

Marden Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	223562
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Inspector	Deborah Ball
Setting Address	Marden County Primary School, Marden, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 3EW
Telephone number	01432 880034
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Registered person	Marden 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?

Marden Pre-School opened in 1992. It operates from two rooms within Marden County Primary School in the village of Marden, Herefordshire. The setting serves the local and wider communities. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 09:00 to 12:55 and Tuesday and Friday from 09:00 to 14:45 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 20 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, nine children receive funding for early education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is promoted and maintained because staff consistently follow established health and hygiene routines throughout the day in order to keep the premises very clean. Staff teach the children about good health and hygiene routines from an early age through role modelling, topic work or discussion, and as a result children are learning to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene. For example, they wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating food, they help themselves to tissues to blow their noses and they place their hands in front of their mouth if they cough or sneeze. Children only need occasional prompting to carry out hygiene routines and staff encourage their self-care skills by praising and congratulating them when they remember without being reminded. There are effective procedures in place to maintain good levels of hygiene and so prevent the spread of infection. For example, staff wear disposable gloves and aprons when assisting children in their personal care or when administering first aid. In the event of accidents, children are treated by staff who have first aid qualifications and access to a suitably stocked first aid box. Documentation is maintained regarding the recording of accidents and appropriate procedures are in place regarding the administration of medication, with suitable records kept which are in line with requirements. Clear, well-written policies, contracts and good relationships with parents ensure individual children are cared for appropriately should they become ill whilst at the setting and sick children are excluded from the provision until they are well, thus reducing the risk of cross-infection.

Children benefit from daily opportunities to engage in physical activity. Outdoor play is provided daily in a secure garden at the side of the building. The children often use the large adventure playground in the neighbouring park to develop physical skills. For example, children climb, balance, twist, and jump on exciting play equipment and they are able to challenge their limits in a safe and secure environment. Children show a keen sense of personal space as they play alongside each other, pedalling their bikes skilfully to avoid obstacles and controlling their speed so that they do not bump into their friends. Through playing energetic games, children are developing their skills of throwing and catching, hopping, balancing, skipping and jumping. They play co-operative games, developing their understanding of sharing and turn taking. Children also have fun as they take part in movement activities and action songs indoors, learning to use their bodies in many different ways. The children use a wide range of small and large equipment to help them develop control and learn to move their bodies in different ways. For example, during indoor PE sessions, the children enjoy using a treadmill, an exercise bicycle, an air walker, a balance bench, a trampoline and stepping stones. Children go out for regular walks around the local community to go and see the cows in the nearby field and experience walking through piles of autumn leaves at the embankment. Staff support children well in learning about how their bodies change when they are active. For example, they learn to recognise when they are out of breath and to put their hands on their chest to feel their hearts beating faster after they have been running. Children develop their fine motor skills using a variety of tools, natural materials and commercial equipment and have opportunities to make marks and develop their pencil control in various areas of play.

Mealtimes are pleasant, social occasions where children sit together and engage in conversations with their peer group and the staff. Children are well-nourished and learn why some food is better for our bodies than others through their discussions with staff and themed topic work. Parents provide a packed lunch for their child, and staff have encouraged parents to follow

the principles of healthy eating in line with the pre-school's policy. Children sing a short prayer before meals to express gratitude for the food they are about to eat. At snack time children eat a range of healthy foods including fresh fruit and vegetables, such as apples, satsumas and tomatoes. The children help with the planting and tending of seeds and help to grow fresh fruit and vegetables which they then enjoy eating at snack time and cooking with, for example making soup. Children gain independence by pouring drinks and helping to serve the snacks. The children have a choice of water or milk to drink with their snacks and meals and also have independent access to water throughout the day from individual water bottles. This ensures that they are kept well-hydrated. The staff have a clear understanding of children's dietary needs and any food items provided by them are in accordance with parental wishes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the provision's spacious and welcoming premises. Displays are bright and attractive and include examples of children's work, photographs of staff and children, and general information about the setting. Consequently, children are helped to develop a sense of belonging and parents are given lots of visual information about what their children are doing and how the setting operates. Resources throughout the pre-school are plentiful and staff ensure that they are safe, suitable and developmentally appropriate for the children in their care. Children are able to self-select resources and this encourages their freedom to exercise choice and independence.

