



Lancaster University Pre-School Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309552
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Inspector	Lesley Sharples
Setting Address	Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 4YW
Telephone number	01524 594 464
E-mail	
Registered person	Lancaster University
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

Lancaster University Pre-School Centre has been registered since 1992. The registered provider is Lancaster University. It is situated within a purpose designed building set within the university campus, on the outskirts of Lancaster. Facilities for children comprise of eight rooms and there are five adjacent outdoor play areas to the side and rear of the building as well as grassed areas and woodland.

Registration is for a maximum of 158 children. The centre is open each weekday from 08.15 to 18.00 apart from Easter and Christmas. There are currently 150 children on roll whose ages range from birth to under 8 years. Of these, 41 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area as most of their parents or carers travel in to work at the university or are students. The centre currently supports a number of children with

learning difficulties and disabilities and also a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

There is a staff team of 41 childcare staff, of whom 35 hold appropriate early years qualifications with one member of staff working towards a qualification. Five support staff provide cover. The setting receives advice, support and training from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning effectively about being healthy. This is achieved through their daily routine because they understand the importance of regular hand washing during significant times of the day, such as after visiting the toilet, playing outside and before eating. Staff are vigilant in ensuring children know why this is important. They ensure developing independence does not compromise hygiene by observing children and reminding them to actually carry this out. This prevents the spread of infection and keeps children healthy. There are rigorous procedures in place to minimise the risk of infection to children as the environment is maintained to a high standard of cleanliness. Staff wear protective clothing when changing children's nappies and the sick children policy is shared with parents. Children's health is further promoted because a large number of staff hold first aid certificates and basic food hygiene certificates in line with current guidance. This means that they can prepare food hygienically and offer advice and support in case of accidents or illness. Children's health is protected by the effective way new systems and documentation are in place to protect them regarding the administration of medication and accident recording.

Children have their health and dietary needs met because staff use information from parents effectively to meet their individual needs. This means that children's dietary requirements and preferences are adhered to at all times. Support staff in the kitchen also have access to important information about allergies and preferences, so that these are strictly complied with. Some parents choose to provide lunches and other children benefit from the provision of a range of healthy and nutritious snacks and meals which include fresh fruit and vegetables. This promotes children's good health and aids the development of both physical and mental growth from nutritionally balanced foods. Children understand the importance of healthy eating and good nutrition as they enjoy their meals within a social time. Children are able to access their snacks when they choose to within a designated period of time. This means that if they are engaged in play they can complete their activity, enjoy small group snacks and have as much or as little as they wish. Drinking water is available at all times through various means. Some children have their own water containers and jugs and tumblers are also offered and easily accessed. Consequently children are never thirsty.

Young children and infants rest and sleep according to their own needs because staff follow their home routines. They have their own comforters and this helps with their emotional well-being. Staff sensitively provide relaxing music and low level lighting which creates a calming atmosphere. Further to this new children are able to spend valuable time settling in. Parents

support this by being available if needed and extend the periods of time to ensure young children feel secure and have made a meaningful relationship with their key worker. Children walk to the gym and take off their coats and shoes with help. They also have a range of opportunities to balance, jump, slide, run, crawl through a tunnel and play with bats and balls. They are enthusiastic and relish their time spent in choosing what they wish to do, ably supported by staff. However, the outdoor area does not fully provide for a full range of opportunities for large and small muscle development. Limited hard surface areas outside each room reduce chances for running and using wheeled toys.

