

Meredale Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	103719
Inspection date	25 January 2008
Inspector	Virginia Cooper
Setting Address	Solomon Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 8EB
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Registered person	Meopham Day Nursery
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory. 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?

Meredale Day Nursery is one of seven nurseries privately run by Kinder Groups Ltd. It opened in 1997 and operates from seven rooms in a building which was originally Meredale Infant School in Rainham, Kent. A maximum of 93 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 112 children aged from three months to five years on roll. Of these, 45 children receive funding for early education. Most children are from the local area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who are bi-lingual.

The nursery employs 18 members of staff. Of these, 16 hold appropriate early years qualifications and one are working towards a higher qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and toddlers relate well to their carers, generally the same staff are with them each day providing consistency and security. Babies express their feelings easily, making it clear when they are happy, sad, uncomfortable or tired. They have a healthy sense of dependence because they receive attention when it is required. This gradually leads them to become appropriately independent.

Staff take positive steps to prevent the spread of infection; for example, they follow guidelines about which cloths to use for different cleaning tasks and children's bedding is never shared, and is laundered regularly. Staff accompany children to the toilet area for security reasons. They encourage them, however, to use the toilet independently; the toilets are child size making them easy for children to use. Children learn about good hygiene practice through the daily routine; for example, they wash their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating. Staff help children brush their teeth after meals encouraging them to adopt healthy routines.

There are effective procedures in place to prevent cross infection when nappy changing. The staff talk to children about hygiene in a way they understand; they learn that germs might make them poorly. Children understand if they drop their cutlery on the floor then it is not to be used and they routinely ask staff for a replacement when this happens.

The nursery staff will care for children who are off-colour if they are happy to come, for example, if they have colds. If they are contagious, however, for example, suffering sickness or diarrhoea, they do not attend ensuring other children are not at risk of cross-infection. A child who becomes sick whilst being looked after is comforted until their parents collect them. The nursery write an emergency medical programme for all children with particular health needs ensuring they can cope in an emergency.

Most staff hold a current first aid qualification; they are able to administer first aid to children in the event of an accident or emergency. Staff record any accidents and any first aid that is administered whilst the children are in their care. This results in parents being well informed about what has happened to their child.

Children regularly play outside ensuring they get plenty of fresh air and exercise.

Parents provide most of the food for the babies under a year old. They bring in bottles of milk that staff store safely in a fridge. Staff heat the bottles in a bottle warmer ensuring it is an appropriate temperature. Staff discuss and follow babies' usual feeding routines.

Most children over one year old eat meals that are provided by an outside company, some children bring a packed lunch in from home. The nursery meals are attractively presented, well balanced and nutritious; the children enjoy them. The company provide enough for children to have a second helping if they wish.

The nutritious content of the snacks that the nursery provides is variable; fruit and biscuits are offered. The portion of fruit is very small. Children are able to help themselves to drinks of water throughout the day ensuring they do not become dehydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are secure and only staff open the door to parents, children and visitors. Closed-circuit television enables staff to see who is at the door before opening it. Children have plenty of room to move around and play. The baby room is particularly cosy and homely, and a wooden bar is placed to help babies steady themselves while they are learning to walk. There are large mirrors for the babies to look at their reflection. Staff have used black and white decorations which are highly visually attractive to young babies because of the strong contrast. The sleep room is adjoined allowing staff to supervise sleeping babies closely.

There is a range of toys and equipment that cover all areas of learning. Staff are soon to have a delivery of new equipment increasing the range available. Staff check all the equipment regularly to ensure it is safe. Children use child sized furniture enabling them to manage tasks more easily. Children particularly enjoy playing with a good range of natural materials, for example, wet and dry sand, water, soil, wood shavings and flour.

A thorough risk assessment is carried out and staff visually check the premises and equipment every day to ensure everything is safe. Safety equipment is in place inside the nursery to help prevent accidents, for example, socket covers. Staff remind children how to behave to keep themselves safe, for instance, they are told not to lick their knife as it might hurt and not to climb on the toys because they may fall. This is beginning to help children take responsibility for their own safety. Children's safety in the event of a fire is considered. Staff carry out and record regular fire drills and evaluate their success to effect a quick evacuation in an emergency.

Staff regularly attend in house training to update their knowledge about safeguarding children from harm. Staff understand the signs and symptoms of abuse. They have clear procedures to follow if they are concerned about any child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff interaction with the babies and toddlers is kind. Children look to their key workers for support if they are feeling anxious and are always rewarded with a smile or gentle words helping them feel secure. Staff chat to the babies about what is happening at home as well as at nursery. For example, they talk to a baby about the swimming lesson he is having with his mummy later on that day acknowledging the other people and activities that are important in his life. Staff are familiar with the framework Birth to three matters. They continue to increase the opportunities for children to explore a variety of natural materials. They are currently experimenting with the system they use to plan activities; staff report that the new system is making it easier to take account of children's interests. They have made treasure baskets full of tactile resources that the babies love to explore, using all their senses. The toddlers enjoy playing with sand, wood shavings and water and feel confident to mix the contents of the different trays. They learn that the wet sand will stick to toys allowing them to hide and find things. Staff listen carefully to what children say and play along with their imaginary games. Children take turns with staff to hide dinosaurs in the wood shavings and staff take this opportunity to encourage children to count to ten whilst they take their turn. On the first day of the inspection many of the resources are in cupboards or stored in other rooms and therefore, not easily accessible. Toddlers do not understand the concept that toys in other rooms are also available for their use or have the communication skills to enable them to access these resources

easily. On the second day of the inspection the opportunities for toddlers to self select resources are improved.

Children enjoy the activities offered at the after school club, they relate well to the staff and are happy and settled.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most of the staff working with the pre-school children are familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum. They regularly carry out observations to help them identify the areas of learning children are currently concentrating upon. Some staff use this information to identify children's next steps but others require more support to do this. Generally, this helps staff plan appropriate activities to aid children's development. Staff record dates when children achieve stepping stones towards the early learning goals. The dates relate to observations but it is difficult to tie up the records and establish exactly how children have achieved each particular milestone. Many of the resources are not easily accessible making self selection, without adult support, difficult. The resources that are accessible are not attractively presented. Staff interact well with the children; they give them lots of praise and encouragement to undertake new tasks. They help them solve problems for themselves, for example, a child was shown how to replace the typewriter keys when they became jammed and another child was shown how to re-start the computer when the screen froze.

Children confidently approach visitors, introduce themselves and ask about what they are doing. Most understand the concept of sharing and taking turns. Staff encourage children's independence in some ways, for example, they pour their own drinks at snack time. Adults ensure there is a range of activities set up in the room; however, they can only self-select, without adult help, a proportion of the resources because of how they are stored. Children's level of involvement noticeably decreases around meal times, snack times and changeover periods when the number of staff available to directly work with children is minimal. Children celebrate a variety of festivals helping them develop an understanding of other people's cultures and beliefs.

Children are keen to communicate and chat happily with staff. Staff members help children understand the etiquette that relates to holding conversations, for example, if a child interrupts, the staff member explains, 'I am speaking to someone else at the moment and when we have finished I will come and speak with you.' This ensures that the quieter, less assertive children receive their fair share of attention. Children usually have opportunities to recognise their own names on a daily basis, however, the hooks that hold their names are broken and therefore, this activity has been less frequent lately. Whilst they wait for their lunch a member of staff helps children do the actions from the Jolly Phonics system. Some children know the sounds different letters make and can recognise if the letter being held up is in their name. However, staff rarely make reference to linking sounds and letters in play situations. The books are not attractively presented and children rarely choose to look at books independently. Staff provide opportunities for children to practise their emergent writing skills and some can write recognisable letters.

Most children count competently beyond ten; staff regularly take opportunities to include counting as children play. Children recognise written numerals and their natural sequence; some can recognise if a number is missing. Staff use snack time to help children make simple calculations, for example, they work out how many cups are required. There is equipment to help children sort and match using shape, size and colours. Children regularly cook and play

with sand and water, giving them the opportunity to measure and explore volume. Children enjoy making jigsaw puzzles and this aids the development of their spatial awareness.

Children have plenty of opportunities to explore and investigate objects and materials using all of their senses. They are confident about using the computer. They are learning how to solve problems related to technology, for instance, they understand when the screen freezes that the computer has to be switched off and re-started allowing it to reboot. The nursery has pet guinea pigs, children handle and feed them teaching them how to care and take responsibility for a living creature. The children gain a sense of time by completing a plan, do and review sheet. This helps them programme the activities they wish to undertake into the day. Children learn about the jobs people do when parents come and talk with them; a vet and a police officer have visited to talk about their work.

Children enjoy playing outside in the fresh air; they go out most days. They move safely with confidence, control and co-ordination. Staff encourage children to be aware of their bodies and to notice if they are uncomfortable, for example, staff ask a child whether they want to change their jumper for a thinner T-shirt if they are too hot. They encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles; staff explain the importance of eating food that is good for them and discuss the benefits of exercise. Children understand they will grow and be strong if they eat their dinner. Children use hand held tools with increasing control and love to shape and mould play dough.

Children use their imagination creating their own games; they enjoy the small world toys especially when these are combined with natural materials. They love to make up stories as they play with the dinosaurs in soil. The role play area, however, does not hold children's attention for long. Members of staff rarely model to children how they might play in this area. Children have daily opportunities to create pictures with a variety of media and materials. They sometimes mix paints as an activity but the art and craft materials are not all together enabling children to make decisions about the materials and tools they think they may need for a self chosen project and select them independently. Children love to sing and play musical instruments exploring tone, rhythm and pitch.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff greet children on their arrival; the children and parents are familiar with the self-registration system, come in happily and settle quickly. The children enjoy a routine that is consistent, helping them feel secure; they enjoy opportunities to be active and relax throughout the day. Staff encourage children to be aware of their emotions; they use photos to good effect to help children recognise how people are feeling. The mix of children is diverse; children are valued and respected as individuals, differences are embraced and every child is treated with equal concern. They celebrate a variety of festivals introducing children to other cultures and beliefs. Staff have arranged for the large Chinese dragon that is used in Medway town festivals to come to the nursery, helping children appreciate they are part of a larger community. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff are aware that some children may have learning difficulties or disabilities and can identify children who may need additional help. The member of staff nominated as the special educational needs co-ordinator works with other professionals to ensure children with special needs are provided with an appropriate service. An individual learning plan is written for all children with learning difficulties, setting realistic and achievable targets to help children progress.

Staff manage children's behaviour positively, their age, stage of development and level of understanding are all taken into account. Children generally behave well and respond positively to the praise and encouragement they are given. Staff periodically remind children of the rules and children demonstrate that they know what is expected of them and clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. Staff encourage children to develop good manners by consistently reminding them to say please and thank you, and praising them when they remember without any prompt.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents are provided with information about the setting and its provision. The policies and procedures are always available for parents to read and a new website is about to be launched. There is a written complaints procedure available to all parents and the manager records any complaints in a log. The parents' notice board currently has a display demonstrating how nursery staff deliver the framework Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage curriculum and how this correlates with the new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to be introduced in September. Parents have contact with the staff each day and communicate easily with them. They speak very positively about the nursery and staff; they report they feel well informed about their child's progress toward the early learning goals. Parents regularly read their children's assessment records. The staff encourage parents to take an active role in their children's learning; the nursery provide forms to enable parents to easily share information and photographs about the child's development and interests at home. This helps staff provide an appropriate service that takes account of children's individual learning needs. Some parents have recently visited to talk with children about their jobs; this communication between home and school is beneficial to the children and helps them understand they are part of a larger community. Children are sometimes taken out in the local area; they recently went to the post box to send some letters giving them an understanding of the postal system.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The recruitment procedure ensures all staff hold a current criminal records check, and are suitable to work with children. Nearly all staff hold a relevant child care qualification and current first aid certificate.

