

Abbey Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	126947
Inspection date	02/11/2009
Inspector	Susan Jennifer Scott

Setting address	Vicarage Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 2HE
Telephone number	07851429453
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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.

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Description of the setting

Abbey Pre-School opened in 1992. The pre-school operates from a large room in a church community hall, in Minster, Isle of Sheppey. The playgroup serves the local area.

The setting opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 9:15 am to 11:45am Monday to Friday.

The group is registered to provide care for 25 children under eight years and all of these may be in the early years age group but none may be under two years. Overnight care is not provided. This provision is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 36 children in the early years age group on roll. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are welcomed, as are children who speak English as an additional language.

Six staff work with the children. All have early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The uniqueness of each child is recognised by staff who provide good support for individuals and their families, ensuring that all children make progress in their learning and development. Children feel safe because there are good systems in place to safeguard their welfare and staff ensure procedures are regularly reviewed and checked. Children benefit from the spacious environment, although opportunities for outdoor play have some limitations. All staff and the committee assist in the self-evaluation process by identifying strengths and improvements. The stable staff team use information provided by parents particularly well to ensure children's experiences are positive and build upon the effective partnership they have with parents and carers.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- use systematic observations and assessments of children's achievements, interests and learning styles in all areas of learning to plan challenging, relevant and motivating play experiences for each child indoors and out, across all areas of learning and development
- ensure children know the rules for being safe in different spaces
- record details of any problems encountered and how they were resolved during the regular evacuations

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding from their training and have established clear procedures for dealing with allegations. The staff are aware how and when to record information and how to use this to refer any concerns to the appropriate agency. This provides good safeguards for the welfare of children, as does the information provided for parents on how to raise complaints or concerns. Managers ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of the procedures that support good practice and use these for the induction of new staff.

The manager has completed a comprehensive self-evaluation and staff assist in identifying improvements they can make. Changes are monitored so that adjustments can be made to the quality of the provision. For example, a milk bar was introduced and later reviewed when staff felt it did not benefit children as much as the group snack time at small tables which they have reverted to. Good awareness of the needs of children and a shared vision for the development of the setting enables continuous improvement in the quality of the provision. The managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff, introducing systems and researching information to secure improvement. They stimulate the enthusiasm of staff and channel their efforts to good effect which has a positive impact on outcomes for children. Planning is founded on robust evidence, tackling key areas of weakness systematically and building on areas of strength.

A very good two-way flow of information ensures staff regularly make parents aware of children's achievements and any concerns they may have. The managers make excellent use of questionnaires with children and parents, and an analysis of responses is used to assist in developing provision. Children's confidence is enhanced through the use of plans which note all of their requests for activities and resources. This provides good opportunities to build upon, and to share experiences the children have. Information is shared with parents during the consultations when children's achievements are discussed. When children first begin at the group their individual requirements and development are noted so that staff can work effectively to support and include them. Other settings that children attend, such as local schools, are also sent information to assist the transition process for children. Parents express great satisfaction with the service they receive and the progress their children make. They are represented by an active and supportive committee and benefit from easy access to clear information about the policies and procedures.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

There is a system for recording children's experiences and achievements, and staff use this to plan for the next steps in their learning. Key workers are mainly responsible for providing opportunities to support children's progress through the activities they plan and deliver. However, staff do not consistently ensure their records are used to feed into activity plans and enable children to achieve the next

steps in their development within a short time.

Staff do support spontaneous learning very successfully and this builds upon the individual interests of all the children. There are good records clearly showing that all children contribute to the play plans through their conversations with staff and requests for particular toys. This means that the play opportunities provided are always popular with children who are often exuberant in their play, expressing their enjoyment. For instance, children shout and squeal with glee when using the climbing frame.

Staff have recently developed a system that ensures every area of learning is covered by their assessments and this enables learning priorities for each child to be identified accurately. Plans provide good opportunities for staff to skilfully promote and extend children's experiences. Children confidently explore by taking toys and resources outside to play, such as the sit-and-ride equipment and the musical instruments. Children all benefit from frequent opportunities to use the outdoor area and learn about the effects of exercise. They become aware of the changing seasons when they notice the fallen leaves on a walk in the grounds and are encouraged to collect and use these in activities by staff.