Older children benefit from regular opportunities to play outdoors with equipment which partly promotes their physical development. This includes the continuous play provision extended outdoors, such as growing herbs, sand play, and water play which is currently a car wash. This is in addition to weekly sessions in the gym for vigorous activities and also exploring the woodland area. Children go outside in most weathers and bring wellingtons and waterproofs for damp days. They regularly benefit from fresh air during different times in the day. Doors can be left open to give children choice should they wish to go out and one area has been made particularly inviting and interesting following recent attendance on a course.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in welcoming, safe and secure indoor and outdoor environments. The setting is warm and well ventilated as well as bright and maintained to a high standard. There is an area created for parents and this is well used for social interaction as well as for sharing written information. Access into the setting is monitored and visitors sign in and out. Children are able to move freely around as space is sufficient and organised well, which allows good movement between activities in safety. Rooms are vibrant and visually stimulating. Especially notable is the quality and thought given to low level items of interest within the baby room so that their eye level is catered for. For example, balloons and lightweight materials that move in the breeze and lights which are coloured and have variable settings for added interest. Sleep areas are relaxing and atmospheric with quiet music and soft lighting and mobiles, creating a cosy space for rest.

Children benefit from the provision of safe, high quality furniture, equipment and wide ranging resources. These are plentiful and of suitable design to meet the routine needs of individual children, such as sturdy low level tables and chairs and plenty of provision for infants to sleep and eat safely. Children independently select activities that are safely stored on low level shelves and in trays which are clearly labelled or have pictures. This promotes good understanding of where resources belong. They are learning to keep themselves and their environment safe by actively helping to put toys away. The provision for children's activities is expanded because the setting is constantly updating resources and is now a member of the local authority resource centre. Staff are able to have a wish list, used for consideration when new resources are being acquired.

Children are kept safe from harm as staff exercise vigilance though constant supervision. Especially noted is the implementation of robust procedures on outings. Safety measures, when walking children to the gym involve ropes to hold where the knot is, staff reinforcing safety

by talking about this with children before they go, staff wearing fluorescent jackets at the front and back of the line, using the crossing and stopping traffic and standing to ensure all children safely cross. Children's whereabouts are recorded and numbers retained in the office prior to leaving. This, alongside counting children entering the gym and extra staff available keeps children safe and sound.

Children's safety and welfare is further assured as staff clearly understand the procedures for recording and reporting any concerns relating to child protection. The designated person was not present during inspection but the deputy demonstrates a clear awareness of the procedures. Most of the staff team have completed child protection training and have a basic knowledge and awareness of a range of types of abuse and neglect. The child protection statement includes relevant telephone numbers, procedures if an allegation is made against a member of staff and up to date information regarding Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Staff are also aware of the government guidance 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused-Summary'

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young children benefit from practitioner's thorough planning and the provision of activities and play opportunities to support and develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. Planning now links very well to the 'Birth to three matters' framework so that children's individual development and learning needs are met. Staff working with children under three years have attended training and fully embrace the theoretical learning and its application in practice. Consequently, young children are developing and achieving at their own pace with future development plans in place to help them in their next stage.

Young children and infants have access to continuous play opportunities. They are regularly observed in their play by their key worker and other staff which influences planning of focused experiences. A daily log is maintained which is shared with parents, so they have written records of significant aspects and experiences. This is alongside the daily and weekly planning information on display as well as both morning and afternoon 'focus' experiences.

Staff are now confident in allowing children to choose for themselves because the curriculum and provision of activities and resources has vastly improved. This is seen in young children and infants exploring for themselves using stimulating resources. For example, a mirror triangle and many tactile and discovery play experiences with items in baskets and in trays on the floor with various textures. Children are becoming skilful communicators when absorbed in looking at books with a member of staff on an individual basis, pointing to and responding to pictures. They explore mark making and are given choices, such as 'do you want a paper plate or paper to paint on?'. A full range of opportunities are offered and repeated if required so that children develop at their own pace.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have strong knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn, gained through training and further professional development. This is implemented well into the planning and delivery of the

education. Children enjoy and are interested in the different areas of learning. They become focused, able to resist distractions and persist for some time because the learning environment and programme of activities is effectively planned to provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences across the six areas of learning. It is suited to the needs of the children, reflects the community the children come from and the wider world. This is achieved through the provision of activities to reflect a wide range of cultures and customs, language and dress, as part of their everyday activities.

