

Zelda School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY389586
Inspection date 15/10/2009
Inspector Nicola Jayne Pascoe

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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

Zelda School is run by a registered company. It opened in 2009 and operates from a yurt in a field on Holifield Farm near the small village of Gweek, in Cornwall. Natural garden areas are used for outdoor play activities. Accessibility to the premises is limited by the rural nature of the setting. The nursery is open Monday to Thursday from 9:00am until 3:00pm during term times only. The provision is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 12 children at any one time. The setting occasionally includes children of compulsory school age who have home education arrangements.

There are currently 18 children in the early years age group on roll, some in part-time places. There are three members of staff working with the children. The manager is a qualified teacher and the deputy holds an appropriate NVQ level 3. Suitably vetted volunteer helpers and parents form part of the adult:child ratio but never have unsupervised access to the children.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Zelda School is an inclusive setting which is successful in identifying and respecting children's unique qualities. It is a local initiative established as a result of an identified need of parents in the community. Since opening it has also attracted interest from parents and children from surrounding areas. Parents play an extremely active role in the provision of care and learning opportunities for their children and they regularly volunteer to assist in the daily operation of the setting. Effective systems for information sharing are successful in ensuring that children's specific needs are met well. Staff demonstrate a sound awareness and understanding of the requirements of the EYFS and have developed suitable systems to ensure that these are met at all times. However, some of the documentation requires further development and is in need of updating and sharing on a more frequent basis in order to maintain continuous improvement in the early years practice.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review the systems for risk assessment regularly to ensure that potential safety and hygiene hazards are identified and minimised
- implement effective systems for the assessment of children's progress in their learning and development
- update accident records regularly and ensure that confidentiality of these records is maintained
- continue to develop systems with which to monitor and evaluate the childcare practice in order to maintain continuous improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The provision benefits from a knowledgeable, dedicated and enthusiastic manager, who is well supported by her staff team. There is a strong focus on providing a stimulating and enabling environment where children can move freely indoors and out to access toys, resources, tools and equipment as and when they wish. As a result, children's ideas flourish and they are able to succeed and achieve desired goals with ease. The setting demonstrate a sound ability to monitor and evaluate their provision and have identified suitable systems with which to drive improvement in the practice. However, these systems have not yet been fully implemented. Staff have established effective procedures to safeguard children, but have not updated risk assessments regularly enough to identify and address some potential hazards.

Very effective and positive partnerships with parents is a particular strength of this provision. Parents are actively and wholeheartedly involved. They are keen to offer ideas, resources and time to support and enable children to enjoy and achieve, extend their friendship groups and enhance their social skills. Although there are good systems in place to obtain and share information with parents regularly, the accident record has not been shared appropriately following a recent incident and these records do not effectively maintain confidentiality. A broad and balanced curriculum of enjoyable and appropriate activities effectively provide all children with sufficient levels of challenge, in order that all are able to further develop their skills and learning. The setting promote equality of opportunity as they ensure that all children are fully included and are able to explore a diverse range of topics. Children use a wide range of natural resources and benefit from the wonder of outdoor learning, investigation and exploration.

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

The provision is effective in meeting children's individual and unique needs well. Staff are skilful practitioners who successfully promote children's learning and development through both child-initiated and adult-led activities. The setting fosters children's imaginative and creative abilities very well as they are encouraged to design, construct and build freely, making good use of the natural materials the outdoor environment offers. Children have established strong and positive relationships with adults and benefit from the active involvement of their parents. The provision promotes a strong sense of community spirit. Children, staff and parents sit socially at the carefully set table to eat together and sing favourite songs. However, although at lunch time there is a pretty tablecloth, candles and appropriate cutlery, at snack time children eat their fruit and vegetables directly off the table top.

