

Artisans Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY376536
Inspection date	20/05/2009
Inspector	Susan Tuffnell

Setting address	Crbtree Fields Scout HQ, Waldergrave Park, Harpenden, AI5 5SF
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Artisans Kindergarten registered in 2008 and is owned and managed by Tasty Tales Limited. It operates from a scout headquarters located in a residential area of Harpenden. The setting has sole use of the premises during the hours of operation. Children share a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The setting is on ground level and fully accessible.

The Kindergarten is open from 08.00 until 16.30 with the main session times from 09.15 until 11.45 and 12.45 until 15.15 with flexible options for children to attend early morning, stay for lunch and the later collection at the end of the day. The setting opens during term time only.

There are 48 places for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children aged five years to under eight may attend holiday workshops run at varying times in school holidays. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The Kindergarten employs ten members of staff who all hold appropriate early years qualifications and offers the Montessori method of teaching. The setting works in partnership with parents and other professionals.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is outstanding. Artisans Kindergarten provides a high class service for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Staff create a very welcoming environment and are skilled at ensuring children benefit from the provision. Senior staff lead a culture of reflective practice and all staff work together to review the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. Extensive evaluations on all areas of the setting have been carried out since the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS) and staff have worked very hard to identify and improve practice. Consequently, the outstanding practice of the setting across all areas, has been achieved through the determination and dedication of all the staff who show a genuine desire to promote the best care and opportunities for children.

All the children are truly valued at the setting and high attention is shown to their individual needs. Equality and inclusion, and the diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected. Children's awareness of diversity and differences is promoted sensitively. For example, the setting's support for the charity Oxfam enables the children to collect clothes for recycling. Their involvement in 'Red Nose Day' resulted in the children making and selling 'Red Nose Cakes' to raise money for charity. Excellent work is carried out by staff to forge close links with parents and carers. Staff have developed secure relationships with other professionals such as the teachers at the local schools, to ensure that the individual needs of all the children are continuously met.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- ensuring that children have opportunities to use activities and resources independently; this refers to pouring their own drinks.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The excellent knowledge, energy and enthusiasm of the senior staff ensures that all aspects of the provision are well-led. Effective implementation of the comprehensive policies, records and procedures support the safe and efficient management of the setting and makes sure that the needs of all the children are met. The kindergarten has produced a detailed self-evaluation which has clear priorities for the future. For example, they have successfully applied for a grant to improve the garden area as an exciting and stimulating learning environment for the children. The setting is staffed exclusively by graduates and trained teaching professionals, qualified either in the Montessori method of teaching or in early years childcare and education. A very professional environment is created in which every staff member has a secure understanding of child development, pedagogy and child psychology. All senior staff have specific areas of responsibility such as planning, safeguarding and behaviour management and continually strive to maintain the very high quality care and education through an impressive training programme.

Robust safeguarding procedures are consistently implemented to ensure that children are protected. The recruitment process includes a clear induction programme and a high level of support for new staff who are mentored by senior staff. Ongoing observation and assessment of staff ensure that the highest quality of practice is maintained. The wonderful dedication and commitment of the staff and their successful deployment has a significant impact on the children's learning and development and their overall welfare.

Staff demonstrate clear commitment to working with parents, carers and external agencies. Superb work is done to forge closer links. Parents and children met their key worker at induction sessions where information is shared to give a clear picture of the child's needs and abilities. Extensive information is shared with parents. Children's files are colour coded for parents in line with the key worker system and contain some excellent examples of the children's work. Good systems are in place to share information such as regular newsletters, informal coffee mornings, open mornings to discuss future projects, displayed planning and regular verbal communication. Reports about the children's progress and achievements are discussed with parents at consultation meetings and parents have ample opportunity to comment on their children's life at home and to share information on a daily basis. Parents are extremely complimentary about the

setting and the positive impact on their children's learning, development and care in recent questionnaires. Many letters and cards received from parents and children show how highly the staff are considered. Wider partnership working is encouraged through good links with local schools.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children make excellent progress in all areas of learning and development and are offered an extensive range of imaginative opportunities and activities. The highly individual and flexible approach to planning ensures that children's uniqueness is valued because activity planning is based on their individual interests and current developmental needs. Staff have a very secure knowledge of child development and offer the children extensive support and encouragement which enables them to be fully involved and active in their learning. The excellent settling-in procedures and extremely caring staff mean that children settle well and are helped to build secure relationships. For example, children who naturally radiate to a particular member of staff are able to choose this person as their key worker. Detailed planning that covers all areas of learning is displayed in a clear format for parents. Staff have worked extremely hard to implement the requirements of EYFS quickly and with the minimum disruption to the children's enjoyment of the activities.

Children participate in a stimulating and challenging variety of activities which include a wealth of exciting resources to investigate. They are inspired to explore practical life as they attempt buttons and zips, explore bottles and screw-on tops and match keys and locks. Children have extensive opportunities to understand concepts such as magnetism, floating and sinking, the elements, colour mixing and different textures in the Montessori cultural life area. Abundant resources are available for children to practise physical skills as they whisk, pour, sieve and mix a variety of substances and use tweezers, nail brushes, scissors and pencil sharpeners for specific tasks. Children show confidence in self-help skills as they contribute to the settings routines such as laying the table, sweeping the floor and putting away equipment. However, although children serve themselves with food at meal times, their independence is not fully fostered as the drinks are poured by staff. Excellent adult support interests and absorbs the children in their chosen activity. They show mature listening skills and are responsive to instructions from staff. Innovative teaching skills include interesting visual aids to focus children's attention. For example, children are introduced to a new letter and the sound is compared to familiar objects to help the children remember. They draw over the printed letter with different colour chalks to identify their own marks. Staff use every opportunity to extend children's language as they encourage children to name colours, shapes and numbers as they play. Children have excellent opportunities to find out about and identify the uses of everyday technology as they explore tape recorders, head phones, digital cameras, printers, calculators and old mobile phones. Role play includes clocks and timers and cash registers for the play shop. Children run around the wild grass area and jump from hoop to hoop counting from one to ten. Staff encourage the children to trace numbers with their finger as they say each one and to count the numbers of items on the puzzle. Children are gaining confidence and competence in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy as they explore a broad range of contexts with the extensive resources

freely available to them.

Children show real interest and excitement as they take part in an innovative project about recycling. They identify and sort the different items of recycled objects and display and name recycled materials in their books. Children learn how to recycle food waste as they observe the changes in the see-through compost bin. Left-over food is used to make delicious meals like 'Bubble and Squeak', Bread and Butter Pudding and Banana Bread to help the children understand about avoiding waste. Extensive planning for the natural world gives wonderful opportunities for children to plant and tend seeds and bulbs and sow wild flower seeds in the wild area of the garden. The process of life cycles is shown to children as they observe flowers producing seed and dying. Children observe the ants in the glass containers as they build tunnels and process their food. Log piles are built to attract insects and observation trays and magnifying glasses are used to look closely at mini beasts. Children 'grab and go' the windy day kits and use windmills and wind direction indicators to test wind speed. Children's individuality is treasured and encouraged with wonderful children's birthday celebrations. Children and staff make positive comments which are added to the child's 'Special Person' book and read out to the group. The book contains photographs of the child through the stages of their life and celebrates their achievements.

Children are cared for in a very safe, secure environment. Comprehensive risk assessments cover all areas of the setting and are reviewed regularly to ensure the high standards of health and safety are maintained. Children have good opportunities to help them understand about safety as they practise fire drills and use resources respectfully. They are offered a healthy diet and their growth and development is promoted well. Children are safeguarded because of the secure knowledge and understanding of the staff.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	1
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	1

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	1
How well are children helped to stay safe?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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