Children are excited and motivated to learn. They often initiate their own activities, building with blocks within the construction area and wearing hard hats on the 'construction' site. Practitioners have the confidence to allow children to develop their own ideas and know when not to interfere. All children are happily engaged in the well planned and thought out provision for continuous play. Children learn to share and take turns through which they learn to value and respect the feelings of others. They understand the differences between right and wrong and are learning about morals in society. This promotes their confidence and helps them to succeed. Children's confidence and self-esteem is therefore effectively promoted and they achieve to their full potential.

Children interact positively with others. They negotiate and take turns in conversations, enjoy listening to and using spoken and written language in their play and learning. They sustain attentive listening whilst enjoying stories and ask relevant questions. They are confident and show awareness of the listener, for example discussing with others about what they are doing. Children are competent using pencils and crayons holding them effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed, when they are writing their names. Practitioners also label work completed, with the children's name so that they can compare and copy with their own attempts. Children are developing an understanding of numbers as labelling and for counting. They say and use number in order and in familiar contexts, count reliably up to 10 everyday objects and recognise numerals up to nine. Practitioners use many opportunities to encourage the use of number, such as when playing with a train and using this opportunity for calculating.

Children thoroughly enjoy exploring and investigating their surroundings. They find out about and identify some features of living things, such as planting herbs and looking after them and going exploring in the woodland area with buckets to put their 'finds' in. Competence in finding out about and using everyday technology and programmable toys, supports children's learning in ICT and in discovering how things work. They use simple computer programmes which helps to extend their skills. They also engage fully in exploring media and materials, colour and texture, in 2 and 3D. For example, they have sliced oranges and lemons within the water play for interest and matching colour, as well as accessing dried pineapple slices and the top within trays with other items of interest. This provides many stimulating textures in inspiring ways to challenge children's thinking and learning.

Children are making good progress in relation to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning. Practitioners use clear information gained either from home or from previous records within the setting to extend their learning from their starting points. As a consequence, the educational programme is appropriate from the outset. Children's achievements are recognised and staff make good use of the learning outcomes for each child

to plan for their next stage. These are contained within the new format of observations and assessment which is developing successfully. This means that there is a clear picture of individual children's progress.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The setting is ensuring the provision of equality of opportunity for all children and their families. The policy reflects this in admissions, curriculum, special needs, food and drink, and employment. Staff are encouraged to keep up to date with their training of equality and inclusion and this is translated into practice. There are good procedures in place to ensure individual needs are fully met. For example, plenty of time is given for introductory visits with parents and if necessary, extending the length of time to ensure individual children take as long as required to separate. As a result, children gain a sense of belonging and they settle in well.

Children are highly valued as individuals and they gain a positive view and understanding of diversity as staff provide a selection of meaningful activities and resources. For example, within the themed activities they have access to wonderful role play items, books and musical instruments. Support for children with learning disabilities and difficulties is successfully focussed on the settings Special Educational Needs policy. Designated staff are to have training and they know how to signpost parents to appropriate professional advice if necessary. As a result, children's special needs are effectively met. Children with English as an additional language are supported well because staff work with parents to help settle the children in. They learn key words in the child's first language so that children have some familiarity and there are many other languages displayed throughout the setting at children's level.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They display plenty of interest in the activities and experiences provided which promotes cooperative behaviour. This is because experiences are well matched to children's needs to provide a suitable level of challenge. Positive interactions from staff promote children's self-esteem. Children receive ongoing praise and encouragement for their efforts, such as helping to tidy up. Stickers are also used to promote positive behaviour and children feel proud of them. Consequently, children learn right from wrong and play harmoniously.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents receive a wealth of information about the provision, particularly the educational programme, both prior to attending and throughout their time in the setting. This is achieved in a variety of ways, such as newsletters, children's individual folders, daily log sheet and notice boards throughout the setting. They are given good quality information about their child's progress and achievements on a regular basis, both verbally and in writing. This ensures they are fully informed about what their children do and learn in the setting and what it has to offer. Children benefit from the close relationship between the parents and the carers and the way that information is shared. For example, through daily discussion with conversations focussed upon the children's needs, preferences and experiences.

