



The Valley Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	110140
Inspection date	31 January 2006
Inspector	Gill Moore
Setting Address	C/o Meonstoke C of E School, Chapel Road, Meonstoke, Southampton, Hampshire, SO32 3NJ
Telephone number	07751 191766
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Registered person	The Valley 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Valley Pre-school opened in 1975 and has operated in its present location since April 2000. It is situated in a self-contained annexe at Meonstoke Church of England School with playroom, kitchen and toilets, and shares outside play areas with the school. The pre-school is a community group, managed by a voluntary committee and serves the village and the local area. A maximum of 24 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday during the school term. A variety of

sessions are available from 09:15 - 12:00 and 12:30 - 15:00 and two full day care sessions from 09:15 - 15:00. Optional lunch sessions are available for three days each week.

There are currently 36 children aged from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these 29 receive funding for nursery funding. The pre-school welcomes children with special needs and those with English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs a total of 10 members of staff who work directly with the children, of these 7, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting has close links with Meonstoke School and receives support from the reception class teachers and from the Hampshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The pre-school is an accredited member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit greatly from the wonderful daily opportunities to engage in a wide range of physical activities both inside and out. This enables them to recognise the importance of regular exercise and know that it contributes to ensuring a healthy lifestyle. They confidently use a very good range of climbing and balancing equipment showing excellent co-ordination and develop an exceptional understanding of spatial awareness. Children confidently ride a range of bicycles, practise walking on stilts and excitedly participate in playing with the parachute. They benefit from opportunities to use more challenging apparatus learning to take risks as they make regular visits to the local park. Children enjoy using a range of smaller equipment developing their skills in throwing and catching; for example, through the use of bats, balls, hoops and skipping ropes.

Children have extensive opportunities to learn about their bodies and recognise the importance of following good personal hygiene routines; for example, as they wash their hands independently after using the toilet and before snacks. They know why this is important and confidently talk about why they need to wash germs away. Children recognise when their bodies are hot and need a drink and develop exceptional independence as they help themselves to juice and water. They develop an excellent understanding of healthy eating, which is enhanced by the range of healthy options provided at snack times. These include a range of fruits and vegetables, salads and cheese and children enjoy choosing their toppings and spreading them on their toast. Children recognise which foods help their bodies to grow and compare these; for example, when preparing for a picnic in their imaginary play. They describe different tastes and talk about where milk and cheese come from, which promotes much discussion around healthy diets and favourite foods.

Children's health is exceptionally well maintained because practitioners have an in-depth knowledge of first aid and know how to effectively deal with accidents and

incidents. They implement highly effective health and hygiene policies to ensure the risk of infection is minimised to children; for example, when clearing spills and preparing snacks. Extremely secure procedures are implemented to record accidents, the administration of medication and to obtain written information about children's health and medical and dietary requirements, ensuring children's individual needs are fully met and they receive appropriate treatment in an emergency.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe in an emergency situation as they practise regular fire drills and know the procedure to follow in the event of a fire. They remind each other that they must hold on to the hand rails as they walk down the steps to the outside play area and learn how to safely carry chairs and handle a range of tools. Children's safety is ensured because practitioners are vigilant and ensure risks and potential hazards are removed. Detailed health and safety policies and the implementation of formal and informal risk assessments contribute to ensuring children's safety.

Children are protected from harm and kept safe because practitioners have a secure knowledge of their role with regards to child protection. They know and understand the procedures to follow should they believe a child to be at risk and implement highly effective procedures for the collection of children to ensure arrangements are secure and children are safe guarded from harm. The implementation of effective systems to record times on and off the premises of all children, practitioners and visitors to the pre-school ensure children are safe whilst in the group.

Children move freely and safely in the warm, welcoming and wonderfully inviting pre-school environment. They have ample opportunities to freely select their own tools and resources making their own decisions about their play from an extensive range of provision suitable to the needs of the ages of children attending. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that all furniture, equipment and play resources are kept clean and well maintained ensuring children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children excel in all aspects of their development and relish their time at pre-school because practitioners have a secure knowledge of child development and recognise how children learn most effectively. Excellent interaction between practitioners and children enable them to become extremely self assured and develop high levels of independence and competence in these early stages of their learning.

