



Magic Moments Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY239397
Inspection date	08 November 2006
Inspector	Susan Ennis / Jo Blackman
Setting Address	1st Baldock Scout, Park Drive, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 6EN
Telephone number	07980 400690
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Registered person	Committee of Magic Moments Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Magic Moments Pre-school opened in 1996, moving to its present location in 2002. It is run by a management committee and is a registered charity. It operates from Baldock Scout Head Quarters situated in a residential area of Baldock in Hertfordshire. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open term time from 09:15 to 11:45 Monday to Friday, 11:45 to 12:30 Monday to Thursday for lunch club and 12:45 to 14:45 Mondays and Wednesdays for younger children. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 48 children from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 17 children receive funding for nursery education. Children who attend the pre-school mainly come from within the local area. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine staff. Seven of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a comfortable, clean environment. They are learning good health and personal hygiene practices through following practical daily routines such as, washing their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Their understanding of the relevance of these practices is developed through discussions with staff and the use of resources such as, posters telling the children to 'now wash your hands' and themes such as, Health and Hygiene Awareness Week. A child observing that she is growing states 'I'm a big girl now. I'm not a baby anymore. I was a baby when I was bored!' Children are encouraged to wipe their own noses as boxes of tissues are accessibly placed on low-level tables and then disposed of in the bin.

Children's special requirements with regard to health and diet are clearly documented and staff ensure that these are respected at all times. Use of a Snack Record Book ensures that staff and volunteers are fully aware of any dietary requirements with them signing their entry confirming this. Children's growth and development are promoted because staff have a sound knowledge of healthy eating and offer children a variety of nutritious foods at snack time, including fresh fruit that the children are encouraged to cut up for themselves. They discuss the difference between peeled and unpeeled apples and their likes and dislikes with one child stating 'I like melon.' Children's knowledge of different food types and where food comes from is developed through topic work such as, growing mung beans and making fresh fruit salad and Diwali sweets.

Children participate in a wide variety of physical activities which contribute to their good health. Good use is made of the outdoor play area, where children enjoy using balancing beams, hoops, balls, a basketball net and buggies. They also practice and improve their physical skills and coordination as they participate in structured activities. For example, children participating in a music and movement session learn control and coordination as they firstly find their own space and then move around the room like monkeys and elephants. Children demonstrate good control and skill in smaller physical movements, for example, they competently choose and manipulate smaller pieces when involved in creative activities using cutters, paint brushes and scissors. They demonstrate a good level of independence in their personal care, for example, visiting the bathroom independently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where there are colourful posters and displays of their work. Their safety is soundly promoted by staff carrying out daily safety checks, identifying hazards and taking steps to remove or minimise these. This area is further promoted as a written risk assessment is completed and reviewed on a regular basis. This helps to ensure that children are able to move around safely, freely and independently in all areas of the setting. The daily implementation of practical policies and procedures ensures that staff are aware of

safety practices and are able to promote children's safety in all areas, for example, there is a clear entry and exit procedure detailing the children's safe arrival and departure at pre-school. However, the emergency evacuation procedure is not practised frequently enough for children to become familiar with it and this potentially affects their safety in the event of a fire or similar emergency situation.

Children are developing their understanding of keeping themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by staff to help them appreciate the relevance of safety rules, for example, they understand why it is important not to run inside and how to carry their chairs safely. Children use toys and resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Resources are checked as they are used and washed regularly ensuring that the children are not put at risk.

Children's welfare is appropriately promoted because staff members have attended additional training and have a sound knowledge of child protection procedures. Although the relevant documentation regarding procedures and local contact numbers is in place, the settings Child Protection policy is not written with regard to them. Consequently children's welfare is not fully protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, secure and settled. They enjoy their time at the playgroup and enthusiastically participate in the activities and play opportunities provided. They are confident in their relationships with others and with members of staff. Their personal development and self-confidence are consistently promoted because staff treat all children as individuals, interacting and offering appropriate support where needed. Staff always remember to sit at the children's level and join in enthusiastically with their play and conversation, showing their genuine interest and further enhancing children's confidence and self-esteem. An example of this is when a staff member joins in with a role play activity in the home corner. She wears a rabbit hand puppet encouraging the children to make it feel better which prompts a child to give it a hug.

