantly hampered.

The leadership and management is inadequate. The pre-school is led by a voluntary management committee made up from the parents of the setting. However, the chairperson has been coerced into remaining in post even though she no longer has a child at the group. There does not appear to be a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between the committee and staff and as a result staff feel overwhelmed with paperwork. There are ineffective systems in place to monitor the quality of education and the strengths and weaknesses of the setting and as a result unsuccessful strategies go unnoticed and children's learning is hindered. Staff's professional development is not managed well and although appraisals are carried out these are neither informative or evaluative meaning that staff are not making the professional progress required to ensure good quality teaching. Overall the provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to request written permission from parents to seek emergency medical treatment or advice and to devise and implement a policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious and to ensure parents are aware of it. Parents now give their written consent for staff to seek advice and there is a sick child policy in place. The communicable disease guidance is also available to parents. As a result of this action children's health and welfare is better assured.

Additionally the setting were asked to introduce opportunities for children to select reference books for topics, to build time for planning and evaluation into staff's contracts, and to introduce processes for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. There are a selection of reference books which the manager states are used to illustrate topics for children making them more meaningful. Staff have been given time for planning meetings but systems are not yet satisfactory for the monitoring of the setting's strengths and weaknesses.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve the risk assessment procedures to ensure hazards to children are identified and minimised, particularly ensure children can not leave the premises unsupervised, that low-level glass does not pose a hazard and that fire evacuation procedures are displayed
- ensure that policies, procedures and records required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are updated and maintained.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve the assessment method in order to enable staff to effectively identify the next steps for learning across all areas of the curriculum and ensure that these are incorporated into future planning
- ensure curriculum planning contains clear information about how activities should be differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of more or less able children

- develop and implement more effective systems to ensure staff are properly appraised and have the opportunity to consider their professional development.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

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