Children are happy, settled, confident and demonstrate high levels of independence. Effective initial profiles and excellent partnerships with parents

ensure that children's individual preferences, interests and abilities are identified, respected and met. Staff have begun to introduce suitable systems to assess and plan for children to make progress in their learning and development. They have recorded useful observations in a separate log book which are ready to transfer into children's individual 'Learning Journals'. These records will contain evidence of children's achievements and identify appropriate 'next steps' for future development, which can be linked to future planned activities. However, these have not yet been fully implemented.

Children benefit from excellent levels of interaction from staff who listen well. As a result, children are confident to join in with favourite stories and ask questions. They sit and concentrate well, listen attentively and offer suggestions as to what may happen next. Children chatter freely and communicate continually when initiating role play, suggesting ideas and negotiating effectively with others. Children enjoy free access to a good quality range of books for reference, personal enjoyment and group story times.

Children are safeguarded appropriately as use of written risk assessments and daily visual checks ensure that most hazards have been identified and minimised. However these procedures have not been updated to include the recently installed and uneven wooden pathway and wobbly step up to the toilet cubicle. There is also a large gap underneath the yurt, which although possible for a child to climb into would be difficult for an adult to access. There are some health and hygiene concerns regarding the risk of cross-infection due to use of a shared hand towel and the number of flies in both the yurt and toilet cubicle. Staff demonstrate a sound ability to identify, record and report any child protection concerns if required.

Children are beginning to learn the importance of maintaining their own safety as they regularly follow a written fire evacuation drill and discuss safety with adults at opportune moments, for example when playing in the wooded area and handling tools. They follow a routine which increases their awareness of self-care as they wash their hands regularly and before eating, enjoy drinks and snacks to refresh and sustain them and can rest and relax as they need to in comfortable indoor and outdoor areas. Children adopt healthy lifestyles through eating organic, wholesome, home-made food. They benefit from fresh air, fun, physical exercise and free exploration outdoors. Children are actively involved in outdoor growth of fruit and vegetables which they nurture, harvest and eat. They bake fresh bread to accompany their home-made soup. Children participate in regular Yoga sessions to physically challenge their core strength, improve their posture and extend their balancing skills. They are physically active outdoors for most of the day and are able to use the outdoor environment in all weathers to develop their skills in climbing, balancing and using the see-saw. Children benefit from natural areas for exploration and can create dens in the undergrowth. Tarpaulin and branches are used to provide cosy areas for play and learning outdoors.

Children enjoy a stimulating environment with sufficient tools, materials and resources to capture their interests and imagination and offer good levels of challenge. Discussion is lively and children are extending their vocabulary rapidly. Observations show that children have made steady levels of progress whilst

attending the setting. The staff demonstrate a sound ability to ensure that children have opportunities to make progress in all areas of learning. Children's numeracy skills are promoted well as they sort and count conkers, chop vegetables and share fruit at snack time. Children and adults freely discuss number, subtraction and addition during daily routine activities. They cook regularly which involves weighing, measuring, counting and dividing quantities of ingredients. Children also consider and resolve problems when making wooden walkways and constructing using wooden blocks.

Children explore and investigate a range of natural materials and have created a table display with autumn's items, such as bark, pumpkins, butternut squash and dried flowers. There is also an attractive display area with Diwali items and associated books for free exploration. Children have made candle holders, enjoyed dancing and listened to the story of 'Lighting a Lamp'. Children actively learn about and respect their own and other cultures and festivals. Children display high levels of creativity as they use coloured powder paints to cover a board with different patterns, mix the vibrant colours and create expressive art work together. Their art work is displayed attractively on the walls of the yurt for all to admire.

Children demonstrate excellent social skills as they care for others and their environment. They share, take turns and problem solve together. They are developing a good awareness of their ability to positively influence their environment. They use the compost heap to dispose of garden waste and organic matter, which is then re-used to nourish new growth. Children benefit from the emphasis on sustainability, as they grow their own fruit and vegetables, bake their own bread, reduce waste and recycle. They do not currently have access to computer equipment, but adults intend to introduce it in an appropriate way to enhance the practice further, as they are aware of the benefit of access to technology. Children have established strong community links and are beginning to develop an awareness of the wider world.

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	3
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	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

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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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