

Cranfield University Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Susan Marriott

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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

Cranfield University Pre-School opened in 1968, moving to its current premises in 2003 and re-registering in 2006. The pre-school serves the community within the Cranfield University campus, offering places to children of students and staff. When space allows, places are offered to the wider community. It operates from two rooms in the Sports and Amenities Centre on the main campus. Children have access to a secure area for outdoor play.

The pre-school is open each weekday during term-time and sessions are from 8.50am to 12 noon. The group also offers extended care from 12 noon to 3.30pm, when demand justifies the provision of the service. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register to provide 26 places and there are currently 26 children attending who are within the early years age group. Of these, 20 children receive early education funding. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and currently supports a large number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff, of whom, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The pre-school is affiliated to the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The mature and exceptionally skilled staff team have truly captured the essence and spirit of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This pre-school is an exceptionally safe, secure and stimulating place to be for the young children who attend. Their individual needs are fully met within this culturally rich and diverse setting which has a fully inclusive approach to care and education and exemplifies its motto, 'we are all alike, we are all different, we are all friends'. Children make rapid progress in their learning and development and have tremendous fun in the process. Passionate, strong leadership and honest, realistic self-evaluation, secures the setting's excellent capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- enhancing further, the use of self-evaluation and quality improvement processes as the basis of ongoing internal review.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's care, learning and welfare is substantially enhanced by the clear vision of the pre-school's management committee and the highly effective way in which the pre-school is led and managed. Current safeguarding requirements are robustly met and all staff are suitably cleared to work with children. Security measures are superb and ensure the safety of children and staff. Visitors are always asked to produce identification and their presence is suitably recorded. Thoroughly detailed risk assessments are carried out visually on a daily basis and written assessments are devised for every area of the pre-school and for every type of outing. Regular practise of fire drills secures the safety of children and staff. Extremely effective links with the parents and carers, together with other professionals involved in the care and education of the children, enables the pre-school to tailor activities to the individual needs of children in their care. All required documentation is readily accessible and effectively underpins the exceptionally safe and efficient management of the provision. The pre-school is fully inclusive and meets the needs of all children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language.

The leader is passionately committed to her vocation and receives enthusiastic support from her loyal staff team who present an instantly recognisable corporate image by wearing purple polo shirts. They deploy themselves in a highly effective manner to ensure that children are constantly well-supervised as they move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment. Continuing staff development is vitally important in this vibrant pre-school and the resultant enhancement of staff skills and knowledge contribute substantially towards the rapid progress the children make. Staff demonstrate an exceptionally high level of knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage, thereby securing excellent learning and development outcomes for children. The pre-school makes outstanding use of the space available and ensures that the six areas of learning are reflected equally outside and as well as indoors. Locally available and accessible resources such as the campus playground and a farmer's market are used to extend learning opportunities. Visiting experts share their skills with the children. For example, a Rastafarian musician introduced music made with a mbira instrument and hosho shakers from Zimbabwe. Parents are actively encouraged to share their skills, knowledge and culture with the children.

Partnership working is reflected in the genuine efforts to strengthen links with other providers and strategies include visiting the local school and a day nursery which is used by some parents. Staff invite the reception class teacher into pre-school prior to the four-year-olds moving up to school and join the children and their parents at a 'Teddy Bear's Picnic' induction afternoon at the lower school. This liaison facilitates informed conversations with the children and their parents about their next step. The setting has forged a mutually beneficial relationship with the health visitor by accommodating health visitor and developmental check clinics in part of the premises and these are accessed by campus families and the wider community.

The pre-school extends partnership working to other professionals outside the setting to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities when appropriate.

The pre-school makes every effort to work in partnership with parents and carers who value this personal care, support and attention. Parents are genuinely keen to work with the staff and actively contribute their views and observations of their child's learning at home to provide an extended picture of pre-school from the family perspective. Parents write overwhelmingly positive comments and really appreciate 'the information gathered over time, coupled with detailed observations recorded with proper indexing'. They compliment the 'wonderful learning environment maintained by the University in general and by the pre-school's untiring staff team in particular'. The organisation of the daily routine ensures that staff are always available to give daily feedback to parents and carers about children's activities and progress. A vast array of useful information is available for parents and this is effectively supplemented by parents consultation meetings and a written report at the end of a child's stay in the pre-school. Activities are evaluated daily and observational notes are recorded in an extremely manageable format to enable each key worker to track children's progress and identify the next steps in their learning. Exceptionally effective planning systems ensure that the next steps are collated and fed back into the subsequent week's plan. Consequently, the setting has developed exceptionally reflective practice to monitor the quality of provision for children, demonstrating the pre-school's outstanding capacity for continuous improvement. Nevertheless, the leader has identified that further enhancement of self-evaluation and quality improvement processes is practicable.

