



The Mulberry Bush Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	311296
Inspection date	22 February 2006
Inspector	Ann Law
Setting Address	Fernside Avenue, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD5 8PQ
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Registered person	Monica Wells
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?

The Mulberry Bush Pre-school opened in 1989 and is a private organisation. It operates from the gatehouse at Almondbury High School, near Huddersfield and serves the needs of the local community. The group has access to open-plan play areas, toilet and kitchen facilities and a fully enclosed outdoor area. The pre-school is open from 08.15 to 12.15, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and offers a lunch club until 13.15. On Mondays and Thursdays the pre-school is open from 08.15 to

15.00.

There are currently 42 children aged from 2 years to 5 years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school currently supports children with special needs, but does not support any who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven part-time staff, of whom four hold appropriate qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority and holds an Investors in Children Quality Assurance award. Club Francais attend for one session per week offering children the opportunity to learn French.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very clean and hygienically maintained environment. Staff give superb support and guidance in encouraging children to gain a secure understanding of the setting's routines for hand washing, after using the toilet and before snack. Accessible toilet facilities ensure that all children can become increasingly independent in their personal care and younger children bring their own potties, which offer them familiarity and security. This is essential for their emotional well-being. An excellent variety of snacks are offered to the children, including fruit and vegetables, which they eat with gusto; manners are expected and well promoted in an enjoyable social occasion. Although children are offered milk or water with their snack, at the time of the inspection drinking water was not readily available to children throughout the sessions. This reduces their opportunity to get a drink when they want one.

Staff constantly maximise every opportunity to contribute to children's understanding about healthy living. The current topic of 'Potatoes' promotes healthy eating amongst the children and displays and books complement the topic, serving as a continual reminder. Children are actively involved in smelling, tasting and exploring a variety of potatoes and discussions regarding the growing of vegetables significantly enhance children's knowledge of food that is good for you.

Children enjoy very good levels of physical activity which contribute to their good health and physical development. For example, playing parachute games running underneath with great excitement and using large arm movements to waft the parachute up and down. The attractive outdoor area offers children a range of equipment for climbing, sliding and balancing, and block play is a regular feature of the provision. Children take part in an excellent variety of activities to develop manipulative skills and hand to eye coordination, such as mark making, using scissors and playing musical instruments. This means that children explore, test and develop physical control in stimulating indoor and outdoor experiences.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a vibrant child-centred environment where thorough risk assessments are undertaken to minimise any hazards to children's safety. As a result, all children are able to move around safely and freely, both indoors and outdoors and this encourages them to initiate their own play and learning. Children have access to an excellent range of age-appropriate toys, furniture and resources which are presented in clearly defined areas for play. This carefully thought out continuous provision enables children to develop ideas and interests over time and promotes independence in their learning. Toy and book libraries are regularly used to enhance themes for children's learning and to cater exceptionally well for the specific learning needs of children.

Staff give high priority to ensuring that children are effectively supervised at all times. The ratio of staff to children is high and there are clearly defined procedures to follow in the event of a child being lost or not collected. A vigilant record is maintained of visitors to the setting and any changes to the people collecting children are carefully noted beforehand, including contact numbers. Staff develop children's awareness of staying safe with clear explanations. For example, when children are hiding under units in the role play area pretending to be cats, staff remind them to 'be careful when you climb out or you might bang your head'.

