

The Meadows Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205230
Inspection date	10 October 2007
Inspector	Rachel Wyatt

Setting Address	9 Mulberry Tree Hill, Droitwich, Worcestershire, WR9 7SS
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Registered person	Susan Jane Foster
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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?

The Meadows Nursery is privately owned and opened in 1994. It operates from the ground floor of a property in a residential area of Droitwich. The nursery serves the local area. A maximum of 12 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open five days a week from 08.00 to 18.00 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. During term time, pre-school age children attend Forest School once a week.

There are currently 55 children under eight years on roll. Of these 16 children receive funding for early education. Older children may be cared for. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Support is available for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for children who speak English as an additional language.

11 staff work with the children. Of these eight have early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualification Level 2 or 3, and two are working towards relevant early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good hygiene is fostered well because they are actively encouraged to be independent in seeing to their personal care. Older children visit the toilet and wash their hands by themselves, clearly understanding the need to reduce the risk of germs. Younger children are introduced to hand washing after nappy changes or using the potty. Children also understand about other aspects of good health, for example, minimising the spread of germs through covering their mouths if they cough and using a tissue when they sneeze. Children discuss the benefits of physical exercise, good dental hygiene and hair care, including looking at these in detail during a recent topic on 'People who help us to stay healthy'. Children are looked after in clean and comfortable surroundings. Staff ensure tables and surfaces are kept clean, for example, before preparing food. Children have individual hand towels and bedding.

Children's health is supported because relevant information is obtained about their medical and dietary needs. If children have an accident, need medication or become unwell they receive prompt and appropriate treatment, in line with the setting's procedures and their parents' wishes. The setting has clear accident, medication and sick children exclusion procedures which are made available to parents. Staff with a current first aid qualification are present at each session. Parents are made fully aware of any issues regarding their child's health whilst at the setting. This includes effective record keeping so that information relating to consents to medication, accidents and incidents are very clear. Parents also receive information about medication dosages, but some omissions to these records potentially affects children's welfare.

Children have plenty of fresh air and exercise through rewarding play in the garden or, for older children, by taking part in Forest School activities. Children are protected from the elements as they wear appropriate clothing. Children become increasingly independent as they are encouraged to manage fastenings on coats and to change into outdoor footwear. They talk about the importance of sun protection. Children's rest needs are met, and staff ensure those who are sleeping are safe and checked regularly.

Children are well nourished and have regular drinks, including fresh water. The nursery works closely with parents to ensure children's dietary needs are met. They enjoy healthy snacks and meals, which include a selection of fruits and vegetables. They discuss food that is good for you and different ways of preparing food, for example, during mealtimes or when finding out what astronauts have to eat. Children's food portions are manageable and their food invitingly presented. Children help to lay the table and also assist with some food preparation, for instance making sandwiches.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are looked after in safe and secure surroundings which are comfortable and inviting. Staff are scrupulous about door security and there are robust dropping off and collection procedures to ensure children arrive and leave safely, and with the correct person.

Children use good quality toys, furniture and equipment. They help to keep toys in good condition and play areas free from hazards because they put things away when they have

finished using them. Children know how to use and store tools such as scissors properly and to use apparatus safely.

Children's safety is also promoted by the staff's effective supervision and the appropriate use of risk assessments to minimise hazards. Outings are well managed to ensure children travel safely on foot or in a vehicle, and so that these arrangements reflect their parents' wishes. Children develop a sound awareness of different aspects of safety. For example, they clearly understand about potential hazards when they are outside because they talk with authority about not picking mushrooms or berries. Other safety matters, such as the danger of matches and road safety are discussed during activities and topics. Children learn how to manage risks whilst they take part in physical challenges such as building dens or climbing trees whilst at Forest School. Children and adults are prepared for emergencies through taking part in fire drills.

Children are safeguarded as staff understand their role in child protection. They have a sound knowledge of the symptoms of child abuse and know what action to take if they have concerns about a child. Relevant safeguarding children guidance is available and reflected in the setting's policy. Children are encouraged to respect each other's privacy and through sensitively managed activities and stories they learn how to cope in difficult situations such as getting lost.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children have a marvellous time at the nursery. They benefit from being looked after in a mixed age group, resulting in very good relationships, plenty of cooperative play and they often help each other. Children respond very positively to the relaxed, welcoming atmosphere and rewarding activities. Plans for topics and activities take account of children's different abilities and interests which are clearly understood by staff as a result of the setting's robust assessment procedures. The strong focus on child-led play and opportunities for exploration suits the younger children, as well as their older peers, and truly reflects the ethos of the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Children are competent learners because they can readily make choices from the varied activities and accessible toys, games, books and resources. This prompts their self-initiated play. The staff's involvement enriches children's play without inhibiting their ideas. Children are confident, inquisitive and imaginative. They happily investigate different materials such as sand, water, soil and dough, finding out how things react or mix together. They freely explore paint and enjoy drawing and chalking.

Children's understanding and their communication skills are promoted by the staff's excellent interactions with them and effective use of stimulating resources. For example, children's appreciation of the weather is fostered through their own observations and regular discussions, and also through playing interesting games which promote conversations about the seasons, different clothing and the children's own experiences. Like their older peers, toddlers love songs, rhymes and well-told stories. Staff encourage their attentive listening and turn taking so that children speak confidently during circle time activities. They adeptly use language to express their ideas and to add colour and drama to their imaginative play, for instance when young children recreate a picnic or pretend to be fire-fighters.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are purposeful and motivated to learn because staff plan meaningful topics and activities that capture their interest and really develop their understanding. The topic on nursery rhymes has introduced children to well-loved songs which they much enjoy singing. In addition, as part of this theme, children have successfully explored some quite complex concepts, their understanding being expertly supported by the staff's skilful explanations and their careful planning and organisation of toys, books and resources. For example, during their focus on the song 'Ten green bottles' children are fascinated by a programme on glass blowing.

Currently another popular rhyme has resulted in children being enthralled by different aspects of space exploration. They have dressed up as spacemen, had 'picnics' in space, made and drawn rockets. Children have listened to and acted out a well-loved story about a bear's adventures in space. Their awareness of a simple sequence is promoted by a member of staff as she and the children discuss and act out the hero's preparation before he embarks on his journey. Other space-related activities promote children's counting and number recognition as they use a computer programme featuring spacemen. In particular, children's understanding of space exploration has been enriched by the staff's excellent explanations and use of several interesting books and magazines. As they look at illustrations in these publications, children and staff have wide ranging meaningful conversations, for instance about the planets, features of the moon, astronauts' daily routines and the reasons for night and day time.

Children are skilful communicators because staff consistently encourage their descriptive language, their recall and their verbal reasoning during conversations and through effective questioning. Children vividly express their ideas during imaginative play, for example, when a small group playing outside develop a dramatic scenario involving witches and princesses. Children's understanding of new vocabulary, including mathematical terms such as 'opposite', is reinforced by the staff's adept explanations and use of the words in practical contexts.

Children also represent their ideas through their modelling and artwork. For example, their drawings reflect structures they have made or features of the natural world they observe at Forest School. Children also find out how different items fit together or materials react. When some of them decide to dig their own fish 'pond' at Forest School, they discover that having dug a hole in the earth, the water disappears. When staff find them a plastic rubbish bin liner, children discover that their pond successfully holds water. They stock the pond with plastic fish, recording their achievements in photographs and through their drawings.

Children's learning and progress is fully supported by excellent planning and assessment procedures. Children develop at their own pace because plans reflect their differing needs and in their practice staff are adept at promoting children's learning at an appropriate level. Identifying and consistently reviewing individual learning targets for each child, enables staff to plan and adapt activities and resources which ensure less able children are fully supported and so that more able children have suitable challenges to help them to move onto the next stage in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are well cared for and make very good progress as their care and learning needs are clearly identified and met well by staff. The setting's thorough monitoring and reviewing of each child's progress facilitates the prompt identification of any concerns about a child's development. Within the setting the staff's particular skills and expertise, for instance in

observing children, using signing and working very effectively with other agencies and parents, all ensure children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Their self-esteem is consistently promoted in line with the setting's positive equal opportunities and behaviour management policies. Children are confident because they regularly make decisions about what they want to play with, helping themselves to toys and resources. Staff support them when they initiate ideas during play and activities, for example, by providing additional toys and materials. Children also feel valued because their interests, efforts and achievements are acknowledged and praised.

Children are settled because staff create a relaxed, fun environment where good relationships and positive behaviour are fostered. They are encouraged to be kind and helpful and demonstrate this in their friendships, care for each other and by looking after toys and possessions. Children also behave well as they understand what is expected of them, for example, when it is time to get ready for outside play or meals or when toys need to be put away. Children understand the consequences of their misbehaviour or disagreements as a result of the adults' calm and clear explanations.