Children's interest is maintained and their natural curiosity encouraged because staff change the activities and play resources frequently, ensuring that children are purposefully occupied. They confidently make choices about their play and activities throughout the session. Children's knowledge and further thinking is encouraged as staff pay attention to getting to know them and make good use of open-ended questions and discussion. For example, when discussing feelings a member of staff asks 'what makes you happy?', 'what makes you poorly?' or when making a face mobile 'how many eyes do we have?', 'where's your nose?' Children participate in all activities because staff continuously adapt them to meet their individual needs, ensuring that their learning is promoted and that they benefit as much as possible. For example, when making the face mobile, older children know about facial features so the activity is extended by discussing facial expressions and feelings, whereas the younger children enjoy the experience of sticking, one child's picture having three noses and four eyes, and discussing how many eyes they have and what colour they are.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress and their overall development is promoted because staff have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and use appropriate teaching methods. Children spend their time purposefully because staff are skilled in monitoring them throughout the session, quickly noticing when they need encouragement and direction. Children are able to access a range of resources from those provided. Resources are rotated to provide added interest and stimulation. For example, play dough may be offered on both days, but on the first day tools are provided for cutting and shaping whereas on the second day, no tools are provided encouraging the children to use just their hands to manipulate the dough. Children's progress in all areas is well-balanced as staff use appropriate planning and observation methods and are skilled at assessing individual children. However, written assessments do not always clearly show the progress made by children, or how further progress is promoted. This could cause confusion for new staff members or lead to a delay in highlighting areas of achievement or concern.

Children demonstrate their enjoyment as they participate in a wide range of activities. These include regular opportunities to engage in role play scenarios, the exploration of music and movement, the use of information technology equipment, reading and a wide assortment of crafts and construction. Children's knowledge is further extended as they participate in a variety of themed topics, providing opportunities for them to look more closely at subjects such as, 'my family', where they look more closely at homes and gardens, clothes by designing their own, pets by using the home corner as a vets surgery and celebrating different ways of life by making Diwali sweets. Children interact well with others, confidently initiating conversations and using language to explain their thoughts such as, when using a rubber topped pencil, a child explains 'I'm going to rub I am. I'm going to draw with this pencil and then rub it out. look it's all gone.'

Children enjoy books listening and concentrating to the story, often anticipating the outcomes such as, when reading 'We're going on a bear hunt' children join in with the words together with doing the actions. Older children are able to recognise their name and are starting to associate sounds with real items when discussing the weekly phonic sound and what items begin with it. They have opportunities for mark-making and enjoy activities such as, threading, construction and drawing, for example, 'a wiggly worm' in an exercise book or walking around with a pad and pencil informing those around them that they are 'doing their homework.' All of which improve early writing skills and hand-eye coordination. Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them through opportunities to use technology, understandings it's uses and handling it with care. For example, they use digital cameras, video recorders and remote control cars.

Children are developing their understanding of simple mathematics such as, joining in with number rhymes like 'six fat sausages' holding up their fingers to correspond with the number of sausages left. They sort objects according to size and colour, noting the differences in the composition of the groups. They understand and use positional and size language. Children confidently recognise concepts such as, under, over and in front. They are gaining an awareness of their cultures and that of others through activities and regular access to resources such as, dressing up clothes, books and puzzles, which provide both information and positive images.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals and staff ensure that their specific needs are clearly identified and consistently met. Children are kind and considerate to each other. Their behaviour is good throughout the sessions as they competently choose their activities and share toys and resources. They respond well to staff whose positive approach and good role modelling ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Reasons are given for unwanted behaviour in a calm, quiet manner and praise is given when children's actions are positive. For example, when the bell is rung for tidy up time, the children are thanked for standing still so quickly and listening to the instructions given. Those children that help to put the resources away are then given a sticker.

Children are offered a wide range of opportunities promoting their understanding of the wider world and their local community. They experience celebrations and activities connected with Diwali, Chinese New Year and Harvest Festival and are involved in local activities such as, a Halloween disco and the Baldock Street Fair. The range of resources, including dolls, posters, musical instruments and dressing up clothes, provides positive images of different cultures and lifestyles.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their requirements clearly identified and met as there is a practical policy relating to this of which staff have a thorough understanding. Staff members have attended additional training and are experienced in identifying needs and working with parents and other professionals to ensure that children are offered the most appropriate care and support. The effective implementation of individual education plans, good teaching methods and a clear understanding of inclusion means that children are able to participate meaningfully in all activities and routines.

Children's needs are well documented and met because staff have an effective relationship with parents. A good quality prospectus informs parents regarding the settings aims and objectives and about all other additional information they need to feel confident that their child is spending their time purposefully within the pre-school. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to feel part of the pre-school. For example, copies of the songs for the pre-school Christmas production are made available enabling the parents to share in the experience with their child and as stated by one parent ' now mummy and daddy will be able to practice your songs for the concert with you.' Parents receive termly newsletters and have full access to all the pre-school policies and procedures including the complaints procedure.

In connection with the provision of funded nursery education, the quality of the setting's partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given comprehensive information about the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. There are informative displays which provide information about the ways in which children learn and the importance of providing good quality play experiences and opportunities. Parents are well informed about their child's progress through termly reports, access to play plans and discussions with staff either at parent's evening or informally before or after sessions. This positive attitude helps ensure that parents' views are valued, standards are maintained and appropriate care provided for each child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Their daily welfare is enhanced by the setting's good organisation and they benefit from the care provided by experienced, qualified staff. There are secure procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. A clear induction process, regular supervision and ongoing monitoring ensure that the pre-school's policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied.

Children's varying needs are consistently met and they are offered a broad, well planned range of activities and play opportunities. They are able to move freely and confidently between activities, enabling them to feel confident and secure. Good use is made of the second hall, where children are able to participate in group activities such as, playing with a feelings cube and music and movement. Good organisation of all areas ensures that children are never left waiting between activities because staff plan ahead, setting up new activities whilst the children are involved in group stories or outdoor play.

The leadership and management of funded children is good. Children's overall welfare is promoted by the clear understanding that the manager has for her role and responsibilities. She acts as a good role model, attending additional training and demonstrating her continued enthusiasm for her work. She also supports other staff members in training, celebrating their endeavours and hard work when qualifications are gained. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting and helps staff to feel valued and motivated. The setting consistently evaluates it's operational plan, updating where needed and working towards continuous improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous care inspection the provider was asked to ensure that qualified staff are deployed effectively within each room at all times and that all relevant information is transferred to the main register. A staff rota is now in operation ensuring that all areas are covered and that children's security is maintained. A signing in book records staff, volunteer and visitor attendance and early departures or late arrivals are recorded in the register. Hazards in the outside play area have been minimised and fire drills are fully documented ensuring the children's safety.

At the previous education inspection the setting agreed to provide further opportunities for older and more able children to develop an understanding of the links between sounds and letters. To use resources to develop all children's writing and mark making skills. To extend their mathematical knowledge for practical problem solving and understanding of different shapes and to extend their understanding of information technology. To develop all children's independence at snack time. Children now have many opportunities within the setting to develop in all areas of learning from recognising their names on their name cards at snack time to extending their mathematical knowledge by using resources such as, compare bears and puzzles. Their independence is encouraged during snack by pouring their own drinks and cutting their own fruit.

The setting was also asked to develop the use of assessment to evaluate children's progress and development in line with the stepping stones. Written assessments, play plans and termly reports evaluate children's progression but their progress towards the stepping stones is not easy to see. For this reason a recommendation for further improvement has been imposed.

The setting was asked to raise staff's awareness of the stepping stones and what children can gain from them. Staff's knowledge has increased as most of them now hold an early years qualification. For those whose knowledge is not so solid, the aims of adult-led activities are written for them to refer to including prompts on how the activity can be adapted for the different ages and abilities of the children and areas to encourage the children to think for themselves.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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.

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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 that the emergency evacuation procedure is regularly practised to improve the children's understanding of fire safety
- ensure that the child protection policy is written with regard to government and local guidelines

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):

- further improve the use of assessment to show children's progression towards the stepping stones

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk