



## **Merriott Preschool**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	162080
<b>Inspection date</b>	09 March 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Bridget Copson
<b>Setting Address</b>	Church Street, Merriott, Somerset, TA16 5PT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01460 77922
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<b>Registered person</b>	Merriott Preschool
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 satisfactory. 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?

Merriott Preschool opened in 1979. It operates from within the Merriott First School grounds in Somerset. It is open weekdays from 09:00 to 11:30 and from 12:30 to 15:00 during term times only. The group also offer a lunch club from 11:30 to 12:30. It is registered to provide care for a maximum of 18 children under 5 years. The premises offers use of a playroom with a kitchen and toilets. The children have access to an outdoor play area as well as use of the school grounds.

There are currently 39 children aged 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 31 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school cares for children with special educational needs. There are no children attending with English as an additional language. The pre-school offers sessional care to children from the village and surrounding areas.

The pre-school employs six members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group is run by a voluntary committee and supported by the Local Authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a range of physical play provision to support them in keeping fit and healthy. For example, they use bikes, trucks, scooters, hoops, skittles and a climbing frame with slide in the garden. They also enjoy indoor activities, such as parachute games, music and movement and join in the school Wacky Wednesday Workout each week. Younger children's developmental needs are supported effectively through age appropriate resources and staff guidance.

Children learn about healthy eating through enjoying a nutritional choice of drinks and snacks at break times. For example, children eat fresh fruits, vegetables with breadsticks with drinks of water or milk. They also explore healthy choices through topics and practical activities. Children have regular drinks at break times and lunch. However, they do not have independent access to drinks of water throughout the sessions to ensure they do not get thirsty.

Children are cared for within a generally clean and hygienic environment, where staff have effective systems in place to prevent the spread of infection, for example, hand washing routines, disinfecting table tops before snack time and lunch and cleaning toys and equipment. However, the foam floor mat on which children play and sit for group time is muddy and has loose dirt particles on the surface, and some of the small world activities are dusty and have smudged finger prints on them. This does not, therefore, promote a clean and hygienic environment for children in all areas. Children learn about managing personal hygiene through washing and drying their own hands. However, children only use cold water to wash their hands. This does not re-enforce good hand washing practice and prevent the spread of infection.

Children's health, medical and dietary needs are met appropriately by staff who keep written records of the care required. They provide parents with written details of any accidents, incidents or medication administered for consistency of care. They also keep details of any special dietary requirements in the kitchen to ensure children only have access to suitable food and drink. All staff hold an appropriate first aid certificate. This knowledge supports them in caring for children appropriately in the event of an accident.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for within suitable premises which are organised appropriately to allow children the freedom to move about and play unhindered and under staff's close supervision. Children are kept safe and secure in all areas of the provision through the measures staff have in place, for example, a locked front door, radiator grills, safety gates, glass safety film and shed and cupboard locks. Staff carry out visual checks each day and a written assessment each year to ensure children's safety is not compromised. Children learn about keeping themselves safe through good practical activities and staff guidance, for example, discussing and practising road safety, using art and craft tools and practising the fire drill.

Children access a good range of toys and activities independently from the open shelves and drawer units within the play room. This allows them to play freely and safely. They do not have access to anything that is unsafe or appropriate for them to use independently; such resources are kept out of their reach.

Children are protected well by staff in all areas of the provision. There are good systems in place to safeguard their welfare, for example, close supervision, a written record of all visitors, details of adults authorised to collect children and a well-supervised going home time. In addition staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues and procedures to support them in keeping children safe.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy an appropriate range of activities and resources to promote and support all areas of their learning and development, for example, constructional and small world play sets as well different role play resources. Children also enjoy threading, puzzles, games and programmes on the computer. In addition, children express themselves in art and design as well as organised creative activities linked to themes. Children have access to a range of story and reference books. However, due to the ineffective organisation of the area, they do not choose books to read independently.

All children enjoy the same learning experiences as those in receipt of nursery education funding. Younger children's learning is planned according to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Within this framework staff organise interesting activities which they link to themes. This helps children to make connections in their learning. For example, for the 'Traditional Stories and Rhymes' theme, they learn traditional rhymes and songs, they also read fairy tales and draw princesses, knights and dragons. They also look at the 'Three Bears' to explore size and cook gingerbread men. However, this framework of learning is not always appropriate for all younger children and does not ensure realistic challenges are given in all areas of learning. For example, a 2-year-old finds a letter recognition and writing activity too challenging and soon leaves to play elsewhere.