Younger children are exceptionally well supported in the daily routine and begin to develop a sense of responsibility as they help to pack away resources. They show excellent imagination making models from recycled materials and enjoy exploring sand and water with an extensive range of tools. Children persevere with difficult

activities showing exceptionally high levels of concentration; for example, when completing jigsaw puzzles, and show real delight and a sense of achievement when they successfully complete the task by themselves. Children relish in wonderful opportunities to explore their senses and be creative. They become competent learners using a wide range of construction equipment to build and know how to safely use scissors and a range of other tools and materials. Children communicate exceptionally well contributing to group discussions and activities and participate enthusiastically in the group story, 'Walking through the Jungle' laughing and giggling with their peers. They respond excitedly to the use of puppets helping to tell stories and take the register and begin to use a very good range of vocabulary to express their real and imagined ideas in their play.

Practitioners are highly skilled in the way they adapt activities and experiences to suit the needs and abilities of the younger children and use regular observations of children's individual achievements and progress to identify clear targets, which guide their planning. Consequently, children thrive in a wonderful and stimulating learning environment and are eager to gain new skills.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children play a dynamic role in their learning making rapid strides in their individual development because practitioners use an exciting and stimulating range of teaching methods to ensure they are fully engrossed. The inside and outside learning environment is rich and stimulating and the structure of the day provides children with wonderful opportunities to initiate their own learning. Children develop excellent self-care skills as they make their own choices about what they want to play with, help themselves to drinks and dress and undress themselves for outside play. They are highly motivated, which boosts their learning and show excellent imagination as they explore their own ideas in a wide range of different role-play situations. Children have excellent opportunities to explore a very good range of media, both independently and during planned activities, including wood, sand, water, dough and pasta. They delight in opportunities to use their senses and explore a range of different sounds both inside through the extensive array of musical instruments and outside. Children explore and compare how a variety of objects hung from the washing line make different sounds; for example, bottles filled with sand, dried peas and pasta and, metal and wooden spoons. They experiment to see how far the sounds travel and following on from this many children decide to make their own instruments, which they later use to accompany their singing.

Children show exceptional skills as they competently use tools, such as scissors and glue sticks, and demonstrate real perseverance threading buttons and beads onto laces. They are encouraged to solve their own problems; for example, when working out the length of bands needed to make the strings on their guitar and develop their skills in the use of hammers and small saws when making models from wood. Practitioners make excellent use of planned activities and incidental opportunities to effectively question children encouraging them to think through their own ideas and make decisions for themselves. Children's curiosity and investigative skills are extremely well promoted as they make predictions about how the mixture will change when ingredients are added during cookery and enjoy searching and exploring for

mini-beasts in the woods. They observe and record changes; for example, as tadpoles change into frogs and seeds grow into plants and learn how to take care of them developing a sense of responsibility and a caring attitude.

Children's early reading and writing skills are exceptionally well developed. They confidently recognise and link sounds and letters pointing out familiar letters and words in their name cards and other print displayed around the room. Children confidently label their own work, write a list of what to take on their picnic and enjoy many opportunities to practise emergent writing, freely accessing an extensive range of writing tools and materials. They develop extremely good speaking and listening skills contributing confidently to group discussions and listening to and valuing what others have to say. Children delight in opportunities to explore a very good range of fiction and non-fiction books independently and with their peers and use these to locate information. They use an excellent range of mathematical language and develop a secure understanding of the concept of number, shape, weight and measure as they freely experiment with an excellent range of mathematical resources, as well as participating in planned activities.

Children excel in their development because practitioners have an expert understanding of how young children learn and a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They make exceptional use of every opportunity to extend children's learning enabling them to become independent and autonomous learners. The planning of the educational programme is excellent and the rich and stimulating learning environment and well planned curriculum provides exceptional opportunities for all children to extend their learning across all areas. Practitioners have an excellent knowledge of children's individual needs, interests and abilities and rigorous assessment of their individual achievements enables them to plan specific individual targets for children to work towards.

Teaching is continually inspiring and challenging for all children ensuring they thrive and respond to challenges in an exciting vibrant learning environment and achieve their individual potential whilst at the pre-school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children settle exceptionally well and develop extremely positive and trusting relationships with all practitioners. They share and take turns negotiating well and recognise how to play well together without the support of an adult. Children flourish at pre-school and show a very caring attitude towards one another, which impacts on the relationships they build with their peers. They develop a strong sense of reassurance and the highly effective implementation of a successful key worker system contributes to enabling children to feel acknowledged and affirmed. Children's behaviour is exceptional. They know the rules and are kind and sensitive towards one another's feelings valuing other people's ideas and contributions to group discussions.

