

Brunel-Meredith Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	143441
Inspection date	02 October 2007
Inspector	Gill Moore
Setting Address	Brunel Junior School, Wymering Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO2 7HX
Telephone number	02392 652745 or 07900831016
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Registered person	The Trustees of Brunel-Meredith Pre-School
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Brunel-Meredith Pre-School was established over 25 years ago. It operates in two rooms on the site of Brunel Junior School and Meredith Infant School, Portsmouth and has access to a secure outside area. The pre-school has charity status and is organised by a voluntary parents management committee. This inspection took place at the pre-school situated in the Meredith School Annex. A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. The group is open Monday to Friday 09:00 - 11:30 and 12:35 - 15:05 during the school term. Children can bring their lunch and stay for a variety of sessions. The pre-school supports a number of children with English as an additional language.

There are currently 54 children on roll. Of these, 44 receive funding for nursery education. The committee employ a qualified manager to be overall responsible for the day to day running of the group. In addition, a total of nine practitioners work directly with the children, all of whom have an NVQ 3 in Early Years.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have an exceptional understanding of why it is important to lead a healthy lifestyle and what contributes to this. They talk about why they need to wash their hands, recognising how germs spread, and follow excellent personal hygiene routines, without needing reminding by practitioners. Children talk confidently about different foods, and how these help their bodies to grow, recognising they need to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. They help themselves to water and milk and a range of healthy options from the snack bar, including a variety of different fruits and chopped up vegetables. Children discuss with their peers how these taste and how they were grown and show great interest in finding out what happens to the milk when it is taken from the cow. They have wonderful opportunities to develop their physical skills, both outside in the playground and in the inside learning environment. Children use apparatus, such as climbing frames and balancing beams, and ride a range of bicycles confidently. They practise using smaller equipment, including hoops, bean bags and balls, throwing to one another and catching them, kicking and aiming them towards a target and learning to balance them on their heads.

Children participate in daily exercises, stretching their bodies, curling themselves up very small and learning to warm up their muscles. They talk about why their heartbeat changes and participate enthusiastically in singing and dance sessions, for example 'Sticky Kids.' Children's understanding of healthy living has been significantly enhanced through the implementation of the Pre-School Challenge. The group are only the third to achieve this award in Portsmouth and it has benefited both practitioners and parents in helping them to consider how well they encourage children to be healthy. Practitioners have provided written suggestions of items to be included in children's packed lunches, which has helped to promote healthy eating at home, as well as at pre-school. Parents and children have been involved in a wide range of challenges, such as making traffic light sandwiches and participating in 'sponsored toddlers.' Alongside this challenge, children have continued to increase their understanding of how to look after their teeth, for example. They enjoy visits from a dentist and doctor and enjoy expressing their own experiences through role-play at the doctor's surgery, dentist and hairdressers. During the inspection, 'Healthy Harvey' came to present the group with their award and practitioners, parents and children enjoyed a wonderful celebration, recognising their achievement, and talking to Harvey about how they keep themselves fit and healthy. Children laugh and giggle as they perform their dance for Harvey, delighted when he joins in with them.

Children's health is exceptionally well maintained because practitioners know and implement highly effective health and hygiene procedures to ensure consistently high standards of hygiene are maintained across the setting. All practitioners have current first aid training and deal with accidents effectively and secure systems are in place to record full details, sharing information with parents. Written information is obtained, relating to children's medical history, medication and any special dietary requirements, and this information is known and acknowledged by all practitioners. Children's health is assured in an emergency situation because practitioners obtain written consent from parents for their child to receive emergency medical treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children have an extremely secure understanding of safety issues and talk about how to keep themselves safe in their everyday play. For example, they learn how to handle tools, such as knives and scissors, safely, recognising they must only use them when sat at the table and must not wave them around in their hands. Children talk about how they must walk in a line through the playground, where older children are playing, staying with practitioners as they walk across to use the hall and hold onto the banister rail walking up and down the stairs. They practise regular fire drills, linked to the infant school and independently, and have a secure understanding of the procedures to follow in the event of fire, which helps keep them safe. Children's understanding of safety is promoted through activities and experiences linked to pre-school topics. For example, they talk about the dangers of fire and enjoy visits from the firemen when they learn about Bonfire night. They practise crossing roads safely, with the help of the crossing patrol lady, and learn how to keep safe when playing in parks and outside their homes, enhanced by visits from the police.

