

Little Meadow Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511757
Inspection date	03 October 2007
Inspector	Zahida Hatia
Setting Address	c/o Meadowside Primary School, Elmore Lane East, Quedgeley, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL2 4LX
Telephone number	01452 725834
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Registered person	The Trustees of Little Meadow Group
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Out of School 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?

The Little Meadow Group formed from the merger of Little Meadows Under Fives and Meadowtech Out of School Club in November 2004. It is a committee run setting. It operates from its own building on the site of Meadowside Primary School in Quedgeley, Gloucestershire in a residential area that is close to shops and recreational facilities. The group also has access to the school outdoor play areas.

The under fives group started in 2001 and a maximum of 26 children aged two years to five years may attend at any one time. Most come from the surrounding area. It opens each weekday during term-time from 09.00 to 11.45. A rising threes group runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12.45 to 14.45.

There are currently 50 children aged from two years nine months to under five years on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for nursery education. The group currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At present, there is one child that speaks English as an additional language. There are three members of staff employed and all hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The Out of School Club opened in 2002 for children of the primary school. There are currently 46 children from four to 11 years on roll. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The club opens five days a week from 15.15 to 17.45 during school term times and from 08.30 to 17.30 during holiday times. There are three part-time staff working with the children, over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. There is one staff member currently working towards a qualification.

The group receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, school staff and fieldworkers from the Gloucestershire Playgroup and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn good hygiene practices as staff remind them to wash their hands at appropriate times. Children also learn from staff about how to be good role models for hygiene. Staff wipe the snack table with antibacterial spray before children eat and they are supported to wash their hands carefully. Staff talk to children about why they are doing this. The risk of cross infection to children is minimised by the use of paper towels for hand drying; the setting has an effective sick child policy. Children are well protected in the event of an accident as staff have current first aid qualifications. The first aid box is easily accessible and permission from parents is sought when emergency medical care needs to be given. Routines for administering medicines and recording accidents are robust. Staff keep accurate records and parents are kept fully informed. These procedures benefit children providing a continuity of care.

Staff seek details of the children's dietary needs and preferences when the child is initially registered, which enables them to meet children's individual needs. The setting is very keen to promote healthy eating by encouraging children to make healthy choices at snack times. Children choose from a selection of fruits and vegetables such as apples, pears, carrots and grapes. The manager has identified snack time as an area for development because at present children are having to wait for snacks to be served. The staff team are working together to find ways of improving the organisation of snack times to encourage children's independence.

Children participate in physical activities on a daily basis. Outside, they take walks around the nature area; they run, swing, kick balls and take part in circle games which develop their co-ordination and large muscle skills. Children learn to effectively use tools and equipment that help to develop small muscle skills and their hand to eye co-ordination, for example, the outdoor play area offers children the opportunity to learn new skills such as brick laying. Children confidently use correct tools such as trowels to spread the cement over the bricks as they build a wall three bricks high. In the playroom children confidently use scissors, rolling pins, cutters and fastenings on dolls clothes. Staff sensitively supervise children and offer younger children extra help and guidance so they achieve and make progress.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised because staff are extremely vigilant and use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits and how to involve children effectively in organising their environment. This allows children to learn some sense of danger

and gain knowledge about how to protect themselves from harm, for example children know that they are allowed to slide down the pole of the large climbing frame but they must not use the apparatus unless there are members of staff supervising outdoor physical play.

Staff make excellent use of the available space as children play in one large room which is adapted for their needs, for example, they divide areas up very effectively to provide an excellent range of creative opportunities, such as a role play, creative and messy areas, and they set out a comfortable reading corner, appropriate writing area, floor play area and interest table. Children move around easily in the spacious room accessing their activities and toys easily. For example, they have plenty of space to walk around and manoeuvre the cars and trucks around the room with good control. Children's art work is well displayed which gives a welcoming feel and sense of ownership to the children.

Suitable information and procedures are in place regarding child protection. All staff have carried out further training and are aware of the procedures to follow. This ensures that children's welfare is appropriately protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle easily into the playgroup. The playroom is well organised and attractive to children offering a good variety of activities which are set out before children arrive. Children's care, learning and play are well supported through a variety of play situations. They show enthusiasm and concentrate for long periods of time at activities such as role play and building with Lego bricks. Children are happy during their time at the playgroup and make good progress in their personal development as they telephone and prepare meals for each other. They make friends and cooperate with each other as they share play dough and direct wheeled vehicles. They form stable relationships with staff and demonstrate a secure sense of belonging through known regular routines.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plan a range of activities that cover all the areas of learning. Staff listen to children and know them well, which means the activities mostly meet the developmental needs of the children. Staff make good use of children's time, activities are varied and offer a balance of quiet and active play throughout the session. Effective team work enables children to move between activities that are organised to offer choice. Staff are particularly good at questioning children and helping them to develop their thinking skills. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and free-play activities allowing children to readily access new activities and resources. This means children have sufficient opportunities to sustain and extend their ideas beyond planned learning outcomes.

There is an effective system in place for collecting information from parents and carers to assess children's starting points. Children's activities are recorded photographically and displayed throughout the setting. This helps to illustrate what they do at playgroup. Staff know children very well and the assessment process largely relies on them sharing information verbally with key workers, who then transfers this into children's individual assessment files. Staff manage children's behaviour smoothly, acting as very good role models and providing positive guidance and support.