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

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Comprehensive recruitment and vetting procedures are robust, because they follow university guidelines. This ensures children are well protected and cared for by staff who are suitable and have the knowledge and understanding to promote children's development in all areas. Management have a complete understanding of how to ensure initial and continuing suitability of staff and respond to identified areas of training. For example, the high numbers of staff who have completed the 'Birth to three matters' training as a result of the previous inspection, which has secured vast improvement in the provision for younger children. The adult-child ratio now positively supports children's care, learning and play and this has made a significant impact on all children.

Established and revised policies and procedures work effectively in practice to promote the safe and efficient management of the setting and promote the welfare, care and learning of children. The required documentation is very well organised, maintained up to date and stored to ensure confidentiality. For example, children's records hold relevant information and consents so that staff can meet individual needs. This contributes to the efficient operation of the setting and meets regulatory requirements.

The leadership and management is good. Management now have a clear vision for the nursery education with a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children. This is achieved by prioritising the actions and recommendations made from the last inspection and by focussing on staff training and support through major changes, as a consequence of this. The management has very successfully led and supported staff, leading to significant benefits for children, mainly through the concept of continuous play. Management seek advice and guidance and as a result, have clear development plans in place. Monthly audits are completed relating to different areas of practice and upon completion of any action plan completed, another area is focussed upon. Alongside this is the effective monitoring and evaluation covering all areas of the National Standards, the 'Birth to three matters' framework and 'Outcomes for children' in which strengths are identified and areas to develop recognised. This has been completed since the last inspection and focuses on the next stage of improvements, such as the outdoor area. This means that continuous evaluation consistently improves the service for children.

Management builds committed teams and provides regular opportunities for communication via monthly staff meetings and a staff newsletter. Staff are listened to and are able to contribute to the effective running of the setting. This can be attributed to staff sharing a common understanding of good practice which benefits all the children receiving early education. A programme of training is maintained which responds to staff needs so that they are fully supported in developing their knowledge and skills, which contributes to children's progress. Management set clear and strong directions, leading to improvements in the organisation of nursery education and the outcomes for children, through positive attitudes to change and enthusiasm in applying these changes. As a result, children's learning is suitably enhanced.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Care

At the last inspection the quality of the care of children was judged as inadequate. The pre-school needed to promote the developmental learning needs of children under three-years-old, by organising and implementing planning systems based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and to develop a system of sharing information with parents about their children's daily routines and activities. They were also required to ensure children receive an appropriate level of staff care and support by reviewing the staff deployment arrangements to meet the required staff-to-child ratios at all times in the various rooms and areas used.

The management have fully supported staff in implementing a whole new approach to the way they provide for the opportunities and experiences for children under three-years-old to develop. Thirteen staff have attended the specific training on the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have fully embraced the changes in the way they observe and plan for individual children's development and learning. Monthly changes to the team leader role, in each room, means that responsibility for planning involves everybody at some time. Planning is influenced by the use of all key workers written observations, incorporating their comments identifying the next stage in the child's development. This ensures future play and practical support fulfils the needs of each child. The planning is displayed and therefore openly shared with parents. It evidences clear understanding of the framework and relates very well to the aspects and components within it. Staff have made very good improvements in the way in which observations and assessments are recorded. 'All about me' books contain clear and concise information of children's developing achievements which is complimented with photographs illustrating what they are doing. These books are routinely shared with parents, who on occasions, take them home to show extended family members.

As a result, children benefit fully from the thoughtful provision of activities. Most importantly, they have their individual development needs recognised and provided for so that staff promote continuing development in all areas. Staff state they know their children so well now and they enjoy working in this way. They feel what is being offered can be validated in their recordings and future planning. They wholeheartedly support the changes and as a result feel tremendous job satisfaction and subsequently this fully contributes to the vastly improved provision for young children. All staff seen and spoken with state they feel much happier and recognise how positive the impact on children has been and how they are able to meet their individual needs. They work extremely well together, know what they are doing and talk confidently about their change in their work and their attitude to it. They are fulfilled and happy and consequently this impacts on the children substantially in a positive and enabling way. Young children are therefore happy, content, meaningfully engaged and parents' state they are amazed at what their children do each day and how well they are informed of this. They also feel that their children receive a lot of individual care and attention and also express their pleasure in looking at their children's 'All about me' books.