Children are happy and settled. They self-register on arrival, find toys for themselves, settle quickly into play and seek out staff to share their experiences and for comfort. This all demonstrates children's sound sense of well-being within the group. Children communicate with confidence and are developing good independence. For example, they tidy up toys, help staff at snack times, dress themselves and visit the toilet alone. Children use their imaginations whilst playing with small world activities, in art and craft and with music. However, their role play is limited throughout the sessions due to the organisation of the role play resources.

Children's progress and well-being is monitored through key worker observations which are linked to the Foundation Stage areas of learning. The system does not identify what next steps are planned to promote children's learning and therefore does not always ensure realistic challenges are given to all children.

### Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good

Children enjoy interesting activities and practical experiences to support all areas of their learning and development. This is supported by staff who have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are clear what they intend children to learn from activities. Staff develop plans which detail a good range of activities linked to themes. For example, within the current 'Transport' theme, children talk about different types of transport and what it is used for. They sing songs, such as 'the wheels on the bus' and 'row your boat'. They read books, such as 'Thomas the Tank Engine' and reference books. They walk to the village to carry out a vehicle survey and to learn about road safety. They create tracks in the garden for physical play and make models and pictures of different vehicles. This provides children with practical activities, realistic images, lots of discussion and encourages children to make decisions and contribute to their knowledge. As a result their learning is re-enforced and fun.

Children's progress is monitored and assessed by key workers who record, date and evidence their observations in each child's individual work book. They identify children's stage of development according to each of the areas of learning. However, this system does not identify what next steps are planned to promote children's on-going learning.

Children are happy and focus well on their chosen activities. They access new experiences with curiosity and excitement, such as joining in a floating and sinking experiment and going out for a traffic watching event. Children behave well and are learning about what is right and wrong. They correct each other appropriately and younger children are sufficiently confident in seeking staff for support. Children are developing good independence, for example, through helping with chores, choosing and finding toys to play with and with their self care skills. Children speak with confidence within the familiar group and listen well to others at appropriate times. They work and negotiate well together, for example, in agreeing a song for their table to sing with the group. Children enjoy listening to stories as part of a group activity, but do not regularly access books independently to further promote an interest in stories. They write spontaneously for many different reasons and are learning early

hand writing skills well. Older children can recognise and write some correctly formed letters.

Children count numbers in correct order during group activities and in number rhymes and songs. Older children can recognise and name different numerals. Children are developing a good understanding of shape, size and position and use good quality resources to support this. They can recognise and name different shapes using puzzles and their environment. They sort objects by size and are learning to use the correct descriptive language. Children explore different objects and materials. They find out more about them, why things happen, how things work and monitor changes, for example, floating and sinking objects, dissolving materials, exploring textures and cooking. They design and build their own models using many different resources, such as robots, collages and mobiles from household items and fabrics. Children are developing a good understanding of time and place. For example, they discuss past and present events from home and pre-school. They explore aspects of the local environment, such as changes in the grounds throughout the year and joining in village events.

Most children move with control and co-ordination using a good range of small and large scale physical play equipment both in the play room and in the garden. They learn about healthy lifestyles and the importance of regular exercise. Children are learning their colours well. Staff support them through linking colours each month to the theme, for example, gold and silver at Christmas, Green in March and Yellow in April. Children sing songs with enthusiasm, matching actions well to the words they are learning. They use their imaginations well in constructional and small world activities, in music and creating during free choice and adult led craft activities. However, children do not have independent access to a good range of resources to further extend their creative development.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for equally and fairly by staff who have effective systems in place to ensure all children are included and their individual needs met, for example, activity lists, displays of incomplete work to allow children to finish at their own pace, records from parents, good communication and the key worker system. The pre-school has a special educational needs co-ordinator in place. She is well equipped to support children with additional needs. She ensures any additional resources are in place and liaises closely with parents and professional to meet children's care and educational needs with consistency.

Children behave well and are learning what is expected of them. For example, they are learning to wait their turn and will say 'please' and 'thank you' to those who share. Children are supported well by staff who make expectations clear through discussing the pre-school rules and any issues that arise. Staff also provide lots of encouragement, praise and reward stickers to promote good behaviour and achievement. Staff create a positive environment within which children are happy and demonstrate a good sense of belonging. For example, they seek out staff and friends

to share news and experiences, they find their own belongings easily and show their work to staff with pride. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are cared for consistently and according to parents' wishes in all areas. Parents receive a prospectus and welcome pack with details of the setting, staff, curriculum, key worker system and aims. They also complete application and enrolment forms and consents for all areas of care. This includes details of children's likes and dislikes. This all supports staff in meeting children's needs appropriately. Parents are kept informed through daily communication with staff, a notice board in the entrance and regular newsletters. In addition parents are reminded regularly that staff are available to discuss their child's progress and well-being at any time and they are invited to meet with staff once a year more formally.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Parents have some opportunities to get involved in their child's learning. For example, staff display details of curriculum plans and themes on the notice board. However, the themes and colours of the week are sometimes changed and parents are not always informed. Staff also invite parents to contribute actively through helping in sessions, fundraising or using their skills to provide additional activities. For example, a parent who works as an artist recently organised a special art session with the children. Parents are suitably informed of their child's progress, but are not encouraged to contribute information regarding their stage of development on admission to help staff in planning their learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by an established team of staff who all hold or are working towards an appropriate child care qualification. In addition staff attend training courses and workshops to update their knowledge and skills. This all supports them in meeting children's care and developmental needs. The pre-school has suitable systems in place to ensure staff are, and continue to be, suitable to care for children, for example, appropriate vetting procedures, staff records, an induction programme and annual appraisals for all staff. This ensures children are protected and cared for appropriately.

There are some systems in place to monitor the quality of care, for example, weekly staff meetings to discuss individual children, training needs and any issues. Staff also keep individual training plans to monitor their own skills and complete annual risk assessments to monitor safety. However, systems are not always effective in monitoring the quality of care in all areas. For example, the ineffective organisation of the premises does not encourage children to read books independently or to role play well. Also the quality of younger children's learning and development does not ensure all children are provided with realistic challenges.

Staff keep all records relating to children secure to maintain confidentiality whilst allowing them access to relevant information easily. Most documentation is updated

regularly to ensure accurate information is held. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good.

The setting has effective systems in place to monitor the quality of nursery education and its strengths and weaknesses, for example, weekly staff meetings which are recorded to ensure issues are addressed, written evaluation of activities each week for reference and accessing new systems and documentation to develop current practice. The manager assesses the group's strengths and weaknesses through staff appraisals to highlight training needs and encourages parents to contribute their thoughts through completing surveys.

The pre-school shows a commitment to improvement. They have good links with the main school into which most children go. They share facilities and join in school events and celebrations. In addition the manager meets with the school every two weeks to discuss issues and development. Staff in both settings share teaching methods and behaviour management strategies. This all promotes consistency for children and aids their transition in to school.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to implement effective procedures to ensure the safe collection of children from the setting. It agreed to provide more opportunities to inform parents of their children's progress. Also to update the child protection policy to include a procedure in the event of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer.

The setting keeps a member of staff situated at the front door at the end of the session to supervise children going home. This ensures the safe collection of children from the setting. The setting regularly informs parents they are welcome to meet with staff at any time and invite them to meet more formally each year to discuss their children's progress. The manager is currently updating the child protection policy to include a procedure in the event of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer.

At the last education inspection the setting agreed to improve the grouping of the children, particularly for story time. It agreed to provide more opportunities for the children to practise addition and subtraction and use the vocabulary associated with this. Also to provide more opportunities for the children to mark make and practise forming letters.

The setting organises the grouping of children at story time according to who is present. For example, on some days they organise two smaller story groups to ensure all children benefit. They provide children with good quality resources and more opportunities to practise addition and subtraction and use the vocabulary associated with this. Children mark make during many different activities and are learning early pencil control skills. Older children are learning to write correctly formed letters 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 satisfactory. 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):

- improve good hygiene practices, especially regarding the provision of hot and cold water for children's hand washing routines and the condition of the floor mat
- develop systems of planning and assessing younger children's progress to ensure appropriate challenges are given and next steps planned, for example, through implementing the Birth to three matters framework
- improve the organisation of the premises to encourage children to develop a greater interest in books and to promote their role play

### **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 systems of monitoring children's progress to ensure next steps are planned accurately for all children
- provide parents with more opportunities to contribute to and get involved with their child's learning

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)