Practitioner's very skilful handling in managing behaviour enables children to gain a very secure understanding of what is right and wrong helping them to appreciate how

their actions affect other people. They have fantastic opportunities to gain an understanding of themselves, their families and the wider world through discussions, stories and activities linked to pre-school topics. Children enjoy visits from people who work in their local community, such as the fire fighter, police man and lollipop lady helping to increase their understanding of the people who help them. They explore different types of homes and buildings, methods of transport, climates, foods and people who live in other countries and enjoy planned opportunities to gain an increasing knowledge of different cultures exploring some of the special events and festivals they celebrate. Consequently, children gain a well developed respect for others and learn to recognise and value the similarities and differences between themselves and other people. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children benefit from a superb partnership between practitioners and parents ensuring their individual needs are extremely well met. All children are valued and included into the pre-school, including those with special needs, and highly flexible induction arrangements ensure children settle well and develop a sense of security and belonging. Excellent links are in place between pre-school and home; for example, through the management and parents in pre-school committees and the implementation of the 'weekend diary'. Detailed information, both formal and informal, including regular newsletters, white board showing daily activities, a detailed prospectus and daily discussion with practitioners ensures parents are well informed about the group and the activities their child is involved in on a regular basis enabling them to play a full part in their learning. They are invited to contribute ideas through the implementation of a suggestion box and opportunities to borrow resources and equipment, such as computer programmes, enhance the very strong links established.

The partnerships with parents are outstanding. Children's learning is significantly enhanced because parents are invited to play a full and active role. They contribute to the initial and ongoing assessment of their child and are invited to spend time in the pre-school helping out in sessions. Parents are fully informed about the curriculum and receive written information each term about their child's individual achievements and progress. Consultation meetings with key workers enable children's next steps for development to be discussed and parents are provided with suggestions of activities to try at home with their child to extend their learning. These very strong and secure links ensure parents play an active role in their child's early education, which consequently impacts on the individual progress children make.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children receive good quality care because the pre-school is very well organised and all practitioners are committed to their roles. The successful implementation of the operational plan ensures all children are provided with high levels of support enabling them to thrive in an exciting and stimulating environment. Children benefit because they are cared for by qualified and experienced practitioners who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities within the group. Effective systems are in place

to recruit, appoint and induct new staff ensuring children are safe and well-protected, although systems to ensure their ongoing suitability are not yet fully developed. Practitioners have a clear understanding of the policies and procedures and implement these effectively across the setting to promote highly successful outcomes for children. The secure management system and committed staff team work exceptionally well together and robust systems are in place to ensure highly effective communication takes place; for example, through formal and informal meetings.

Children's learning is significantly enhanced by the outstanding leadership and management. All practitioners have an in-depth knowledge of the Foundation Stage and child development and management place high importance on monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the provision. Teaching is monitored on a daily basis as well as through annual reviews where strengths of individuals are recognised and areas for development identified. Practitioners are actively encouraged to increase their skills and knowledge and identify their own training needs as part of the review process. Highly effective systems are in place to monitor the curriculum, ensuring all aspects are sufficiently included, and to evaluate the impact the educational programme has on children's individual progress. As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Management have a clear knowledge of the strengths of the group and place high importance on reviewing the provision on a regular basis. The highly effective use of time and resources, very successful deployment of staff and the wonderfully stimulating learning environment provides children with ample opportunities to initiate their own learning, gain a real sense of belonging and thrive in a happy and secure environment.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Children Act inspection the group were asked to provide further resources to reflect positive images of disability and to record the time staff leave the group on the register.

Increased resources have been purchased by the pre-school; such as, play people for the dolls house and additional books to reflect a diversity of disability and a selection of photographs and posters are now displayed. Use of these resources and discussion with children enables them to appreciate how some people's needs and abilities differ from their own and to gain an increased understanding of the wider society. Procedures are now in place to record the time staff leave the premises, which contributes to ensuring children's safety.

The group were also asked to ensure officers of the committee take up relevant checks and to maintain confidentiality with regards to staff clearance. Effective systems are in place to ensure all relevant checks are undertaken and a record is kept on file of the disclosure numbers and issue dates ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

At the last nursery education inspection the group were asked to consider improving the organisation of some whole group activities to minimise distraction and enable all

children to concentrate and contribute. This was reviewed and the deployment of practitioners during whole group activities has been increased to ensure all children are exceptionally well supported and contribute fully to discussions developing high levels of concentration.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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 outstanding.

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):

- continue to develop the procedures for the recruitment, appointment and induction of new staff to ensure their ongoing suitability

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk