

Little Oaks Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY392996
Inspection date	18/11/2009
Inspector	Gillian Charlesworth
Setting address	Adeyfield Community Centre, Queens Square, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 4EW
Telephone number	01442 252 030
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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

Little Oaks Pre-School was re-registered under new management in June 2009 and was first registered in 1999. The pre-school is managed by the proprietor and operates from the Adayfield Community Centre, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, located in a shopping precinct that encompasses a library and local church. The pre-school has an allocated large room in the Community Centre with toilets and a kitchen area. They also have the use of a large hall at agreed times and an additional toilet that is shared with other hall users. There is an enclosed area for outdoor play. Access to the community centre is via a set of steps.

The setting is open each weekday from 9.30am to 3.30pm term time only. It offers a variety of sessions including a three hour session in the morning or afternoon or a full day. An optional lunch club is available between 12 noon and 12.30pm for those attending the morning or afternoon sessions. Little Oaks Pre-School is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. They are registered for 26 children aged two to under eight years, all of whom may be in the early years age range. There are currently 62 children aged from two to four years on roll who are within the early years age range. Children have varying attendance patterns and mostly come from the local area. The setting currently supports a number of children with English as an additional language and a minority with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Little Oaks Pre-School employs seven staff. Of these, four including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The registered person is working towards a degree in early years and two further members of staff are working towards appropriate qualifications. Placements are also regularly offered for students from the local college and senior schools, and four young adults currently attend. The setting receives support from the Hertfordshire Early Years development team and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The setting is a strong provision and provides effectively for children through an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who support the children well and work hard to meet their individual needs. The environment is mostly enabling and as a result children relish their time in the setting and are making good progress in their learning and development overall. Policies and procedures are generally in place to safeguard children although some are less well developed. Relationships with parents are positive and support good continuity of care particularly for children's welfare. There is a high level of commitment to continuous improvement, and a clear vision to develop many aspects of the provision. The proactive manager strives for good quality education and care and is involving staff and parents in the developing strategies to self-evaluate.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further the policy and systems for safe recruitment in line with statutory guidance, ensuring that decisions of suitability are based on a range of evidence including medical suitability and declarations that may affect suitability to work with children, and induction training for child protection is clearly defined
- develop further the learning plans for each child to guide the overall planning based on information gained from talking to them, their parents and colleagues, and from observations of the child
- develop further the systems to support the individual needs of every child, with particular regard to large group activities such as registration and circle time and taking the indoors outdoors in all weathers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The setting runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis with an enthusiastic and committed young staff team who are well deployed. Evidence of suitable criminal record checks is obtained for all staff and students who help in the setting. Records policies and procedures are well organised and clearly defined to ensure the safe and efficient management of children overall. The safeguarding policy and local guidance is readily available for staff and parents, and procedures are underpinned by staff's sound knowledge to recognise, record and respond to concerns. However, the safeguarding policy and procedures are less well defined in areas such as safe recruitment, on-going suitability and induction. Consequently, in the event of new staff being recruited, decisions of suitability focus on limited criteria rather than a wide range of evidence and, although staff receive induction in safeguarding procedures, this is not well documented. There are many positive strategies to manage resources such as providing visual prompts that effectively encourage children to tidy away; good deployment of staff to meet children's individual needs; and well organised space indoors that empowers both boys and girls to move equipment around to extend their play and learning, particularly in role play.

Positive relationships are evident from parent feedback and there is a consistent flow of two-way information. Parents are well informed and are encouraged to be involved in children's learning at home when provided with nursery rhyme books as part of National Book Week and through fundraising activities. They are aware of plans for forthcoming consultation meetings that will involve them in children's learning and development records even though parents are not yet contributing to assessment of children's learning and development. A wide range of partners are involved in the setting and to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities which ensures that children benefit from targeted support and expertise and their individual needs are well met.