Children's welfare is promoted appropriately; sufficient staff hold a first aid qualification and a secure understanding is held of their roles and responsibilities within the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures to safeguard children. However, children's dignity and privacy is not fully respected when they are using the toilets or being changed, because there is full visual access from parts of the open-plan play areas into the toilet area and the cubicles.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely happy and well settled in the pre-school, because their well-being is of paramount importance to each of the caring members of staff. Staff are highly intuitive of children's needs and respond to them admirably. For instance, children who are upset when their parent leaves them receive cuddles and individual attention to help them settle, whereas children with specific learning needs who get upset by too much attention receive just the right amount to put them at ease when entering the setting. This exceptional support helps to ease all children through the transition between home and pre-school. The wide and fascinating choice of activities allows all children to build on their natural curiosity as learners and promote their intellectual development. Staff use the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and the Birth to three matters framework in a very sensible and practical way to ensure that children's individual learning needs are all extremely well catered for. For example, in a potato printing activity the member of staff skilfully tailored her questioning to suit the stage of intellectual development of the child. Some children were encouraged to explore the texture and feel of the paint and other children were

encouraged to describe what happens when blue and yellow paint is mixed. Staff skilfully achieve a superb balance between supervised activities and allowing children freedom to create from their imaginations and consequently, children thrive in the relaxed and inspiring environment.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is outstanding. Teaching is rooted in expert knowledge of the Foundation Stage and two qualified teachers are part of the staff team with a full understanding of how young children learn and progress. Extremely useful activity information is displayed for all staff that serves as continuous reminders and prompts for the focus of the activity, including the learning intentions and the language to be modelled. Clear and concise planning ensures that children have access to an extremely well balanced range of rich and varied daily activities. Allowing children to choose their own activity and supporting them closely as they work is a very effective strategy. Consequently, children of all ability levels make excellent progress and are able to achieve to their full potential. Regular file meetings are held where children's key workers identify their next steps in learning. For example, a recent identification was that some children were not meeting the stepping stones for music in creative development. As a result, a musician was invited into the setting and the children had great fun taking part in focused music activities. By identifying gaps in children's learning and being pro-active in addressing these, children are assured of receiving a truly broad and balanced curriculum which is individually tailored to meet their needs.

Children have an excellent attitude to learning; they are very confident and interested learners. Children independently choose from an exciting range of activities and they have a positive approach to new experiences, such as scrubbing potatoes in the water tray. They vigorously clean them, saying, 'this is a really messy job!' Children show care and concern for living things and the environment, for example, admiring the emerging snowdrops in the woodland garden. They know not to squash them, 'because they are growing into flowers'. Staff are highly skilled in effective questioning and exploit all activities to encourage children to use talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next. For instance, children become fully involved and engrossed in a potato exploration activity discussing textures, explaining how the chipper cuts the potato into chips and where they need to be cooked. Story time is a rich and stimulating experience for the children, because staff animate the stories to fully engage them. Children listen with full attention and show awareness of the rhyme in the story.

Children play a dynamic role in their learning and respond to challenge with great enthusiasm. For example, they willingly count the potatoes and independently access resources to help with the accuracy of the counting, such as a number line card. Staff pay exceptional attention to detail in assisting all children to recognise numerals. They use number stickers on children's fingers, to help children relate the words 'one' to 'five' with the numerals 1 to 5, when singing, 'one, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive'. Children show great interest in simple information and communication technology and are adept in using a mouse to complete basic computer programs. They demonstrate a good sense of time and differentiate between the past and the present, confidently describing a recent holiday to France

and travelling on a train under the sea. Children are extremely enthusiastic at singing time and respond very quickly and competently to new challenge. For example, staff inspire children with a new song, 'have you got your singing voice?' Children swiftly pick up the rhythm and respond, 'yes, we've got our singing voice!' whilst keeping time by slapping their thighs. Creativity is nurtured superbly; children imaginatively adapt an activity of potato printing by stamping their individuality on the painting. They use the wooden end of the brush to make swirls in the paint and to drip dots in a pattern around the picture. Staff are fully aware that the process of the activity is much more important for children's development than an end product which looks just like everyone else's.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are warmly welcomed into the pre-school and play a full part in the daily sessions. Staff recognise each child as an individual and work closely with parents and external agencies to meet their needs. Those with specific needs are extremely well supported in the very inclusive provision; this ensures that they are able to take part in all aspects of the group. Children experience a tangible sense of belonging in the pre-school, because name cards are used for coats and registration and many photographic displays show children playing in the environment. For example, in the entrance area photographs of the children form the leaves of the mulberry bush. This allows the children to see themselves reflected in the group and consequently, they feel valued and experience a positive sense of self.

A very good range of toys and resources promote a positive view of the wider world; they contribute to increasing children's awareness of diversity. Many festivals are included in the planning, such as Christmas, Chinese New Year and Diwali. This means that children are learning about differences in culture and religion in a meaningful way. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are learning responsible behaviour, because staff consistently apply positive behaviour management strategies. Staff constantly give children meaningful praise so that they seek attention for being kind and helpful. These strategies have a very positive effect on the children and as a result their behaviour is exemplary. Staff are extremely committed and dedicated to ensuring that all children learn pro-social behaviour. Some staff have attended Applied Behaviour Analysis training and use positive reinforcement techniques, such as a reward bag to provide children with specific learning needs with a tangible reward system. This is essential for their progress and development.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents are welcomed into the setting by an attractive entrance area, where a wide variety of information regarding the provision is displayed. Detailed information regarding the service is provided for parents in the form of a welcome pack and regular newsletters keep them up-to-date with new developments and the current theme for learning. Although the information provided is of good quality, the information regarding the use of the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum is limited. Staff keep parents informed about their child's time in the setting, because individual files, which record

their achievements in photographs, examples of work and observational comments, are very well maintained and this evidence is linked to the stepping stones. However, there is no explanation for parents in the files of what the areas of learning are and how the stepping stones help children progress towards the early learning goals. Parents are encouraged to add any comments to the files about children's learning at home. This mostly effective sharing of information encourages parents to become involved in their child's learning, which contributes to children's development and well-being.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit greatly from the excellent organisation of the space and resources, both indoors and outdoors, which encourages them to be truly independent, curious and imaginative learners. Staff turnover is low; many members of staff have worked in the provision for a number of years. This has a positive impact on the children who enjoy highly attentive and consistent relationships with the staff. A good level of commitment to training and continual development is maintained. For example, staff attend many training courses to extend and update their childcare knowledge and practice. Most recently training has been attended in 'Birth to three matters' and 'Listening to young children'. Staff who attend the courses disseminate the knowledge to all the staff team, thus making the best use of all the information obtained. As a result, the pre-school are always moving forward in current childcare practice and this greatly enhances the care, learning and play provided for the children.

The leadership and management of the pre-school are good. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to children's achievement and development, which is evidenced by the children's enthusiasm for, and involvement in, their learning. Processes for monitoring and evaluating children's progress are excellent and these ensure that children consistently receive high quality care and that nursery education meets each child's individual needs. For example, staff meet regularly to assess children's progress and advice is sought from the local authority when necessary. Although staff appraisals are not systematically carried out, the manager recognises individual staff skills within the team. This results in confident staff who are pro-active in ensuring an inclusive environment where every child matters. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the pre-school were asked to improve: the system for recording existing injuries; the child protection statement; and the toilet facilities. A new system for recording the existing injuries now ensures the confidentiality of the information noted. Recent guidance has been obtained from the government and the local authority for child protection procedures, which has ensured that all the necessary documents are available for recording and reporting suspected child abuse. Although various options have been looked into, as yet no improvements have been made to the toilet facilities. This does not ensure that the dignity and

privacy of children are respected when using the facilities and this remains a recommendation from this inspection.

At the last nursery education inspection the pre-school were asked to improve the planning and assessment systems for children's learning. Stepping stones are now identified in the planning documents and in children's assessment files which means that any gaps can be identified. The information is used to inform the future planning for children's learning, offering a broad and balanced curriculum and meeting individual children's learning needs exceptionally well.

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 good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure children's dignity and privacy is respected when using the toilets or being changed.

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):

- extend the information provided for parents to give a clear explanation of the Foundation Stage and what their children's records of achievement mean.

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:
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