

Milstead Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date 23/11/2009
Inspector Susan Jennifer Scott

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Milstead Pre-school opened in 2004 and operates from a village hall in Milstead, Sittingbourne, Kent. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The pre-school is open on a Monday and Wednesday from 9.00am to 3.00pm and on a Thursday and Friday from 9.00am to 12.00pm, term time only.

The group is registered to provide care for 30 children in the early years age group but none may be under two years. Overnight care is not provided. This provision is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 27 children in the early years age group on roll. The pre-school staff have experience of supporting children with special educational needs, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs a total of eight members of staff. Seven staff, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

A well developed knowledge of each child's needs enables staff to successfully promote children's welfare and learning. Children are safe and secure and enjoy plentiful opportunities to learn about their local area and the world around them. The partnerships with parents and other agencies are very successful in making sure that the needs of all children are met, along with any additional support needs. This means that children progress well, given their age, ability and starting points. Regular self-evaluation by the managers and staff ensures that priorities for development are identified and acted on, resulting in provision that responds to the needs of all users.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- allow sufficient space, indoors and outdoors, to set up challenging and interesting activities for energetic play
- ensure posters, pictures and other resources on display show the setting's positive attitude to disability, and to ethnic, cultural and social diversity
- ensure accident records maintain confidentiality

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All staff are able to safeguard children from harm or abuse because they all participate in child protection training offered by the local authority. There is a clear induction programme for staff and good systems to ensure the health and safety of children. Staff complete daily checks and have good risk assessments in place so that procedures ensure children are kept safe both inside and outside the building. The managers take good steps to promote children's welfare by vetting all staff to establish their suitability to care for children. Records are well maintained and organised securely. For example, there are certificates of registration and insurance displayed and a clear selection of policies and procedures, including one for complaints. However, one record noting all the accidents does not preserve confidentiality because parents sign this, although it contains very little detail.

The quality of the environment and resources is good. Children enjoy selecting from the varied and interesting toys, resources and activities which are changed at regular times during day. There is a large and modern kitchen, with a fridge for the safe storage of children's lunches. The resources are used and managed well, though when children cannot use outside areas the staff have not consistently planned challenging physical play. Staff deployment is good and there are high staff ratios and good support for children. Systems for observing and assessing children's progress, and the plans that are based upon these assessments, are secure and well understood by all staff. As a result, children make good progress.

The managers and staff have completed a comprehensive self evaluation and identify improvements they are intending to make. Changes are reviewed and monitored so that adjustments can be made to ensure children receive a quality service. Questionnaires are used with parents and the responses are used to assist in developing provision. A friends group has been formed in response to the survey and they assist in many family events during the year. Good awareness of the needs of children and a shared vision for the development of the setting enables continuous improvement in the quality of the provision. Staff participate in regular training every year which has improved the provision. However, staff have not had any training in paediatric manual handling to ensure their safety or reviewed their practice of lifting children onto the nappy changing station.

There are effective systems in place to share information and obtain specialist advice and support for children's individual needs and this contributes to the effective partnership with other agencies. The pre-school works closely with several specialist services, such as speech therapists and the specialist teaching service, to promote the development and progress of all children. The pre-school works hard to establish positive relationships with 'feeder' schools, and they have a successful partnership with the neighbouring village school. Children therefore benefit from a smooth transition to school.

Parents are very happy with the service offered and feel that the provision meets the needs of their children successfully. There are excellent arrangements for

exchanging information with parents to ensure children's individual welfare needs are understood and met. Parents complete a profile to inform the plans when their children start attending and they are able to request a particular focus for their children's learning at every consultation. The consultations are based upon twice yearly reports, summarising children's achievements and progress and are shared with parents in November and May. Parents receive a variety of supportive information about the provision in the 'new parent pack' and the prospectus.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children enjoy a varied and interesting range of play activities to support their progress towards the early learning goals. Adults work closely with them, listening to what they say and encouraging them to express their own ideas and noting the progress they are making. Children are able to choose their play and enjoy the activities available. Staff all contribute to the planned activities, covering different areas of the curriculum. Key staff observe, assess and record what their key children do, and their achievements, on a regular basis. They use these assessments to plan for the next steps in the learning of the children in their keywork group. All areas of learning and development are observed and assessed and staff systematically track these in children's learning journey books.

Staff provide resources and equipment for many types of play and they describe the choices of play available to children at each session after they have conducted the group registration time. This encourages children to think about the choices they can make and to explore various activities. Staff develop children's understanding through the good questions they ask and the discussions they have. For example, staff encourage children to describe their collages and their use of the blocks of varied shapes.

There is a system to ensure observations and assessments cover all areas of development, but staff are very aware that all activities and routines offer opportunities to practise or build upon the children's individual skills and understanding. This means that staff ensure children make good progress in every area of development. Staff ensure children are able to fully participate and enjoy their play by ensuring activities are developmentally appropriate.

Children are confident, relaxed and enjoy their time here as staff recognise their skills and praise their achievements. Children's relationships with each other reflect the positive and welcoming attitude of the staff who meet the needs of children of different ages and stages of development successfully. Children's behaviour is good and they play harmoniously together, enjoying opportunities to select from the toys and resources provided. However, children do not consistently benefit from challenging and interesting opportunities for energetic physical play. Although a balance beam was available on the day of inspection children lacked encouragement to use this and their use of sit and ride toys was not planned to deliver challenges. The staff make good use of the local environment, taking children on walks and to play outside whenever the weather permits.

Children settle quickly and happily into this safe environment when they first attend. They feel secure in the welcoming setting and enjoy selecting their own activities from the good range available to them. Staff support children's play successfully and build upon children's interests by discussing their ideas and opinions. This promotes children's confidence and self-esteem. Children enjoy regular opportunities for outdoor play or exercise every day utilising the local facilities by playing on the field nearby or walking around the Church. Children's understanding of healthy lifestyles is encouraged through good routines. For instance, children benefit from a snack bar which enables them to experience healthy, balanced choices of food. They are keen to be named as the child of the day who assists in preparing the snack display and laying the tables. Each child selects their name label, a cup and a plate when they feel hungry and joins the snack table to sit and eat in a small group. They also wash their own plates and cups after use, further promoting their independence.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe because they use play equipment sensibly. They participate in regular emergency evacuations and are introduced to visitors at the setting during the whole group registration time, which reassures them and promotes feelings of safety. They are encouraged to behave in ways that are safe by sharing resources and taking turns. For example, children can use a timer to see how long they have using some popular toys. Children with special educational or medical needs receive very good support to ensure these are met as staff encourage all the children to sign which benefits their communication skills. Children have opportunities to learn about aspects of their own cultures and those of others; they do this by celebrating varied festivals, learning about foods and using books and pictures reflecting different cultural traditions. However, there are few visible images that represent people with disabilities to encourage discussion and an understanding of differences and similarities.

There is an interesting range of resources available that meets the needs of every child and caters for the interests and ages and stages of the children who attend. For instance, the books are situated in a comfortable area and some are displayed to support topics or activities that are planned, such as those about Australia. Children happily engage in making collages while chatting to staff about their ideas and the materials they use and staff sustain their conversations well. Children are encouraged to extend their knowledge and skills through a range of activities, such as going on bug hunts outside, and using a camera to record their findings. They also develop their imaginative and creative skills through their role play and dressing up which staff support well. For example, children are keen to use 'Cinderella's house' and dress up in fairy costumes, or they play with the knight's castle.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met