Children learn to respect other peoples' beliefs and customs, for example, during Christmas and Chinese New Year celebrations. They gain an insight into the lives of children in other countries, particularly as the nursery sponsors a child in Cambodia. Children attending the nursery take an active part in sharing news, gifts and drawings with him. They also explore aspects of diversity through topics and using toys, games and books which reflect positive images of race, culture, disability and gender. Children's own backgrounds are valued because they are encouraged to talk about their families and experiences. Their parents' views and wishes are respected, for example, regarding their children's care and routines and also through discussing agreed targets to support their child's progress.

Children have their needs met very well because the nursery provides parents with excellent information about all aspects of its service. These details cover how the setting is managed and organised and include very good explanations of the types of activities and experiences provided for children of different ages.

Parents are consistently reassured about how their children's needs and routines are met. During new children's settling in visits, parents are given details of observations of their child's activities and interactions. Parents of new children are also encouraged to share as much information as possible about their child's routines, interests and skills to help staff to get to know children and to provide them with familiar activities and experiences.

On a daily basis all children have their ongoing needs effectively met because parents receive helpful written or verbal feedback about their baby or child's routines and activities. Parents and carers are also kept fully informed of their baby or child's progress, receiving regular reviews of their achievements and what aspects of their development are being focussed on next. Parents very much appreciate the approachability of staff and the quality of care and learning provided for their children. This is reflected in their evaluations, including the cards, letters and feedback given by parents and their children about the nursery. Children are safeguarded because parents have clear information on what to do should they have any concerns about the setting, including how to contact Ofsted.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Children's learning is enhanced as result of their parents' input. For example, they are encouraged to tell the staff about their child's interests and achievements. This helps staff in their planning of activities and in their monitoring of children's progress. Parents have regular feedback about their child's activities and development. This includes having examples of their child's work, being given photographs of their child in the setting and receiving feedback on their child's responses to topics. Parents are involved in the monitoring and review of their children's progress and in agreeing their individual targets for learning. As part of this process parents attend parents' evenings and regularly exchange information with their child's key worker.

Children's learning is also enriched because their parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage. They are given explanations on how the nursery's topics and activities promote children's progress in relation to the six areas of learning. Weekly plans are displayed for parents' reference and they, along with parents of younger children, have opportunities to attend special parents' group sessions covering an aspect of children's development such as communication. Parents and carers also provide items for topics or activities and help with fundraising.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are safeguarded because the provider's robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure staff are suitable, well qualified and have appropriate experience. Children benefit from being cared for in a small mixed age group, with each child having a designated key worker. Children are contented and very settled because they are looked after in a most inviting environment. They use plenty of rewarding resources and enjoy smoothly run sessions because staff work well together and clearly understand their roles. Adults are well informed about their responsibilities as a result of effective induction procedures, and because they can refer to helpful operational guidelines, policies and procedures. The provider and staff regularly attend training courses and good practice sessions.

Children's care is supported by the nursery's record keeping and agreements so that relevant information is maintained on them and their families, and their parents' wishes are clearly understood. Records are securely stored and confidentiality maintained.

The leadership and management of funded children is outstanding. Children are confident and purposeful, making very good progress towards the early learning goals because the provider and her staff promote their ethos of children developing and learning in a small mixed age 'family' group. Children thrive in a learning environment which is reassuring, fun and stimulating. They readily learn from each other, as well as from all of the rewarding topics and activities provided for them. Children's learning and progress is confidently supported by all the adults who have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage. They consistently plan and implement high quality activities which incorporate children's differing learning needs.

Robust evaluation procedures ensure regular monitoring of children's progress and of the nursery's early education programme. As a result children's skills and ongoing learning needs are always clearly understood and met. Their learning is also enhanced by the provider and staff's commitment to the further development of the children's nursery education. These improvements include recent adaptations to planning and assessment procedures and continual development of children's use of the outdoor play area. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to improve recording of medicines administered to children. Their well-being is now better supported by the nursery's procedures. These ensure parents' consents to medication are clearly documented and that details of dosages are recorded and made available to parents. However, some omissions to dosage records potentially affect children's welfare so this aspect of the nursery's medication procedures remains an area for improvement.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to develop children's access to writing materials to extend their imaginative play. Children's mark making is fully supported by worthwhile opportunities for emergent writing during role play, and for making marks and symbols in different creative contexts such as painting and drawing, for example, when they use chalks on the paving in the outside play area.

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 outstanding.

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):

- further improve procedures for recording medication dosages.

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