

The Meads

Mill Mead School, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 3AA



Inspection date	9 December 2015
Previous inspection date	7 July 2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Inadequate	4
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Inadequate	4
Outcomes for children		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is inadequate

- The committee and manager are unaware that they do not meet some legal requirements or that safeguarding arrangements do not protect children. Safeguarding procedures are not implemented effectively. Robust recruitment procedures are not used to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children.
- Staff do not use observations and assessments of children effectively to ensure that children make good progress in their learning and development. They do not identify their interests and preferred learning styles and plan suitably challenging activities.
- The monitoring and supervision of staff has not improved the quality of teaching enough to prepare children well for the next stage of their learning. Staff do not organise activities so that children's interests are developed to extend their learning.
- Although risks are identified, they are not always removed or minimised promptly enough to ensure children's safety. The school gate has been left open a few times by construction workers and is not always checked.
- Registers do not always accurately record children's hours of attendance. The information provided for parents is not always up to date and correct.
- Staff have not considered how to manage outdoor play, given the restrictions of the school timetable. This negatively affects the choices in play and learning of children who prefer to learn outdoors.

It has the following strengths

- The children are well cared for and behaviour and relationships are good.
- Some aspects of personal development are well promoted and children are confident and happy.
- The setting has a strong partnership with Mill Mead School.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure that the safeguarding policy takes account of the latest legislation and that it is implemented effectively with regard to the use of mobile phones and cameras 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed to ensure that staff are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their role, for example, by checking references before staff are employed at the setting 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ improve risk assessments so that they identify all risks and implement these effectively so that the premises and equipment used by children are safe and risks and hazards that may occur on outings are identified 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure the attendance registers include a record of children's times of arrival and departure 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering the premises and ensure that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ improve the use of observations and assessments to develop an understanding of each child's starting points, ongoing levels of achievement, interests and preferred learning styles, and where their progress is less than expected, to help children make consistently good progress 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ implement each area of learning through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ put into place appropriate arrangements for the supervision of staff, so that staff training needs are clearly identified and develop clear targeted support to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for children 	31/12/2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure that all information provided for parents about the setting is up to date and accurate. 	31/12/2015

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- review the organisation and management of outdoor play to provide more choice for those children who prefer to learn outdoors
- ensure that the self-evaluation process accurately identifies weaknesses so that they are swiftly addressed, in order to provide a focus for planned priorities to consistently drive forward improvements.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the indoor play area and in the outdoor play space. She conducted a joint observation with the manager and discussed the practice.
- The inspector spoke to members of staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection and held a meeting with the leader of the pre-school.
- The inspector held discussions with key persons in relation to observations of children's play, learning and progress.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day of the inspection.
- The inspector looked at children's records, planning documentation and a range of other documentation, including policies and procedures to safeguard children's welfare. She looked at evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school and reviewed the pre-school's self-evaluation form.

Inspector

Sandra Teacher

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is inadequate

The leadership team has an inadequate understanding of the legal requirements and they are in breach of some of them. They do not review their practice and identify key areas for improvement. Safeguarding is not effective. The leadership team has not ensured that the policy documents which relate to safeguarding contain all the relevant, up-to-date information. They have not been rigorous in carrying out a range of suitability checks on new staff, such as taking up references before these staff start working with children. They have allowed cameras and mobile phones to be used by parents when children were performing in the Christmas show. Children's hours of attendance are not recorded accurately. As a result of these omissions, children are not adequately protected. However, all staff are able to identify signs of possible abuse and know how to refer concerns about adults working with children. The members of the leadership team do not observe staff practice regularly or effectively enough to be aware of the weaknesses in teaching and their impact on children's learning. They do not use the supervision arrangements consistently to support staff in promoting good development and well-being for children. They have not monitored the teaching, learning and assessment, to identify the inherent weaknesses which have a negative impact on the outcomes for children. They have not made sure that all the information provided for parents is accurate and up to date, both on the website and in the parents' handbook. However, parents are pleased with the care their children receive and feel that they are happy and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

Managers and staff regularly observe children to find out what they are interested in or what they can do. However, many staff are new to the setting and their interaction with children is often ineffective. Furthermore, they do not understand what they have observed and assessed and how to use this knowledge to provide children with good quality learning opportunities. They are not able to ascertain if children are making typical progress for their ages or to set more challenging activities for the older and more-able children. Some members of staff supervise activities as children sit at the creative area and draw pictures or stand back and watch children build in the construction area. Some staff do not talk to children as they play or help them to extend their learning. This results in children moving from one activity to another with little purpose or enthusiasm for learning, so they do not consistently make good progress. Children enjoy daily play outdoors. For example, they ride the bikes expertly or jump from coloured tubs with good balancing skills. This helps to develop both their small and large physical skills. However, children's choices in their play and learning are negatively affected because their access to the outdoor playground is restricted by the school timetable. Children who learn best outdoors do not have regular enough access to this environment. This hinders learning for those children. Furthermore, staff do not provide an appropriate range of things to do in the playground. Some of the outdoor resources are not kept clean and tidy, so they are not attractive and inviting to children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are inadequate

Managers and staff do not effectively assess risks to children's safety. Staff do not ensure that the premises are secure when building work is taking place on the school site. Behaviour is good and relationships are strong between all adults and children and also between the setting and the school. Care is taken with health and hygiene and children independently wash their hands before lunch. Older children are able to change their clothes by themselves when getting ready for the Christmas show. Their participation with older school children helps to build up their confidence and self-esteem as well as learning about the Christmas story and celebrating a special event. Children are polite and well mannered and show respect for all. They engage each other in conversation when pretending to play in a cafe environment and this helps them to develop good communication skills. They learn about other children from different countries and cultures.

Outcomes for children are inadequate

Children are not all making good progress in readiness for school. They have some opportunities to develop skills in literacy and mathematics but learning is not tailored to their individual needs and does not consistently give them enough challenge.

Setting details

Unique reference number	401994
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	868950
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	3 - 11
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	18
Name of provider	The Meads Management Group Committee
Date of previous inspection	7 July 2009
Telephone number	01992 582055

The Meads was registered in 1995. The three/four group is open each weekday from 9am until 3.30pm, term time only. The breakfast club runs from 7.45am until 8.45am. The after-school club operates from 3.15pm to 6pm. Both clubs run in term time only. The setting employs 40 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The setting provides funded education for three- and four-year-old children.

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