The manager is proactive and has made many improvements following re-registration of an existing setting, thereby raising standards and benefiting children who have become more confident, able to freely access different areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and have good relationships and behaviour. She recognises how to extend practice further and works closely with staff, parents, and a range of outside agencies. Staff engage in the self-evaluation process through consultation at team meetings which leads to accurately targeted plans to make improvements that will have a beneficial impact on children and further improve their experiences. For example, planning permission is being sought to enhance outdoor experiences and use of environmental print has been targeted to extend opportunities for children to recognise that print carries meaning.

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

Strategies to help children achieve and enjoy their learning are developing well and help children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Children say they like coming to preschool and they enjoy naming favourite toys. They work independently and choose activities for a large part of the session. For example, they enjoy selecting and reading books, and utilise resources from different areas, thoroughly motivated as they develop story lines in the role play area with staff and peers. Key workers monitor children's progress regularly and have a good understanding of children's overall progress. Assessment records are developing positively and show children's progress in relation to their starting points. These records are not always fully reflecting the good progress that individual children make, for example, for those learning English. Written planning is resource led to ensure continuous provision but learning intentions and differentiation for each activity is not always included therefore the next steps for individual children are not consistently reflected.

Children enjoy their learning and have developed positive attitudes, a strong desire to participate and learn by choosing from the wide variety of activities that are challenging and sustain interest in their chosen pursuits. Children are learning to behave well, cooperate, and share with one another throughout the session. They express their occasional frustrations confidently and are ably assisted by staff who help them to resolve conflict well. Consequently children play harmoniously, make good friendships and socialise well together in a busy, purposeful and calm atmosphere throughout the setting. However, during large group activities, although children are well supported and reassured, and those with English as an additional language are engaged through action rhymes, a small minority are less well engaged because they are not yet ready to contribute for example, in circle time and registration.

Children feel safe in their setting and are helped to understand issues relating to safety by staff who are vigilant and remind them of safe boundaries, such as not to run indoors. They behave in ways which are safe for themselves and others, for example when using knives to chop their fruit snacks, closely supervised by staff. Effective support is provided for those with additional needs, thus ensuring they

can fully participate in a calm atmosphere where all children feel safe.

There is a strong drive to help children learn and understand how to lead healthy lifestyles. Staff guide children to develop good hygiene practices, encouraging their self-care and hand washing appropriately. Many children need very few reminders and delight in practising their hand washing skills in the accessible facilities. Children independently help themselves to cups and water so are never thirsty. They enjoy the rolling-snack table that is available during the session and make healthy choices about what and when they eat and drink with staff on hand to ensure that dietary needs are met and all children participate. They learn about why certain foods are healthy through topics and displays such as 'smile at the crocodile' linked to a puppet show encouraging healthy teeth. Children enjoy the physical activities outside such as riding bikes and using slides, but are not always able to experience activities in all weathers or utilise a wide range of resources between indoors and outdoors.

There are effective strategies in place to help children develop skills in communicating, literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT). Children are familiar with the ICT programs and are eager to use their skills of observation and mouse control. They communicate confidently with one another, with staff and with visitors and enjoy using language for thinking when talking to staff about the cake displayed for fundraising and recalling their past experiences. They enjoy self-initiated mark-making opportunities, selecting from the accessible resources arranged in well-organised trays, and sometimes have chances to make marks on a larger scale outdoors when chinks are provided. Children use the wide range of toys to solve problems according to their ability. For example, older children persist in discovering how a small-world digger operates while younger children enjoy learning how cars travel down the runway of a garage. Children have exciting opportunities to learn about the wider world. They visit the local shops regularly and enjoy selecting fruit and vegetables from the Greengrocers store. They engage in community fundraising activities such as 'Red Nose Day' and 'Children in Need' and are well prepared for Pudsey Bear's visit by talking about the group's plans, making wall displays and puppets, and welcoming him with excitement when he arrives to sing action rhymes with them.

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	3
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	3

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

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