



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 102854

DfES Number: 519311

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	15/03/2004
Inspector Name	Nicola Jayne Pascoe

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	Little Merlins Pre-School
Setting Address	Culdrose Community Centre Hibernia Road Helston Cornwall TR13 8DJ

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	The Committee of Little Merlins Pre-School Committee 1028011
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	Little Merlins Pre-School Committee
Address	Culdrose Community Centre Hibernia Road Helston Cornwall TR13 8DJ

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Little Merlins Pre-School opened in September 2000. It operates from two rooms in the community centre, on the edge of Helston town. The pre-school serves the local area and the naval community.

There are currently 49 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. This includes 23 funded 3 year olds and 7 funded 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs. There are no children attending who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens 5 days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45. A lunch club operates from 11:45 until 12:30. There are sessions available for children aged 2 to 3 years on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 13:00 until 14:45.

There are 4 part-time and 2 full-time staff who work with the children. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. There are 3 staff currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA).

How good is the Day Care?

Little Merlins Pre-School provides good quality care for children. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. All are committed to further development. The committee take full responsibility for the effective recruitment and management of staff. Good use is made of the pre-school environment. The premises are child-centred and welcoming. Children freely access a broad and balanced range of toys and resources. The administrator ensures that all required documentation is kept.

Written risk assessments are used effectively. There are systems to monitor visitors and to identify authorised persons to collect children. Health and hygiene practices are good. All staff hold first aid certificates. Children's individual dietary needs are

identified and met appropriately. There is a wide range of opportunities for children to develop a positive understanding of different cultures and beliefs, but not of people with disabilities. Staff have attended relevant child protection training.

There is a good range of suitable toys and resources available for both free play and planned activities. Staff have attended special needs training. Appropriate records are kept and staff work closely with parents and professionals to plan to support children with special needs. Staff are consistent in their use of age appropriate and positive methods of behaviour management.

Staff have implemented new systems with which to share information with parents and carers, regarding the care and education of their children. The key worker system provides good opportunities for daily verbal information sharing. Good efforts are made to ensure relevant information is shared through a variety of suitable methods.

What has improved since the last inspection?

There were four actions identified at the last inspection. These were to ensure that staff improve their knowledge and understanding of the local child protection procedures. To provide Ofsted with a copy of the reviewed policies. To ensure that written confirmation of completed staff checks are available for inspection and to provide Ofsted with a copy of the written child protection statement. Since the last inspection, staff have attended suitable child protection training and a comprehensive written policy is now in place. Staff clearance documents are made available for inspection and copies of the policies and procedures have been sent to Ofsted and seen by the previous Childcare Inspector.

What is being done well?

- Staff use written risk assessments effectively to minimise hazards indoors, outdoors and on outings. The premises are secure and there are effective systems to monitor visitors to the setting and to identify authorised persons to collect children.
- Health and hygiene practices are good. Medication and accident records are completed and shared appropriately with parents. All staff hold first aid certificates and they follow suitable procedures to protect children from illness and infection.
- Staff have attended special needs training. They are familiar with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (SEN COP). Appropriate information is recorded and staff work closely with parents and professionals, in order to plan to support children with special needs.
- Staff are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers. They have implemented new systems with which to share information regarding the care and education of children. The key worker system works well to provide good opportunities for daily verbal information sharing. The pre-school environment offers good areas in which to display children's work

and written information for parents and carers. Good efforts are made to ensure relevant information is shared through a variety of suitable methods.

What needs to be improved?

- the range of resources which promote a positive awareness and understanding of people with disabilities.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
9	Extend the range of resources which promote a positive awareness and understanding of people with disabilities.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Little Merlins Pre-school offers good quality nursery education where children enjoy learning through play at a wide variety of well resourced activities. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas apart from communication, language and literacy which is limited by some significant weaknesses.

Teaching is generally good. Staff manage children's behaviour well and act as good role models. Good use is made of the wide range of resources available. The manager plans a curriculum for the children, linked to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Observations are carried out on children's developmental progress, and include assessments linked to key learning intentions. Most staff understand that these are used to help evaluate children's progress towards the early learning goals. The developmental records are not used to plan the next steps in children's learning or to plan extension activities to challenge older or more able children.

