

Middle Rasen and District Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY344802
Inspection date	14 July 2008
Inspector	Susan Hoult
Setting Address	Middle Rasen County Primary School, North Street, Middle Rasen, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 3TS
Telephone number	01673 843250
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Registered person	Middle Rasen and District Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Middle Rasen and District Pre-School has been established for over 20 years and in April 2007 moved to new premises. It consists of a pre-school and an out of school club known as 'Play Matters'. The provision is run by a voluntary management committee and operates from a portacabin in the grounds of the primary school in the village of Middle Rasen, Lincolnshire. The enclosed, purpose built outside play area, the school playground and playing field are used for outdoor play.

The provision serves the village and surrounding areas. It is open five days a week during school term times only. A maximum of 36 children aged from two to under five years may attend the pre-school and a maximum of 16 children aged from three to under eight may attend the out of school club at any one time. Older children also attend the out of school club. There are currently 68 children on roll. This includes 23 children in receipt of funding for nursery education. Pre-school sessions run from 08.40 to 15.30 and out of school sessions run from 07.30 to 08.30 and 15.00 to 18.00. The provision supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The provision employs 12 staff to work with the children. Of these, nine have appropriate childcare qualifications, including two staff who are working towards early years foundation degrees. Two other staff are working towards recognised qualifications. The provision receives support from the local authority and is affiliated to the Pre-school Learning Alliance and Children's Links.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff promote children's good health well. Children quickly develop an understanding of why and when they must wash their hands through explanations, routines and gentle reminders as needed. Staff use antibacterial spray to clean surfaces before preparing food, wear gloves to change nappies and make sure parents understand what illnesses will prevent a child attending. This helps prevent infection through cross-contamination. Any children who become ill during a session are cared for well until their parents collect them. The majority of staff hold a current first aid certificate, two first aid boxes are easily accessible and one is always taken when children go on outings. Therefore, any accident can be dealt with effectively. Staff ensure that, after water play, children change out of any wet clothes and shoes. This means children can enjoy their play to the full without worrying about how wet they get. For example, children take part in the doll washing and car washing activities with gusto, thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Children learn about the importance of regular exercise and rest and the effect it has on their bodies through displays, activities and discussion. A pre-school child confidently talks about how lots of fresh air and exercise 'keeps you fit' and that rest 'helps give you energy'. Children take part in a good range of challenging physical activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Children have fun whilst developing their large muscle skills, body control and hand-eye co-ordination through for instance using ride-on and pedal toys, balancing, climbing, sliding, bouncing on the small trampoline, practising bat and ball skills, throwing 'Frisbees' and moving to music. There is great excitement as children take part in running races on the school field with staff and children clapping and cheering each other. Suitable facilities are available for children to rest or sleep.

Staff liaise closely with parents to ensure they are aware of individual children's dietary requirements and any allergies. Over half of the staff have food hygiene certificates ensuring food is prepared and served appropriately. Children gain a good understanding of healthy eating through activities and discussions. They enjoy a 'rolling' snack time where they choose when to eat whilst still maintaining a social element with children choosing who to sit with. Nutritious snacks such as fresh fruit, chopped vegetables, tomatoes, cheese, toast, breadsticks and occasionally biscuits are offered with a choice of water or milk to drink. Children also enjoy eating food they have cooked. For example, children after school choose to make pizzas and apricot flapjacks for tea. Children staying all day bring packed lunches which are stored in a large fridge to ensure they are stored at a suitable temperature. Children freely access water from a water dispenser to ensure they do not become thirsty.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are looked after in a safe, welcoming, stimulating and warm environment where very good use is made of space and resources. A large part of the purpose-built, enclosed outdoor area has an impact absorbing surface, It is covered, enabling free flow from indoors in all weathers. Children use a wide range of good quality, well-maintained toys, books and equipment with an increasing amount made from natural materials, which are stored effectively so that children can access them freely whilst making sure younger children cannot access small items that may be a hazard to them. This helps maintain children's interest and ensures they all have the opportunity to gain the most from the resources available.