Children are encouraged to develop their understanding and sense of responsibility by assisting in tidying up. For example, they help to tidy away some toys and are familiar with the routines, forming an orderly line when they have to wash before their snack. They happily sit in small groups with their key person and enjoy a pleasant and interesting break discussing their preferences in food and drink. All the children feel secure and show how confident they are by helping themselves to healthy snacks as well as choosing which drink they want. The staff are very adept at enabling children to extend their understanding and skills because they constantly talk to them and nurture their ideas and thoughts.

Children enjoy a varied and interesting range of play activities to support their progress towards the early learning goals. Adults work very closely with them, listening to what they say and encouraging them to express their own ideas and follow their own interests. Children can choose their own activities from the selection provided and staff pay particular attention to ensuring that all children who attend have their individual needs and interests provided for. Children's relationships with each other reflect the inclusive attitude of the staff who are welcoming and friendly towards parents and visitors. All the children play harmoniously together and behaviour is very good. This results from the positive rules referred to as 'have a happy morning' which are represented in words and pictures and are recited every day.

The needs of children of different ages and stages of development are successfully met through the provision of an appropriate range of resources. The staff ensure activities enable all the children of varying levels of competence to achieve well by offering a varied range of equipment. For example, children can make choices about the scissors they use, selecting those to suit right or left handed users, or those with sprung handles for the less experienced children. Staff facilitate these opportunities by making suggestions, supervising the activity and discussing safety so that activities are interesting and safe for all children. As a result of the good,

sensitive support from staff, all the children are confident, relaxed and enjoy their time here.

The premises are attractive and spacious, although there is limited space for children to experience storytime or other quiet activities. The small side room used for this activity has many chairs stored in it and the remaining space is insufficient to accommodate the whole group safely. Staff sometimes read stories outside when the weather permits and some days children use the side room in two small groups. The outside area adjoins a car park and the group have little control over their outside environment. However, staff use stable barriers to secure a small area to the side so that children can experience a safe free flow of inside/outside play during most sessions. Staff sometimes take children on a short walk, or use the grassed area at the far side of the car park. The children are learning about safety and staff give them reminders but this practice is not as securely embedded as the indoor 'rules' which are recited and discussed positively every day.

Children really enjoy their learning, they show great enthusiasm for the activities organised for them and particularly enjoy the input from staff. For example, children have been making hedgehogs by stuffing tights with compost and planting grass seed for hair. They took these home to water and care for at half term and are pleased to observe that their hedgehogs have now all grown hair in the form of grass. Children are proud of their achievements and want to share these with their parents and carers.

Children settle quickly and happily into this safe environment when they first attend. They feel secure in the welcoming setting and enjoy the activities as the staff support their choices very well and respond to their expressed interests. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem. Children are familiar with good personal hygiene practices such as hand washing and learn that this helps to prevent the risk of infection. Children enjoy well balanced snacks, comprising fruit, cheese or noodles and a drink of their choice during the break. They are encouraged to discuss the healthy food offered because staff display pictures under the heading of 'five a day'. Children with particular dietary needs receive good support to ensure these are met by staff who refer to their records if in any doubt.

Children learn to keep themselves safe because the staff remind them to use play equipment sensibly. They are cared for in clean premises which are expertly risk assessed and they participate in regular emergency evacuations, although staff do not record any details, such as problems encountered. Staff care for sick children appropriately and manage any accidents using their first aid skills; they record these promptly and have a secure system to ensure all parents are notified of these when signing the records. Children have opportunities to learn about aspects of their own cultures and those of others; they do this by celebrating festivals, learning about foods and using books and pictures reflecting different cultural traditions. There are clear procedures in place to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are welcomed into the setting.

Children enjoy books that are regularly rotated and used to support topics or routines, such as autumn. Children happily sit and draw or colour pictures while

chatting to staff about their experiences because staff sustain their conversations well. Children are encouraged to extend their knowledge and skills through a range of activities, such as using a scanner and laminator to preserve leaves and flowers which are displayed. They also develop a range of skills through their outdoor play when they use stilts and hoops which staff support well. Children particularly enjoy walking round the grounds of the abbey and church and collect some fallen leaves, encouraged by staff who discuss their recent activities and experiences. This enables children to recall achievements and consolidate their understanding. Children also build upon their developing knowledge when they notice a machine being used to suck up leaves and staff take them outside to observe this more closely.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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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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