Leadership and management of the group is generally good. A relatively new committee is supportive of staff and encourages training and personal assessment. A mix of established and new staff work well as a team to ensure a consistent approach is given to children. All staff are responsible for teaching the children and a key worker system for children is in use. Staff are committed to on going professional development and regularly attend training courses.

The partnership with parents is generally good. Comprehensive policies, procedures and information sheets keep them informed about the group. In response to parents' questionnaires, key workers are now available for discussions about children's progress on a regular basis. A comprehensive entry profile ensures that parents share what they know about their child when they join the group.

What is being done well?

- Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted well. Children are confident and well behaved in the setting. They are learning to play well together. They are forming good relationships with the staff and each other.
- The manager plans a variety of interesting activities for children that cover all six areas of learning. Sessions are well structured and good use is made of the wide range of resources available.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's use of assessments to plan the next steps in children's learning,

particularly to offer challenges and extension activities for the more able children

- opportunities for children to start to recognise the initial sounds of letters, to practise emergent writing and to learn that writing has a purpose
- staff's use of mathematical language during everyday routines, to introduce problem solving activities, calculation and measurement.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The pre-school has made generally good progress since the last inspection. A new manager is in place and she has produced comprehensive plans that cover all six areas of learning. The plans are linked to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. Children are now managed more effectively in large group situations, due to the strategies used by the manager to engage children's attention. The development of the outside play area is an ongoing project; new wooden play equipment has recently been provided and the manager and committee intend to add more resources to provide challenges for all children. The use of the daily routine to reinforce mathematical thinking is still not used effectively by all staff members, especially to challenge more able children, and this has been raised again as a key issue from this inspection.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are developing confidence and personal independence. They are learning to sit and concentrate at large group activities, when they happily show and talk about items they have brought from home. They play well together, are learning to share and take turns when playing table top games. They are starting to become responsible within the group and are learning the daily routines such as helping to tidy up before snack time.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children communicate well. They are able to discuss and talk about their activities, especially during role play and when explaining their growing activities. Children are starting to enjoy looking at books. All children are able to recognise their own written name. Children are encouraged to make marks, but there is no purpose to the activities. Children are not given regular opportunities to learn phonic sounds or develop writing. Older children are not encouraged to try to name their work.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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All children are able to count to ten and many beyond, during group counting activities. Some children are able to recognise numerals up to ten. Some staff are starting to introduce simple estimation and calculation at snack time, counting number of plates and cups, but this is not reinforced by all staff. Staff are not using mathematical language, throughout the daily session such as "how many?", bigger, smaller, heavier, lighter" to introduce the concepts of calculation and measurement.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children enjoy many opportunities to explore and investigate as they grow seeds in their miniature garden. They are able to name the days of the week and discuss the weather and local events at circle time. Children enjoy constructing using plastic and wooden building blocks. They use technology with confidence, all are developing mouse control and many older children can complete simple computer programmes. Children use basic technology in their role play.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children move appropriately within their own space. They join in music and movement songs such as "I am the music man" and "Wheels on the bus". When playing outside children are given opportunities to hop, run and jump to develop co-ordination and large muscles. Staff encourage children to learn about personal hygiene and keeping healthy. Children are aware of the changes in their bodies after physical activities. They are developing good hand to eye co-ordination by using small tools.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children enjoy making collages using a variety of media. Staff encourage children to use their senses and discuss the differences in textures of dough, sand, paper and soil. They enjoy songs and will sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little star" and "Incy Wincey Spider" alone and with confidence. Children enjoy role play, they are able to play independently and make good use of props provided. Staff encourage and support children to develop their imaginations.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- develop the use of children's developmental records, so that they are used to plan more challenging activities for older and more able children and the next steps in all children's learning
- plan more opportunities for children to develop literacy skills by practising and valuing emergent writing, attempting to write with a purpose and by beginning to link sounds to letters
- increase staff's knowledge of how to use language during daily planned and routine practical activities to help children develop their understanding of number through problem solving.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.