Children's safety is generally assured because a wide variety of security and safety precautions are in place. For example, a safety gate prevents children's access to an unsafe area and children are only released into the care of known individuals. Detailed written risk assessments ensure that potential safety risks to children are promptly identified and minimised, however, staff are not vigilant in their everyday practice as on occasions they fail to notice that socket covers for electric points have not been replaced; therefore children's safety is potentially compromised. The staff carry out frequent visual safety checks and encourage children to develop an awareness of safety precautions. For example, the staff remind children to push their chairs in to the table so that they do not get in the way of others. Children's safety in the event of a need to evacuate the premises is protected as children and all adults in the setting are given regular opportunities to practise procedures for the emergency evacuation of the building. Adults understand their individual and collective roles and responsibilities and fire exits are clearly marked and unobstructed. Appropriate and well-maintained fire safety equipment is in place. Children develop an understanding of road safety as they go out for walks in their local community and use the 'stop, look and listen' technique when crossing the road.

Children's welfare is safeguarded through effective child protection policies and procedures. These are well known by staff and openly shared with parents to ensure that they are fully informed. Staff have a clear understanding of the known indicators of child abuse and the action that they should take in the event of a concern about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Throughout the pre-school, children are happy and settled and have great fun during their time there. They have very good opportunities to develop their independence skills, as children of all ages select what they would like to play with and how they would like to spend their time.

Children are very interested and consistently involved in a wide range of imaginative and worthwhile play opportunities both indoors and outside, which promote all areas of their learning and development. Warm and trusting relationships with staff ensure that children feel secure in their care environment. Staff work directly with the children and consistently involve themselves and interact in their play.

Play and learning opportunities for the younger children attending the pre-school are enhanced due to the effective implementation of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff carefully plan and provide a wide range of activities which are appealing to the children and focus heavily on their individual needs and stages of learning and development. This ensures that all children are able to participate at a rate best suited to their needs. Younger children's assessment records are detailed and link directly to planning to ensure that they are specific to individual stages of learning and development. Observations and assessments in line with the aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework are conducted on each child on a regular basis and are readily available for parents to view. Children throughout the pre-school enjoy playing with natural materials, which provides sensory learning opportunities. They enjoy a wide range of art and craft activities and free play with a good range of quality toys and resources.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plan a wide range of activities which appeal to the children. Long term and medium term plans systematically take into account all six areas of children's learning, incorporating themes which are meaningful to children. Weekly plans detail a full range of activities that cater for all six areas of learning, which are equally weighted. Planning documents do not, however, differentiate how activities can be adapted to cater for children's varying abilities or individual children's learning needs. Observations of children's progress are made during focus activities and also spontaneously as they play. These observations are used to inform children's assessment records, which also include examples of children's work. They are well-presented and are openly shared with parents, both at formal parents meetings or at any time that parent's wish to view them. Staff are enthusiastic in their work with children and readily involve themselves and interact in children's play. Children enjoy their company, and benefit as staff ask them questions and talk to them as they play, which helps to develop and clarify their thinking and understanding.

Children show a strong sense of belonging and develop good self-esteem. They enjoy looking at photographs of themselves and proudly point to their completed art work on display. Children are interested, keen to learn and actively and purposefully engaged in activities. They play co-operatively together, show concern for others, and are able to take turns and share tasks such as tidying up. The children respond well to clear instructions given to them by staff and sit very well for circle time activities, absorbed and involved in conversations. Children have excellent opportunities to develop their independence skills. For example, they change into their PE kits independently and confidently serve their own meals and snacks.

Children are confident communicators and openly share their experiences with their peers, the staff and visitors. They happily talk in front of familiar groups, for example, at circle time, and readily join in with singing familiar rhymes and songs. Children have easy access to books and enjoy spending time in the comfortable book area. The children enjoy having stories read to them and listen intently, showing excitement and pleasure by joining in with familiar parts of their favourite stories. They confidently ask staff to read them a story if they are feeling tired and happily snuggle up to enjoy their books. Children have opportunities to see and recognise

written words, including pre-school labels. The children find their name cards at snack time and self-register as they stick their name up on a board. Children also have many opportunities for writing and are beginning to link letters to their sounds. Activities such as role play are used to introduce children to writing, for example, the space centre contains paper for writing messages.

