

Apsley Lock Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Ann Hilary Guy

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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*.

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Description of the setting

Apsley Lock Pre-school is run by a voluntary committee of parents. It registered in 2005 and operates from a community room. Children have no access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school is situated in the Apsley Lock area of Hemel Hempstead, in close proximity to the canal marina and a main road. It is open each weekday during school term times from 9.15am until 12.15pm with a lunch club running from 12.15pm to 12.55pm every day except Tuesday.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 20 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 32 children aged from two and a half years to under five years on roll, some of whom attend part time. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with English as an additional language and also some with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are five members of staff, four of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ Level 2. Two staff are working towards furthering their qualifications. The setting provides funded early education for three and four year olds.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is inadequate.

Children are happy and settled in this friendly local pre-school, which offers a curriculum tailored to the individual needs of the children. Staff devote much of their time to developing children's knowledge and understanding through the wide variety of activities available and good conversations that encourage the children to develop their play. Observations are noted throughout the session and kept in individual files by the key workers; these are not always dated and do not show the areas of learning achieved by the child or identify ideas for further development. Risk assessments of the premises ensure the children's safety at all times, although a full record of all staff, visitors and children present on the premises, showing times of arrival and departure is not maintained. Policies and procedures underpin the care and education offered, however, many of these have not been updated since the pre-school opened and do not fully reflect current legislation.

Overall, the early years provision requires significant improvement. The registered person is given a Notice to Improve that sets out actions to be carried out.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To comply with the requirements of the EYFS the registered person must take the following action by the specified date:

- ensure a daily record of the names of the children 11/12/2009

looked after on the premises, together with a record of all staff and visitors attending the group, showing their hours of attendance (Documentation)

To improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop the recording of observations to clearly show how they link to the six areas of learning, evaluating them to show ideas for future planning. These should be clearly linked through to the weekly plans
- ensure all policies and procedures are updated regularly and reflect the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager and staff team have a very good understanding of safeguarding and positively promoting the welfare of the children. The manager is the only person who has attended additional courses on child protection and therefore all concerns are passed through her. Other staff have been identified to attend training in this area in order to share the responsibility. The pre-school has committed an offence by failing to notify Ofsted of a change to the person who is managing the preschool and the change to the nominated person. This is a specific legal requirement in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Ofsted does not intend to prosecute on this occasion.

Parents sign the children's register when they take their child home, but no times are recorded to identify children's arrival and departure, especially if this is significantly different from the session times. A visitors' record book is maintained but visitors are not always asked to sign it, showing their times of arrival and departure. This means that there is a potential risk in case of emergency that not all persons present would be accounted for on the register during an evacuation. This is a breach of EYFS requirements.

Many of the staff have worked hard to achieve a suitable early years qualification, and some are now aiming to improve their level of qualification by attending further training. This ensures a good standard of care and education is offered to the children within the pre-school, and staff are able to work together to inform the planning so that it meets the needs of each child. A wide range of resources are available for the staff to pre-select for the children. They pre-prepare the room each day with a good variety of activities covering all areas of learning. They offer the children some self-selection by having a few moveable storage units containing a variety of equipment. Staff effectively develop children's play through good conversation and interaction, encouraging and challenging the children to extend their capabilities.

This is a multicultural group who have found ways of successfully communicating with parents and children who do not have English as their main language. Their resources reflect the diverse community in which they are situated, promoting equality and full inclusion for all the children. Clear daily risk assessments of the

premises are carried out each day with additional risk assessments when the group is visiting the local park or going for walks with the children. They are very conscious of their close proximity to the Marina and have two child size life jackets used to take two children at a time to the fence around the Marina and talk about keeping safe around water. They have found this is a very effective way of positively promoting water safety.

An Ofsted self-evaluation form had been completed by a previous manager and so the content was out of date. The current manager has been unable to access this but has identified all the key areas for further development of the group. Together with the staff, she has identified courses which they would like to attend to further their knowledge and understanding and improve the care and education offered to the children. Many of the policies and procedures underpinning the care and education offered by the provision have not been updated since the pre-school opened and do not fully reflect the current requirements as stated in the EYFS.

The voluntary management committee is made up from parents. They are very supportive of the work staff do within the pre-school, although are slightly less sure of their role. The group operates an open door policy for parents with key workers happy to share children's development files with parents whenever they wish to see them. Each family is greeted by a staff member when the child arrives and leaves, with a whiteboard informing parents of all the activities their children have been involved in during the session. Parents also enjoy regular newsletters keeping them fully informed of all the changes within the group. Close liaison has been developed with other professionals involved in the care of the children, especially those with additional needs, enabling all parties to be as consistent as possible in the care of the children. Links have also been made with schools to which children will be transferring, with teachers visiting children at pre-school as well as the children visiting the schools.

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

Children are happy and secure in this welcoming small pre-school. Although they have no outdoor play area, staff aim to bring as much of the outdoors in to the group and also provide the children with large equipment generally associated with outdoor play inside the building. They do have a children's playground a short walk from the pre-school and have parental permission in place to take the children. They are not allowed the use of sand in the building but can use water and also salt dough, gloop and similar messy activities. Every session they have a range of equipment to enable the children to explore activities on the table tops, like board games and puzzles, writing and drawing, floor space for construction kits, train sets and dolls houses, together with specialist units for painting and water play. The role play area becomes different things inline with the theme of the week and they have a very well used book area with soft furnishings to enable children to sit in comfort and read to themselves or share a book with others.

Staff plan weekly based on a theme. They brainstorm a topic, thinking of as many activities as possible in all six areas of learning and then each week look at the

individual needs of their key children and plan a range of experiences to meet these. They look at ways of extending the children's abilities, particularly those who are very bright, as well as discussing how to ensure all the children are fully included, stimulated and challenged throughout the session. Each child has a folder showing all the observations that have been noted during sessions, many of which have photographs alongside. Not all the entries are dated and only the formal observations identify the areas of learning covered. They do not include the next steps for development for the children, although, through conversation, it is clear staff are aware of these.

Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They all wear soft shoes in the hall and at the end of session are encouraged to change their shoes and put on their coats before their parents arrive. They are also encouraged to be independent when going to the toilet, although it is necessary for safety that a staff member goes with them. As there is only one toilet the staff use a bowl of water in the room for all the children to wash their hands at snack time and also after painting or before cooking. This water is regularly changed to ensure it is fresh and not too cold or dirty.

Children were involved in making sandwiches and fruit salads to sell to the parents in aid of Children in Need. These activities took over two of the tables during the session times, enabling the children to show their dexterity with knives when cutting up the fruits or spreading the sandwiches. Some excellent conversation took place during these activities with children talking about the colour and texture of the fruit and discussing the variety of fillings for the sandwiches. Parents came early at the end of the session to purchase the items their children had made.

Children play in the main room of the community centre and have escorted access to the hallway from where access is gained to the toilets and kitchen. During the session the main door is kept locked, although, it is opened a few minutes before the end of session to enable parents to come and wait inside. Children cannot get through the door to the hallway as it has a high handle. They enjoy a healthy snack during the session with a drink of milk or water, water is also freely available for children to help themselves at any time. Staff positively promote all six areas of learning through the range of activities offered and the positive interaction each key worker has with the parents and the children.

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?	4
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	4

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding	4
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	4
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	3
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	3

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