The daily routine is organised to include quiet times, active times, meals and snacks. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Each room takes a turn to dish up all the meals for the other rooms in the nursery. The children in the room that is serving food have to wait some time to get their meals; however, the children with a packed lunch are able to start eating. This has an impact on the social side of mealtimes because some children are eating whilst the others, also sitting to the table are singing songs and reading books. After lunch is a particularly busy time for staff. A member of staff is busy clearing up, another is helping children brush their teeth, some children are leaving and others arriving and this only leaves one member of staff working directly with the other children. The resources are not well organised or stored in a logical order. On the first day of the inspection a lot of resources are in cupboards; there are no visual clues to help children remember what is stored in each cupboard. On the second day of the inspection staff have removed cupboard doors in some rooms to help children see more easily what is available.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The nursery manager involves all staff when completing the nursery self-evaluation form; staff in all rooms are encouraged to identify the nursery's strengths and weaknesses and to suggest ways they might improve outcomes for

children. The nursery manager and staff are aware that some resources need replacing and some systems can improve, for example, the ability to cover staff sickness promptly. New resources are on order and staff look forward to using them. The staff are caring and work well as a team. They are keen to improve the care and education for all children. All mandatory documentation is in place, for example, attendance registers, accident records and records for the administration of medication. They are currently experimenting with a new way to plan activities which is more immediate and they are finding the system beneficial.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection two recommendations were made.

The staff were asked to review the policies and ensure they contain all the necessary information and inform the parents of the named member of staff with responsibility for the different areas; and to offer children opportunities to choose equipment within a balanced programme of activities to promote all round development.

The level of improvement in these areas is varied. There are comprehensive policies and procedures written that parents are able to access at all times. However, few tasks are delegated away from the nursery manager. She not only monitors and evaluates the systems in place but takes overall responsibility for implementing most of them as well.

Children are grouped according to their age and follow a curriculum for their age group. Staff offer various activities, but the opportunities for children to self-select toys or equipment independently are still limited. The resources that are easily accessible are not attractively presented and do not invite children to use them. A lot of toys are stored in cupboards and are not on view for children to see, although children can ask a member of staff to get them out. Some of the youngest children are expected to remember the equipment that is kept in other rooms, for example, dressing up clothes. Because of their age and level of communication skills they are unlikely to ask for something they have not seen for a while.

Therefore some similar recommendations remain to further encourage children to make independent choices about the activities they undertake.

At the last education inspection the key issues for improvement related to the use of assessment records, developing the opportunities for four year olds to link sounds and letters to words and objects in practical activities, to regularly use and see numerals in everyday routine activities to aid confidence in number recognition and counting and to ensure Individual Education Plans for children with special educational needs are monitored and regularly updated, to ensure progress is being made.

The staff continue to experiment with using assessment records to help them plan appropriate activities for children and are making progress in this area.

The Individual Education Plans for children with additional needs or disabilities are regularly monitored and updated.

Staff have made good progress including maths activities in the everyday programme, however, phonics tend to be taught quite formally using the Jolly Phonics system. Staff are less likely to link sounds and letters to words and objects in practical activities.

Therefore a recommendation remains to improve the opportunities for children to link sounds and letters in play situations.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 1 2004, Ofsted received one complaint relating to National Standard 6 - Safety, National Standard 7 - Health and National Standard 14 - Documentation.

Concerns were received regarding the practice for heating children's milk. Ofsted asked the provider to conduct an investigation and report back. A response was received and Ofsted asked for additional information. A further response was received detailing action taken by the provider. The provider had failed to meet National Standard 14 and an action was set. Ofsted received a suitable response to this action. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 satisfactory. 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 the opportunities for all children to self select resources by making them more easily accessible; present resources attractively to make them more inviting to children [relates to funded children also]
- consider how meal times are organised to prevent some children waiting too long; also consider how staff are deployed to ensure sufficient staff are available to work directly with children at busy times of the day

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):

- consider how staff might link sounds and letters with children more often in play situations
- consider how to improve the book corner and make it more inviting to children

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