Children use number and mathematical language in their play activities and are beginning to count with increasing accuracy. They are developing an understanding of numbers for counting and as labels, as they see numbers around the rooms, on posters and number lines. Children use numbers in their role play, such as in the space centre, when they count how many people are in the rocket. The children use mathematical language when playing board games and they can compare size and sort by colour and shape. Children can identify some names of different shapes and are starting to link this knowledge to every day situations. They use shapes in their craft activities and talk about them. Through their participation in number rhymes and songs, such as 'five little men in a flying saucer', children learn simple subtraction skills as they take one away and find the new total. The children are learning about space, shape and measurement as they play with sand, water and construction sets.

Children develop knowledge of the world when they participate in activities relating to their local environment, such as observing the cows in the neighbouring farm and taking walks across the park, where they are able to discuss the habitats of creatures living in the local environment and collect items for the Autumn table. The staff skilfully use soft toys such as 'Hodge the Hedgehog', to explain hibernation and ZooLab rangers bring a variety of animals from different habitats for the children to handle and learn about. Children benefit from having access to their own garden, where they use child-sized gardening tools to plant seeds and then watch them grow. Adults and children both enjoy the aromatic smells of the plants in the garden area. People who work in the area, such as police officers and fire fighters visit the pre-school. During these visits police officers and fire-fighters encourage children to try on their uniforms and talk about their roles within the community. Children participate in themed topics where they can learn about different cultures and festivals through a range of practical activities and experiences. For example, they learn about Chinese New Year, Diwali and Christmas and how each festival is celebrated. They sample eating multi-cultural food, such as Indian samosas, Chinese noodles and the children have tasted seaweed which is used in Japanese cooking. Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences in an interesting environment. The children explore freely as they use sand, water and dough and enjoy interesting activities such as discovering the texture of shaving foam and watching what happens when they mix yellow food colouring and cornflour silk. Children explore ice and watch with interest as it begins to melt. They make jelly and observe how the liquid changes when it is placed in the fridge. Children explore and investigate a range of natural materials as they use peat, sand, water and dough both inside and outdoors. They use their senses as they explore the feel of items, such as bark, plastic beads and wooden texture blocks to promote recognition of different surface textures such as, rough, smooth and hard. Children have opportunities to use information and communication technology as part of their everyday play. They use a digital camera, a computer and simple programmes that often link to other areas of learning, such as colour and shape recognition skills. Children demonstrate good mouse control and are becoming familiar with words associated with computer equipment, such as touch pad.

Children express themselves freely through paint, drawing, music and movement. Their creativity is valued and they are widely encouraged to make up their own games and act out familiar roles through their imaginary play. For example, children use their imaginations to cook each other

meals in the role play kitchen, which leads to lovely conversations about healthy and less healthy foods. The children explore colour and texture as they use a variety of painting techniques and collage materials and often help to make the colourful displays which decorate their learning rooms. For example, they create frosty spider web pictures using glitter and string. There is lots of time for singing and moving expressively to music and they regularly enjoy experimenting with sounds and rhythm as they play musical instruments or enthusiastically join in with action songs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a strong sense of belonging within the setting as they form good relationships with their peers and the staff who value and respect their individuality. Parents are encouraged to share their knowledge and views of their children's development and this ensures that staff can provide the most appropriate care for their child, based on their individual needs. Children have access to many toys and resources that offer positive images of diversity and encourage them to gain a sense of belonging and self-esteem. For example, children can choose from a range of books, dolls, dressing up clothes, puzzles and small world figures. Craft activities and stories are used to help children learn about a variety of cultural and religious festivals, and displays around the pre-school reflect children's home and community experiences.

Consequently, children are developing an understanding of similarities and differences and are learning about the wider community.

Staff work effectively with professionals from outside agencies and are skilled at adapting their teaching methods to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are effective systems in place which enable staff to implement individual learning plans for the children and to work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure each child is able to make sound developmental progress. As a result of these strategies, all children are positively included and fully participate in all aspects of the provision. This enables them to settle well and develop their sense of belonging.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children are busy and behave very well. They happily share and take turns with their peers as they play. Children's understanding of right from wrong is developed through consistent behaviour management strategies applied by staff. The children's self-esteem is developed through ongoing praise and encouragement. Children beam with delight as staff recognise their efforts and achievements, for example, their beautiful artwork or their helpful suggestions at circle time.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are respected and made to feel very welcome in the setting. They are provided with comprehensive information about the provision, which includes details about nursery education and how children work through the Foundation Stage of their education. The person-in-charge ensures that information from parents concerning their child's development and particular interests are used as a starting point for planning and assessment. All parents are consulted and kept well-informed about what their children do and their achievements through regular discussions and access to their child's own development folder. Further information about the provision and any changes relating to the care provided for their child is available through newsletters and information on the notice board. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the setting. Details about the range of activities their children are involved in are displayed, which outline the topics they will cover. Children and parents are then encouraged to bring appropriate items into the setting from home, therefore supporting these learning experiences and opportunities. The children can

choose a storybook to take home to share with their families and they take it in turns to borrow Tickly Teddy the pre-school bear. Children take the bear home for the weekend and write and draw about the activities that they have enjoyed with Tickly Teddy during their time together. This encourages and involves parents in their children's learning well. Children benefit from these close partnership links as their needs and interests are acknowledged and acted upon.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced due to the good organisation of the setting. They benefit from a committed, enthusiastic and motivated staff team, who work together very well and support children in their play and learning. They actively engage in children's play, asking them questions to encourage their thinking and implementing new and enjoyable ideas. Throughout the pre-school, space and resources are very well-organised and children benefit from this. They have easy access to their playthings and can freely and easily move between the available play space. Robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures are in place, ensuring that children are cared for by suitable and well-informed members of staff. An effective key-worker system is in operation throughout the pre-school and as a result, children have strong relationships with familiar and trusted members of staff.

All of the required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place, carefully stored and well-organised. They are frequently reviewed and are only accessed by staff to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The range of policies and procedures work very well in practice and are frequently reviewed to ensure that they continue to reflect current good practice and professional advice. They are fully understood by staff and are openly shared with parents to ensure that they are aware of the organisation of the setting. Children's observation and assessment records are well-detailed and are continuously updated to ensure that a true picture of children's progress is maintained.

The leadership and management is good. The setting is led by a parent committee who have a suitable understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They support the staff in their work with children and are actively involved in working within the pre-school and alongside staff to carefully monitor their progress. Staff are very knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage curriculum and are experienced in working with pre-school children, which impacts successfully on the achievements children make. The committee, supervisor and staff team work in partnership to monitor and evaluate the nursery education curriculum, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the setting and areas for further improvement. The management committee is supportive of staff, using discussions and annual appraisals to identify some professional training needs with them. Staff are able to access training opportunities and are committed to improving their knowledge and understanding, as their self-development is supported and valued by the management committee. This in turn helps to maintain a loyal, well-motivated staff group, thus helping to ensure consistent care for the children. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Care

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, the pre-school was required to; review procedures for making information available to parents and to review procedures to ensure written parental consent for children to receive emergency medical treatment is obtained.

The management team have reviewed and updated all policies and procedures so that they are current and reflect the practice to support children within the setting. These policies are well written, include all necessary detail and are clearly displayed on the notice board. The provider has updated the information given to parents with regard to seeking emergency medical advice and treatment and has obtained their written consent. As a result, the partnership with parents and carers is effective and they are kept fully informed, further safeguarding children's well-being.

Nursery Education

At the last inspection the pre-school was required to; develop an informative system of gathering information on children's developmental progress which clearly shows children's achievements; develop a system for sharing information on children's developmental progress with parents and to further develop staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage in order to improve children's learning opportunities.

Staff have accessed relevant training to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and ensure that all planned activities and events are linked to the stepping stones and Early Learning Goals. The staff use their observations, evaluations and assessments of children to effectively track children's progress and this information links into planning for the next stage in their development and learning. Children's progress is now plotted accurately in children's individual development folders with secure evidence. All parents are consulted and kept well -nformed about what their children do and their achievements through regular discussions and access to their child's own development folder. These measures have had a positive impact on the quality of nursery education.

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 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):

- reduce potential hazards in the setting relating to socket covers.

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):

- develop the planning system to ensure that differentiation is identified for different groups of children to ensure that children's varying abilities and individual learning needs are catered for.

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