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

The evident commitment to inclusion is exemplified in the pre-school's approach towards the culturally diverse backgrounds of the children. With children coming from around 15 different countries worldwide, every child's religious customs and cultural celebrations are valued and shared within the group and staff share traditional British customs too. Parents share their skills and knowledge and provide information for staff, enabling their special festivals to be incorporated into the pre-school educational programme. For example, staff will be including Loy Krathong Day, a popular Buddhist festival in Thailand where sufferings are symbolically floated away in vessels made from banana leaves. Photographs show parents dressing staff in saris, demonstrating traditional dance styles and explaining the significance of American Thanksgiving. The festivals of Eid, Divali and Chinese New Year are all acknowledged and celebrated in a meaningful context. The pre-school organise an International Feast Day at the end of each year, where children and parents sing their favourite songs, wear wonderful fine clothes and share tasty foods from around the world. Children try to toss pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, make traditional Easter cards at Easter and visit the local church's Christmas Tree Festival.

The leader discusses and consults with the staff team on a daily basis and together

they devise strategies to support particular children and identify areas for improvement. Their resolute determination to drive improvement through development plans contributes significantly to the quality of care and education. For example, they are acutely aware of the differing learning styles of boys and girls and ensure that their differing needs are taken into account when planning the balance of daily activities. Children learn through exciting play that is facilitated through a carefully crafted educational programme. Activities are delivered at an excellent pace and there is always something exciting to choose so children develop an extremely positive disposition towards learning. The staff know that children learn best when they are relaxed, comfortable, secure and happy and so create a loving, stable environment, where children have time to experiment and develop their play. Staff are exceptionally sensitive in gauging when to interact and stimulate and when to hold back and leave the child to discover and learn for themselves. Children are provided with experiences and support which helps them to develop a positive sense of themselves and others.

Children demonstrate sustained concentration and a highly positive disposition to learn because exceptionally knowledgeable, dedicated staff make extremely imaginative use of a wide range of teaching techniques. Children are captivated by the lively story telling of a story about dinosaurs and excitedly join in with noises and actions to the refrain 'Stomp, chomp, big roars. Staff skilfully acknowledge the overhead circling of helicopters and successfully redirect the children's attention to enable the story to be completed. Staff encourage all children to make an attempt to write their name when they sign in on arrival and label their work. Children's problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy skills are significantly enhanced in a broad range of practical contexts. Expert practice ensures that children count cups and plates at snack time in a meaningful way. Children sit at the picnic benches anticipating the arrival of their toasted fruit buns and staff engage them in singing songs and counting whilst they wait.

Children enjoy plentiful opportunities indoors and outside, to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. Staff maximise the learning content of spontaneous activities initiated by the children. For example, children want to dig in the soil and the exciting discovery of a worm in the digging patch leads staff to guide children towards the book area to find a book of mini-beasts. Another area of the garden provides opportunities to plant and grow vegetables and care for small animals. Children can experiment with sound using the bongo drums and the wall-mounted cooking pans. Children experience a wide range of activities covering all areas of learning through the 'continuous provision' which includes activities such as crafts, singing, story, music and movement, a role play centre, small world play, construction, dressing up, sand and water play and play dough. Children's physical skills are developed on a daily basis. For example, children build with the large wooden blocks, practise their balancing skills on the stepping stones and make their choice of small apparatus including balls, bats, quoits, stilts and hoops. Staff gently and skilfully engage the children in tasks and throw balls for children to hit back with bats, praising their efforts and demonstrating genuine delight in children's achievements.

Staff maintain lively levels of interaction with children of all ages and effectively meet their daily care needs with dedication. Children are encouraged to adopt

healthy habits such as washing hands, blowing noses, and putting tissues in the bin. This is managed by gentle and supportive encouragement increasing the child's independence and highlighting why these things are important. The group make inspired use of the key worker system to develop respectful and collaborative partnerships with parents and carers. Staff gather in-depth information about each child's abilities and backgrounds on entry to the provision. They make expert use of observations to promote further learning and support children's developing communication skills. Children develop good habits for the future, become independent learners, develop collaborative skills, problem-solving abilities and creative thinking because they are happy, relaxed, supported and challenged by this stimulating, age-appropriate environment.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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