

# The Learning Zone Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY403600

**Inspection date**

14/07/2010

**Inspector**

Lynne Kathleen Talbot

**Setting address**

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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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

## **Description of the setting**

The Learning Zone Pre-School re-registered in December 2009 having originally been registered since 1996. The provision operates from Symonds Green Community Centre in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

The provision is open each weekday during term-time only and sessions are from 9.30am to 2.30pm each day, with the exception of Wednesday when opening times are 9.30am to 12.30pm. A maximum of 32 children may attend the provision at any one time. The setting receives funding for nursery education. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The setting is also registered to offer care to children aged over five years and up to eight years. Children occupying these places would share the same facilities as the children in the early years age range. There are currently no children on roll in this age range.

There are currently 72 children on roll, all of whom are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Three children attend other settings such as the early years unit of the local primary school or childminders. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language. There are 12 staff members; all hold relevant childcare qualifications.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage is focused and child-led, supported by extensive planning covering all areas of learning ensuring that children receive experiences that foster good progress overall. Staff create a highly welcoming environment, using firm safeguarding procedures and thorough risk assessments, ensuring they have accurate knowledge of each child's needs to ensure that every child is included. Partnerships with other agencies, together with those with parents and carers are key strengths, showing dedication to meeting all children's needs. The managers communicate ambition and drive to secure continued improvement using purposeful self-evaluation processes.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

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

- develop further the balance of adult-led and freely-chosen or child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play with particular reference to observing, finding out about and identifying features in the place they live and the natural world; ensure there are opportunities to explore places, objects, materials and living things

- increase further children's involvement in the daily routine to enhance their development of independence, self-help skills, hygiene and care for the environment.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Comprehensive and detailed safeguarding procedures ensure that children are fully protected. The manager ensures that all persons required undertake the appropriate checks to safeguard children. Daily routines within the premises, and staff vigilance when implementing the procedures, ensure that safeguarding procedures work at all times. This includes the signs placed throughout the premises, the vetting and monitoring of all visitors, the inner security for the playroom and the overall safety of the security. Risk assessments for the premises and all outings undertaken are systematic and are monitored to ensure their efficiency. All policies and procedures are thorough and receive regular review. Clear recruitment and induction procedures ensure that staff working with children are suitable to do so. Managers are highly enthusiastic and have clear expectations for development. There is a real commitment to ongoing professional development throughout the staff group with a high level of training resulting in a clear impact on the care and learning provided. Self-evaluation processes are well-developed and detail action areas to secure improved outcomes for children.

Children's individual learning styles are fully respected. The provision offers sessions split between two age groups but works closely with parents to evaluate the appropriate group for each child throughout their time within the provision. This ensures that every child achieves. Staff are extremely well deployed throughout the session managing their shared outdoor area very well to ensure that children have the opportunity to make considered choices within their play. The environment is conducive to learning, safe and well-cared for, with a good range of quality play provision used to achieve the planned goals for learning and development. Consequently, outcomes for children are good due to the flexibility of staff, close attention to children's interests and use of the available resources. The highly inclusive systems of communication used to engage parents and carers ensure that there are consistent and productive partnerships. Methods include home visits prior to joining the provision where parents are provided with learning journals and parent input sheets, and termly consultations supplemented by parent 'voice' and observation sheets. Regular questionnaires are issued which are evaluated and have a detailed response issued to all parents. This is evidence of a commitment to seek and act on parental views within the parameters of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

The managers and staff actively promote equality and diversity and tackle unfair discrimination. They are highly committed to working in partnership with others and take a lead role in establishing effective working relationships. They liaise continually with external agencies using a transition project which they have shared with other settings. Laminated photograph books showing new settings, teachers and areas of their settings help children to move easily from one setting to another, as do the uniforms held for them to view and become familiar with.

Learning journals, as well as direct contact, further support the links. Managers and staff make the most of events and festivals in the community to broaden children's awareness. Parents are invited to share their cultures through henna hand painting, fiction books in other languages, and sharing their home languages. This helps children to appreciate the local and wider society around them.

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

Children are offered well-planned activities that help them to make good progress overall in their learning and development. Assessment through recorded observation is clear and the information gained is used very effectively to identify next steps. Spontaneous observation leads into the daily next steps sheets, recorded for every child, and around which the planning is formed. Staff are skilled in utilising children's emerging interests to capitalise on learning situations. For example, during water play children ask why the water is green. Staff offer clear explanations about the ice cubes, made with food colouring inside, that had been placed into the water and which have now melted. Children are then encouraged to continue questioning this further to extend the play into catching toy insects in the water using nets, linking it to ponds and later looking at floating, sinking and swimming. They are showing the curiosity needed to begin exploring early science. The outdoor area is used effectively to encourage children to carry out a range of activities covering most areas of learning. However, whilst some materials are offered to children to explore the natural world, such as wind chimes, a soil tray and some planting, this is not yet developed to encourage children to fully explore the natural world, wildlife, or ongoing observation of growing plants and foods. Children show an avid interest in books and stories. They share reading with staff in small groups and altogether where they ask relevant questions about the stories read to them. For instance, they understand that books are written by authors and join in with familiar rhymes and phrases. Children have ample opportunities to begin mark-making and show emerging knowledge of sounds and letters. For instance, older children sound and locate the letters for their own names, and those of their families, on a keyboard as well as confidently 'writing' their names on drawings. They engage in conversation with both staff and new adults and are able to use language to explain their thinking from a young age. For example, younger children taking part in a cooking activity are able to explain stirring, the need for more water, and what they use to assemble their 'sunshine' biscuit. These activities link to previous creative works where children make collages to show summer scenes.

All children have daily opportunities to become physically active, developing good health. This includes parachute fun, the inviting climbing frame and bridge outdoors, and 'Dinky Dancing' sessions led by a visiting teacher. Children become very animated as they join together to sing, jump and skip, and develop good attention skills listening closely. They link physical activity to health when they choose from fruits to cut for snacks, and begin caring for the environment when they clear food scraps for recycling. Works are carried out using the 'good and bad' foods boards encouraging children to think about what foods are healthy to eat on a regular basis. Personal hygiene routines are followed with the help of staff.

However, the routines for enabling children to develop self-help skills, such as preparing for snacks, taking responsibility for cleaning and clearing away, as well as those linked skills for number and sorting, are not consistently applied. Children regularly discuss keeping themselves safe when they carry out emergency evacuations and consider the use of sun-cream and sun-protection during hot weather. Walks in the local community, including those to post letters, broaden children's awareness of their society. They explore festivals and events including Hanukkah and Remembrance Sunday to encourage them to explore both cultures and history. Children play a full part in the setting where they use 'smiley face discs' to indicate how they are feeling each day as well as evaluating and voting on activities. They are able to express themselves and understand that they are fully considered as individuals within the provision. Children are clearly learning the skills and attitudes necessary for future learning and taking their place as part of the community.

## 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

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

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
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

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

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
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	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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