The adult-child ratio now positively supports children's care and supervision. The increase in the number of support staff completely ensures ratios are maintained at all times, in all areas, with staff directly working with children. This has been achieved by employing extra staff

covering for lunchtime breaks as well as wherever needed throughout the day. Management are extremely vigilant in ensuring this, as well as staff not leaving the room until someone replaces them. Registers in each room evidence the numbers of children and numbers of staff at any one time.

This means that children benefit from greatly improved levels of individual attention. It also supports the increase in time for staff to observe their play and development and subsequently undertake better assessment for their future development needs. The deployment of staff allows for direct and continuous working with children and this has impacted positively on levels of interaction, and the provision of purposeful activities, which are thoughtfully provided. It also enables staff in following young children's own routines and their needs to be met, such as sitting with a baby bottle feeding by the key worker in a relaxed manner, as well as children having individual meal times. Older children enjoy being taught to knit and staff have the time to spend with individual children to encourage these skills. Others are completely absorbed in developing their own imaginative play in the doctor's surgery. Staff have increased opportunities to observe children and undertake in depth planning, therefore the benefit to children is many fold and impacts enormously on their greatly improved all round care and education which now has reached a high level.

Nursery education

At the last inspection it was agreed to extend children's knowledge and understanding of healthy living by developing their opportunities to be physically active through a planned programme of activities with access to suitable equipment; to ensure individual children's learning needs are met with sufficient challenge to extend their progress in all areas of learning, and in particular the level of staff support for numeracy based work, and reviewing the planning and assessment systems, including the use of regular observations, differentiation and a suitable balance of focussed work and continuous provision. They were also required to extend the opportunities for children's learning through parent-partnership by providing suggestions for parents to support their children's learning at home; reporting and sharing progress on an ongoing basis with parents, and providing information about the planning and the content of the Foundation Stage.

The provision for the outdoor area is given high priority by the setting. A lottery grant is being sought in consultation with parents, to incorporate their suggestions and so that areas of natural woodland can be fully used safely and a range of equipment fitted. This remains an area for improvement and so a further recommendation is made so that children benefit. All children have regular access to outdoor space and as part of their daily play enjoy the benefits of fresh air in most weathers. Gym sessions continue, so that once throughout the week, all children have an opportunity for vigorous play in a large enclosed space. Walks are undertaken by all children, including babies, to the duck pond and other areas of the campus. Activities, as part of the curriculum, include music and movement and obstacle courses indoors, which means children have regular opportunities to be physically active.

Children's learning needs are now met with sufficient challenge to extend their progress in all areas. This is as a result of planning following on from the good practice implemented for younger children and translated into the Foundation Stage planning and assessment systems.

These successfully achieve the high levels of individual observations and assessments for children's next steps. Practitioners now skilfully use previous information about individual children's learning and this tracks their future learning needs. As a result, planning therefore incorporates differentiation. Practitioners are enthusiastic in the way continuous play allows children to development for themselves and they also recognise when focussed experiences are needed to help children move on. Number is now an integral part of the children's environment and part of their everyday play and learning and this supports their increasing understanding and use of number.

Practitioners have made some good efforts in parent partnership. New initiatives, such as the home link sheet, which parents can share information about their child at home and the parent group who have expressed interest in their children learning another language, partly achieves what the recommendation requires. Practitioners are keen to evolve this aspect of practice and actively seek advice and support from the local authority. However, at present this does not comprehensively target extending individual children's learning at home, by encouraging parent's involvement in their learning.

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.

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):

- increase children's opportunities for physical development and outdoor experiences, by the provision and access to suitable equipment

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):

- increase the opportunities for children's learning by supporting parents as educators within the home.

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