Staff are conscientious about maintaining safety both inside and outside the provision. They vigilantly supervise the children and maintain ongoing risk assessments of the premises and the places they go to on outings. For example, although the ramp and steps leading to the main entrance are covered in a non-slip material children hold onto the low level handrails to prevent tripping. Daily routines, staff encouraging safe practices, planned activities, outings to the local fire station and visits from the community police officer and ambulance service aid children's increasing understanding of taking responsibility for their personal safety. Fire drills are practised with young children so that they know how to evacuate the premises safely and quickly should the need arise, however, this is not done as regularly with older children which may potentially compromise their safety.

Children are safeguarded well as the managers and the majority of staff have attended child protection training. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities and know what action to take should they have concerns about the welfare of a child and what to do should an allegation of abuse be made against a member of staff or volunteer. Children are never left alone with persons who have not been vetted. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that the staff know who will collect children and the action the provision would take should an emergency arise.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in the provision, are happy and settled. They are eager to attend and quickly become interested and busily involved in the wide range of purposeful, stimulating and developmentally appropriate activities available. A good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities promotes choice, independence and learning through play. Staff currently take account of the 'Birth to three matters' framework when planning care and learning for children aged under three years whilst undertaking in-house training to move onto the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) from September 2008. These younger children are cared for in the same area as the older pre-school children and staff effectively adapt activities to ensure their full participation and enjoyment. For example, a two-year-old works happily with older children washing cars and later dressing up and joining in role play. Staff foster children's emotional development well by building warm, caring relationships with them. School-age children and some pre-school children aged three upwards attend the out of school club. The club has a relaxed but industrious atmosphere where staff support the children well, participating in, and extending, play as appropriate whilst recognising that at times children like to enjoy their leisure time together without adult involvement. Children explain that they like attending because of the variety of activities offered, that they often help plan, and the opportunities given for them to play with their friends. As well as becoming involved in baking activities several children

choose to sweep up grass cuttings from the patio area outside the play house and 'beach hut' before happily chatting together whilst sitting on the wooden mushroom seating to eat their tea. School age children involve younger children well in their play, for instance helping them use the interactive game controls.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The outdoor area is zoned and planned for in the same way as the indoor area. The staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage, the stepping stones and how children learn. This enables them to plan a broad range of practical activities that motivate children to extend their learning whilst enjoying themselves. Programmes of learning which are shared with parents take account of children's interests and ensure a balance of learning over time. Staff know the children well and skilfully adapt planning to meet individual children's changing needs and intuitively extend and differentiate activities to challenge children. However, this is not fully effective as not all written assessments made through observation clearly show children's starting points or fully reflect the good progress children are making towards the early learning goals. This means that next steps planning for individual children may not always be totally effective. Staff are enthusiastic, use a variety of teaching methods and are adept at using conversation and careful questioning to develop children's knowledge and understanding. Staff use time, resources and space well to enable children to develop their independent learning skills without being rushed. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in the life of the setting with staff supporting them effectively to gain the most from their experiences. Staff manage children's behaviour very well, enabling them to develop their self discipline by understanding how to behave responsibly and distinguish between right and wrong.

Children are confident, have good levels of concentration and persevere with tasks well. They happily follow routines and take the initiative to choose activities and access resources for themselves promoting their learning by following their interests. They link up with others for support and help each other as needed. For example an older child helps a younger one dress up in a police officer's jacket whilst two children sit side by side suggesting ways to complete their respective computer tasks. Children's language skills are developing well. They use their increasingly wide vocabulary to organise their play with one another and to ask questions of each other and staff. Children have opportunities to mark make and access books in all areas including outside. They are learning to recognise their names and write them on their pictures with older children helping write tickets for the 'carwash'. Staff capture children's imaginations as they tell stories using a variety of resources. For instance, children hunt for bears in the wooded area of the school grounds before acting out the whole story with a tape recording and a bear puppet as props. Children's number, colour, shape recognition and problem solving skills develop through daily activities and play. Many children count and use mathematical language spontaneously, for instance, counting mushrooms on the field and working out the total when they find another one further on. A child, building with interlocking blocks, decides out loud what size and shape bricks they need next and whether to put them on top or alongside.

Children are developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them make sense of the world. They have wonderful opportunities in the outside areas to explore, stimulating their interests and curiosity such as going on bug hunts, growing flowers and vegetables, making and experimenting with 'gloop' and watching a young hand-reared bird being fed. Children enjoy using the tape recorder and taking photographs with a digital camera. They are developing an understanding of time and place through discussions and activities. For instance the children enthusiastically contribute to 'calendar time' and talk happily about where they went on holiday.

Many opportunities are provided through play for children to develop their small muscles skills. These include using paint brushes, glue sticks, scissors, completing jigsaw puzzles, building with a variety of construction materials and helping prepare snacks. A group of children concentrate well as they sew with their choice of coloured thread. Children admire each other as they dress-up in a variety of costumes and develop their imaginative play well whilst involved in a variety of role play situations. Children are proud of the pictures they create by rolling balls in paint and enjoy creating collages using a variety of freely available natural and man-made materials. Children enjoy music and become engrossed as they take part in ring games and action songs, laughing with the staff who actively take part.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff support all children, whatever their ability or background, to take a full part in the life of the provision creating a fully inclusive environment. The support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their parents is very good. Staff respect and value each other, the children and their parents as individuals. This, the way diversity is positively promoted and the very effective key person system ensures children develop a good sense of belonging and sense of autonomy enabling them to confidently make positive choices and decisions. Children are encouraged to express their feelings and this is supported through the inclusive, reassuring environment, displays and children being able to bring comforters such as a blanket or favourite toy with them to the provision. Children increase their awareness of their own and differing cultures through discussions and planned activities such as celebrating festivals and 'visiting' other countries such as Australia, Kenya and China. Children are becoming aware of their local community through visitors to the provision and outings, for instance walks around the village and outings to the library, a falconry and a local supermarket.

Children's behaviour is very good. Staff maintain a gentle approach whilst using praise, encouragement and explanation extremely well. Staff are skilled at standing back and allowing children to resolve their own conflicts. However, when needed they use positive intervention techniques helping maintain a calm, friendly atmosphere where children play co-operatively together. For example, two young children supported by a member of staff resolve a minor dispute over who is going to play with a toy by deciding to share and use a sand timer to measure how long each one has to play with it. One of the children then remarks that it was kind of the other child to agree.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents comment very positively about the provision. They find that the staff are 'very approachable', 'brilliant', 'friendly' and 'really look after the children well'. They find their children's key persons 'very good and supportive', 'promote independence' and feel their children are 'doing really well' and are 'very confident'. Staff form good relationships with parents and carers, recognising them as the first and main educators of their children and exchanging information regularly to meet children's care needs. Parents receive information about the stepping stones being covered towards the early learning goals in the programme they are given and learn about their children's achievements and progress through on-going discussions and the annual parents' evening. Parents are invited to contribute to topics and share their skills and have recently been invited to attend a workshop showing them how the staff use many of the High/Scope approaches to learning with the children. Staff invite parents of young children due to start at the provision to seminars about parenting skills and empowering them to be involved in their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by the staff who have a very high regard for the well-being of all children and put them first. This is shown through high adult: child ratios, the provision's commitment to safeguarding, partnership with parents and inclusion and their clear vision of continuous improvement to the standards of care and education offered. Children's records are accurately maintained and are stored confidentially. Although all the required policies and procedures are in place they are not all regularly reviewed to support the good practice in place within the provision. Work is currently in progress to further develop the already stimulating and well laid out outdoor play area using natural resources.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The two managers lead the staff by example creating a conscientious, committed team who positively promote equality of opportunity and an inclusive environment where every child matters. The dedicated staff team are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and are very good role models which enhances all children's experiences. Effective recruitment, vetting and induction procedures, regular staff and committee meetings, detailed appraisals and on-going professional development of the staff ensure that children are cared for by adults who are motivated, knowledgeable and keep up to date with childcare practices. All staff who attend training feedback to their colleagues so that their learning is shared. Ongoing self-evaluations, monitoring of nursery education and action plans enable the staff and committee to develop the good standards of teaching and learning. The provision is an active member of the local cluster group and has forged very good links with local schools helping make the children's transition from pre-school to school a positive experience including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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.

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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):

- vary times of fire drills to make sure older children are included regularly
- ensure all written policies and procedures are regularly reviewed.

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 systems for recording children's starting points and assessments through observation to make sure each child achieves appropriately in each area of learning.

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