Children's safety is assured because practitioners have an excellent understanding of safety issues and are vigilant. They conduct daily formal risk assessments on all areas used by children to ensure risks and hazards are minimised, both inside and out. Extremely secure procedures are in place to monitor these checks, and the implementation of fire drills, by practitioners and a member of the committee, assessing the impact on children's health and safety. The highly effective deployment of practitioners, as children arrive to pre-school and on collection, contributes to keeping them safe. Children have independent access to an extensive array of equipment and play provision, which is all presented at low level. Exceptionally secure procedures are in place to ensure this is safe, clean and well maintained and children are involved in this, for example as they help to wash the dolls. All safety checks and evidence of when equipment is sterilised and cleaned are recorded and monitored each month by management, which helps to promote a safe and clean environment.

The physical environment is absolutely wonderful and really enhances children's independent learning. The room is organised into different workshop areas, which are labelled and extremely inviting and the open plan layout is exceptionally effective in helping to promote children's independence as well as ensuring their safety. The pre-school environment is bright and attractive with photographs, children's work and posters displayed throughout and there are many opportunities for children to recognise print, letters and numerals around the room. Children are well protected whilst at pre-school because all practitioners have completed relevant training and have an excellent understanding of their role with regards to protecting children in their care. They recognise different types of abuse, and possible signs and symptoms that may cause concern, and have secure systems in place to share and record information. Parents are fully informed about the role of the pre-school with regards to child protection issues. Comprehensive procedures are known and implemented by practitioners to respond to child protection issues, both within the pre-school and externally, and they have a secure understanding of how to implement local safeguarding procedures. This contributes towards ensuring children are protected and safeguarded from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive excitedly to pre-school and know the routine well. They hang up their coats, find their name cards, presented on colourful trains, and self register before joining their peers

on their mat. Practitioners are highly effective in helping the younger and less confident children to settle and sit with them on their laps for a cuddle as they participate in songs and action rhymes. Children participate enthusiastically, singing 'The Grand Old Duke of York', marching around the classroom, and laugh and giggle with their peers as they engage in exercises every morning. They listen to one another during large group times and talk about the day ahead and what snacks are available at the snack bar. Practitioners are very effective in facilitating large group sessions, keeping these short and capturing children's attention. Consequently, all children are fully involved and effective learning takes place.

Younger children benefit enormously from playing alongside their older peers, for the majority of the session, and this increases their sense of self assurance and confidence. They become competent learners working on the computer and have wonderful opportunities to freely express themselves through play. Children use their senses to explore a range of tactile experiences and media in the creative area, snuggle up with practitioners in the book area sharing stories and enjoy investigating the world around them. They talk to their peers on telephones and express wonderful imagination through role-play. Practitioners plan activities according to children's individual abilities and levels of understanding, using their expertise and knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework to help ensure a varied and exciting range of experiences are provided. They help children learn new skills, for example showing them how to hold the scissors correctly when they are trying to cut out their picture. Practitioners introduce new language and answer children's continual stream of questions, which helps them build their knowledge of the world around them.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from the routine of the day, which provides opportunities for them to work in large and small groups as well as playing independently. Their individual learning is significantly enhanced because all practitioners have a very secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. They use excellent questioning techniques, encouraging children to think through their own ideas, problem solve and consolidate their knowledge. The exceptional organisation of the learning environment, and presentation of the resources and equipment, has an extremely positive impact on the individual progress children make and their attitude and motivation towards learning. Consequently, children are happy and self assured, fully engaged in all aspects of the session and become confident and autonomous learners.

Children's development is enhanced because practitioners are extremely effective in making use of every opportunity to extend their learning and build on their knowledge. For example, whilst playing with dough children suggest they make birthday cakes and a wedding cake. The practitioner uses this opportunity to talk to children about special celebrations, what people wear and how people celebrate weddings in a variety of different ways. Children discuss their own experiences of going to weddings and talk about the pictures they have seen at home of their parents' wedding, whilst being introduced to new language. They extend their own ideas using the cakes they have made to pretend they are celebrating someone's birthday. Children plan a party, sing to their peers and make a wish blowing out the candles. They have a wonderful time dressing up and pretending to be the doctor as they engage in role-play, and use the stethoscopes to listen to one another's heartbeats because they have been shown how to use these instruments by practitioners.

Children use an extremely good range of language describing how the paint feels on their hands and making comparisons between different types of materials. They have marvellous

opportunities to express themselves as they explore creativity and have independent access to a wonderful range of tools, materials and different textures. Children make their own selections about the colour and size of paper they use. They fetch their own aprons and use the colours they want, squeezing their paint into the individual pots. Children explore paint in different ways, for example choosing brushes, rollers and their hands and discuss how the colour and texture changes when they decide to add white or mix different colours together. They explore weight and measure playing in water, making predictions about what will float and sink, and have daily access to sand or water, dough, glue, paint and a range of collage materials. Some opportunities are provided for children to experience a range of different media, for example they play with cooked pasta, corn flour dough and cornflakes.

Children's independence is exceptionally high and this is very much promoted by the organisation of the learning environment. They make their own decisions about when they want to have their snack as the group operate a snack bar system. Children choose from the options available, wash their plates and cups up when they have finished and enjoy chatting to their peers. They are extremely kind towards one another, recognising and valuing what each other has to say. For example, children listen to one another's ideas when working together to construct the railway and share and negotiate without the support from practitioners. They help themselves to sand timers, which they use to help them take turns on the computer, for example, and solve their own problems around size and shape when difficulties arise during the construction of the track.

Children enjoy exploring and develop their investigative skills, freely accessing a range of equipment in the finding out area. They show great excitement when they discover a mini beast outside and come rushing into the classroom to fetch magnifying glasses in order to examine it more closely. Children examine patterns on shells and leaves and compare the textures of the prickly fir cone to the soft fluffy feather. They use very good mathematical language in their play describing how heavy some objects feel and comparing numbers and size. Children sort, count and match mathematical resources and use balancing scales, number games and a range of other equipment to support their understanding of mathematical concepts. Children are extremely confident in using a wide range of tools and materials, such as scissors, cutters and knives when playing with dough. They help themselves to writing materials and glue sticks and competently use sellotape and scissors to cut out pictures and make models, which they draw and design for themselves.

Children receive an exciting and stimulating range of planned activities and experiences because systems to plan the educational programme are extremely secure. The pre-school link experiences to different topics, which helps them in their planning. For example, children learn about different types of homes, people who help them in their local community, and how animals and plants grow. They observe how things change, making predictions about what they think might happen to the jelly cubes when boiling water is added. Children examine different properties and materials, plant sunflower seeds and grow cress, and explore what type of materials soak up water. Practitioners use practical activities to help extend children's learning. Children make bar graphs of their colour eyes and measure themselves against one another to find out who is the tallest. They water their seeds and measure these at frequent intervals, comparing whose has grown the most. Visits from animals who live at a farm and opportunities for children to bring their own pets into pre-school enhance their understanding of how to take care of living things. Practitioners use inspirational teaching methods, such as the use of puppets and props in story sacks, to help aid children's learning. For example, children listen to and act out the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' to enhance their understanding of life cycles and how things change. Physical play is extremely well planned for, although use of the

outside area is restricted as the playground is shared with the school. Children walk to the local park and take letters they have written to the post box and practitioners use these planned outings to promote their learning. However, opportunities for children's learning to be enhanced outside more frequently have not yet been fully explored.

Practitioner's are exceptionally skilful in the way in which they adapt their questioning techniques to ensure children are effectively supported, whilst those more able are provided with sufficient challenge. They use their excellent knowledge of children's individual abilities and information gained from assessment, to help guide their planning. Systems to monitor and assess children's individual progress and achievements are extremely well established, although their individual next steps for development are not formally identified, which impacts on practitioners' ability to share this information with parents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's levels of confidence and self esteem are exceptionally high and they develop a very strong sense of belonging to the group. They build excellent relationships with practitioners and their peers, and this is truly enhanced by the successful implementation of a key worker system. Children's behaviour is excellent. They have a clear understanding about right and wrong and talk continually about how it is nice to be kind to their peers. Older children help their younger peers put on coats and painting aprons, and all children show an extremely positive attitude towards one another, learning to recognise and value the similarities and differences between themselves and others. This is exceptionally well promoted by practitioners who use every opportunity to help increase children's awareness of diversity. For example, during stories children discuss their feelings and the use of small play figures, jigsaws and pictures in books provide wonderful opportunities for discussion. Children talk about why some people wear glasses, what the role of the optician is and why some people need aids to help them walk.

Children have many opportunities to learn about themselves and their families through activities and experiences linked to topics. For example, they increase their understanding of babies and how they grow and bring in photographs to talk about who is in their family. Children learn about different cultures, customs and traditions and parents are very much involved in this, helping to ensure all children's religion and special events are valued. For example, they make lamps and learn about the different clothes people wear when celebrating the festival of Divali. Children make a Chinese dragon and lanterns and taste noodles using chopsticks as part of their Chinese New Year celebrations. They make pancakes and eat these with their peers on Pancake Day and engage in sponsored events to raise money for children less fortunate than themselves, for example on Red Nose Day. Children gain an understanding about how to look after their environment as they recycle materials at pre-school and discuss why this is important. They recently celebrated the 200th anniversary of Brunel and engaged in a range of activities as part of the pre-school and school celebrations. For example, children collected items from home and around the environment to build a bridge, learnt about laying the foundations properly and examined a range of photographs of bridges from around the world. They dressed up in Victorian costume and were featured in the evening newspaper showing links within the local community. Children's understanding of the wider world is increased through experiences linked to topics such as travel and holidays. They use the globe and books to find out information about different countries and talk about the many places they have been visited. Consequently, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The pre-school promotes a fully inclusive environment where every child is recognised and valued as an individual. Children benefit enormously from the extremely secure partnerships between practitioners and their parents. Practitioners work exceptionally well with parents, and in particular with those parents of children for whom English is an additional language. This helps them gain an excellent understanding of children's individual family and home circumstances, needs and abilities. Flexible settling in arrangements help ensure children and parents feel secure and the pre-school use an excellent range of strategies to ensure they communicate effectively. For example, practitioners use puppets, pictorial symbols and photographs, display words in a range of different languages and work alongside other early years professionals to fully support and value each child's home language and culture. Strong links are in place between home and pre-school and parents receive a wealth of information about the group in a variety of ways. Regular newsletters are sent home, detailed information is displayed on parent notice boards and a parent pack is provided at registration. Parents are invited to be involved in the group, for example through the role of the committee, helping out in sessions, participating in fund raising events and attending concerts and presentation days at the end of the term. They are well informed about the policies and procedures, although have not been advised of the new regulations regarding the requirement to keep a record of complaints and share this information with parents.

The partnerships with parents of children who receive nursery education are good. Parents are well informed about topics and activities their child is involved in and all planning is displayed. Some information is included in the parent pack and many photographs are displayed of children participating in experiences, however opportunities for parents to be informed about the Foundation Stage Curriculum and how their child learns through play are not fully developed. Parents are encouraged to support their child's learning at home, for example by borrowing story sacks from pre-school and using ideas displayed on the board for the home link activity, which complements experiences children have been involved in during sessions. They share information about what their child can do when they begin the group and are invited to look at their individual assessment records and portfolio of evidence at any time. Practitioners have recently introduced the idea of 'Bring your parent to school' days, which will be implemented each term and will provide opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with their individual key workers and share their achievements. Informal discussion takes place daily between practitioners and parents, particularly when children have achieved something special. However, systems to share information about children's next steps for learning and suggestions of how parents can support this in the home have not yet been fully introduced.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children thrive in an exciting and vibrant learning environment because they are cared for by qualified early years practitioners who have an exceptionally good understanding of how young children learn. Management and practitioners share the same vision and strive towards achieving this. Practitioners have clear roles and responsibilities and meet formally every week, and excellent communication takes place between the committee and practitioners. Formal and informal channels of communication help to ensure the operational plan is fully implemented and consequently, the pre-school is exceptionally well organised. The deployment of practitioners is highly effective, and the wonderful use of time, space and resources really enhances opportunities for children to learn independently and develop in confidence in a safe and nurturing environment. As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children's health, safety and well-being is exceptionally well promoted because practitioners have an expert knowledge of the policies and procedures and implement these to a consistently high standard across the setting. Secure procedures are in place to monitor and review all documentation, records and written policies and procedures and this is maintained to a high standard, with a minor weakness in the complaints procedure and the sharing of this information with parents. Secure systems are in place to recruit, appoint and induct new practitioners, students and volunteers and comprehensive information is held on file to ensure their suitability. Systems to ensure the ongoing suitability of those working in the group have been introduced. Children are protected from people who have not been vetted, because staff are rigorous and ensure they are not left unsupervised, and accurate records are maintained of who is on the premises at all times.

Leadership and management are good. Children's learning is significantly enhanced because all practitioners have an expert knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and how children develop through play. They plan and implement a varied and exciting educational programme, where every child is able to consolidate their learning and develop new skills and knowledge. The system for planning and assessment is extremely secure and high priority is placed on continually monitoring teaching, the educational programme and the impact this has on children's individual learning. All practitioners are involved in the overall planning and each key worker updates their child's assessments records weekly, which helps them to tailor their teaching and plan accordingly. Annual appraisals are implemented, including an element of self-appraisal, and practitioners work with management to identify their own training needs. Practitioners regularly attend training opportunities and management recognise the importance of this allowing them to update their skills and knowledge, which ultimately impacts on their practice and opportunities provided for children. Management conduct ongoing observations of practitioners and their individual performance and the pre-school are just starting to implement peer on peer observations, as an additional way of monitoring practice. As a result, children really flourish from this wonderful early years experience, where they are cared for by dedicated and inspirational practitioners who recognise and value every child as an individual.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were asked to ensure all relevant documentation and records contain sufficient detail and are kept as required. This has now been reviewed and improvements made to the recording of children's attendance and medication records to include the required detail. Contact details for Ofsted are displayed on the notice board as requested.

At the last education inspection the group were asked to build on experiences for children to develop their imagination through role play and provide more opportunities for them to make choices, particularly in creative development. They were also asked to provide regular fun opportunities for children to hear, say and link sounds to letters and rhyme and ensure that the presentation of the book area is inviting and encourages children to enjoy, value and care for books.

Increased opportunities have been provided for children to engage in role-play in a variety of different settings and to extend their own ideas supported by practitioners. The art and craft area has been re-organised, providing a wide range of open shelving units. This allows children independent access to the full range of media and materials and enables them to explore their own ideas through creativity. Practitioners have increased their understanding of how to introduce sounds and letters to children through training opportunities and now use a wide range of fun and exciting teaching methods to support children's development in this area. For

example, they use puppets, objects and games to increase children's awareness of sounds and rhyme. The book area has been developed to include new furniture and low level bookcases, which makes it much more inviting. In addition, the deployment of practitioners is extremely effective and supports children as they learn to be responsible when handling books.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- update the complaints procedure to ensure it reflects current practice and share information with parents about the requirement to keep a complaints log

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):

- increase opportunities for parents to be informed about the Foundation Stage Curriculum and how their child learns through play, the next steps in their child's individual learning and how they can support this at home
- continue to explore how to increase opportunities for children to extend their learning in the outside environment.

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