Children have positive relationships with adults and peers. They behave well and understand what is expected of them and how their behaviour affects others. Children show good levels of involvement and interact cooperatively in group activities. They take turns, share and respond positively to praise and encouragement. Children are managing their own personal hygiene needs, for example they wash and dry their hands after toileting. They are beginning to learn independence because sufficient support is given by staff, for example, children are learning to develop their manipulative skills and hand eye coordination by pouring their own drinks at snack times.

Children listen well to adults and each other and thoroughly enjoy joining in with well-known stories. They play alongside and speak confidently to each other. Children are developing knowledge of sounds as they sing nursery rhymes. A broad range of opportunities are created for children to engage in mark making, for example, they use pencils and crayons to draw and produce rubbings. Children are encouraged to 'have a go' at writing their name on their work. Older children recognise letters of their name and are beginning to hold a pencil effectively to form recognisable letters.

Children use mathematical language in everyday activities, such as during tidy up time when they name shapes as they pack them into their container. They use language such as 'wide' and 'tall' as they build in the sand. Children reliably count up to 10 and use numbers in their play. Staff are competent at introducing problem solving and simple calculations into routine and spontaneous activities, for example children help staff to count how many parents are on rota for the day and how many staff are on duty as well.

Children develop a sense of the passing of time as they talk about the seasons and the holiday just gone. They show great interest in their world, for example, when out walking in the nature reserve area children happily pick up and sensitively examine snails but recognise that living creatures need to be put back in their own environment. They express their creativity as they explore a range of media and art materials. Children use their imagination in role play as they re-create experiences from home and their life, for example, they pretend to have sleep-overs at each others house. They enjoy singing familiar songs from memory, sometimes accompanied by actions, showing delight and gaining confidence in their abilities.

Children learn to investigate as they roll play dough and use paint in a variety of ways. They are given the time and resources to explore further techniques. They construct with a purpose in mind as they choose from the varied construction toys available. Children improve their observational skills as they are periodically encouraged to look and listen, as when they can hear an aeroplane outside but not yet see it.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Relationships are very good between adults and children creating a supportive atmosphere. Children quickly and confidently settle into their various activities. Children are learning to work together, for example helping each other to dress and undress in the role play area. They are able to make some choices about how they spend their time and enjoy playing in different sized groups. They learn about equality through their play and access a good range of resources that reflect diversity and the wider world. Children are beginning to be aware of different cultures and traditions by participating in a variety of celebrations such as Shrove Tuesday, Diwali and the Chinese New Year. This helps children to gain a strong sense of the wider

community they live within. The playgroup regularly receive visitors. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children behave very well because adults respect them and provide clear and consistent boundaries. Appropriate behaviour is developed through gentle reminders and group consensus of rules. For example, all children quickly learn the group rules for safely using the large climbing frame outside and actively seek adult's approval to go for walks in the nature reserve area. Children receive positive encouragement and praise so successfully learn the difference between right and wrong. Staff ensure individual needs are met and adapt activities to enable all children to participate. The setting has a positive approach and staff have experience of caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Prospective parents receive a well-presented prospectus giving details of arrangements for their children's care. General information on the running of the playgroup is clearly displayed at the entrance for parents to see, with all contact details updated regularly. Parents receive regular newsletters informing them about events but a daily exchange of information to support the children's care and learning between staff and parents is not effectively shared. Parents fill in forms on entry ensuring staff have essential information to make children's time safe and enjoyable.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is good. Staff are very welcoming and approachable and answer parents' questions. Parents are able to access children's developmental records if they wish. They are kept up to date through newsletters and informal discussion with staff during sessions when parents are on rota to help out, but parents who have limited time to offer could miss out on this opportunity. Children's progress is recorded in individual files and these are shared with parents on request. Children benefit as parents are asked to contribute to their children's initial assessments to establish a starting point for learning. Reports are given at the end of the year. Parents have very positive comments about the good atmosphere and friendliness of staff.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The environment is well organised and good use is made of the available space. The staff work well together and demonstrate enthusiasm for creating a safe and secure learning environment that stimulates children. They implement routines to give children a broad range of experiences. The children benefit as the staff consistently interact with them. Sensitive support and encouragement helps children feel secure and confident. All the required documentation, such as emergency contact and registration details are in place, are easily accessible and stored securely. Policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive. The playgroup operates a key worker system so that children receive support from caring and motivated staff who know the children well. Parents who attend the nursery on the rota have regular opportunities to receive updates about children's progress. However, these opportunities for feedback need to be more consistently available to all parents.

Staff have a range of qualifications and experience in childcare and continue to develop their knowledge and skills through regular training. The manager and staff are supported by the committee and the local authority. Procedures are in place for ensuring staff are suitable to work with children and their competency is evaluated through internal systems. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and ensure that they conform to legal requirements and necessary documentation so that children are well cared for. All the required documentation, such as

emergency contact and registration details are in place, are easily accessible and stored securely. Policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff have regular opportunities to meet as a team to discuss planning of activities and children's progress. There is a strong commitment by the manager to develop the provision to promote learning in all areas. The staff support this and are skilled in their roles, having a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. The staff work well as a team and plan the educational provision through discussion, evaluating the activities that they provide. Links with the primary school teachers enable children to have a smooth transition into school. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to; ensure parents sign the written records of accidents, ensure that all records relating to out of school care activities are readily accessible on the premises and available for inspection at all times.

Children are now well protected in the event of an accident. Parents are now aware of any accidents that occur and they sign and date the accident book. During the inspection records for out of school care were present and readily accessible.

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

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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):

- ensure that snack times are organised so that children's needs are effectively met

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):

- ensure that all parents have regular opportunities to receive updates about their children's progress

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