

Apsley Lock Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Kim Wailling

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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 hall which has two toilets and a kitchen area within Belswains Lane Residents Association community building in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. Children have no access to an outdoor play area. The pre-school 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 27 children aged from two years four months on roll. 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 four members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years 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 satisfactory.

Overall, children make sound progress towards the early learning goals in this friendly and welcoming pre-school. Generally careful monitoring of most children enables staff to tailor learning experiences to suit their needs. Good well-established partnerships with parents and links with some outside agencies and the local school ensure consistency in children's welfare and learning. Staff members effectively carry out recently updated policies and procedures designed to protect children from harm and to support their well-being. Following the last inspection, positive steps have been taken to improve practice and raise standards. There is evidence of a solid commitment by the parent committee, the manager and the staff team to maintain continuous improvement through self-evaluation.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- introduce systems to monitor the progress of different groups of children such as boys and girls, in order to address any difference in their progress
- ensure that there is sufficient challenge for older and more able children in the range of activities offered during free play sessions.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are kept safe. Following a review of procedures, safeguarding measures now used by the pre-school meet requirements. The majority of staff have received updated child protection training and are secure in their understanding of what to do if they have concerns about a child in their care. Appropriate background checks on staff members are carried out. Staff are vigilant when visitors approach the building and take suitable measures to ensure that the safety of the children is not compromised. Children are offered a safe play environment through judicious use of risk assessment together with staff attentiveness to maintaining a clean and hygienic environment. Minor accidents to children are dealt with appropriately, as most staff have attended first aid training.

Children are offered a range of play experiences. Children are able to choose favourite toys and join in adult-led activities such as making play dough. Although during the free play session most children are busy, there is insufficient challenge for some older and more able children and learning opportunities are lost. However, overall the staff team arrange the room to take into account the six areas of learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that children's skills for the future are adequately promoted throughout the year. In the absence of an outdoor play area, indoor provision is complemented by visits to a nearby council-run playground and by walks to the local marina and shops.

There is a strong commitment to ensuring that social inclusion is promoted within the pre-school. Partnership with parents is good. This is a strength of the setting. Each family is enthusiastically greeted by a staff member when the child arrives, which creates a happy and welcoming atmosphere. There are many opportunities for parents to share information about their children with the staff, which helps to establish children's starting points. Regular communication between the children's key person and parents means that children's achievements and progress are effectively shared. General information about the pre-school is attractively displayed on a parents' notice board while a whiteboard is used to list the activities offered during the daily pre-school session. Newsletters are used to keep parents fully informed about the changes within the group. In addition, the pre-school circulates questionnaires to all parents. Constructive suggestions for development are considered and, where appropriate, adopted. The pre-school welcomes the involvement of parents and provides opportunities for them to join their children at various times.

Procedures to measure individual children's progress are in place. However, although staff check that everyone is included in the range of activities offered, little consideration has been given to monitoring the progress of groups of children, particularly boys, to ensure their progress meets and does not fall below expectations. Links have been made with local primary schools to which children will transfer. Key staff prepare child progress reports which parents can pass on to their children's school. There is a named member of staff who manages the support of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. She effectively performs her role by ensuring that appropriate support and guidance is

given both to children and their families by coordinating links between agencies.

All actions set at the last inspection have been fully met. The parent committee, the manager and the staff team are working hard to raise standards. The pre-school is currently receiving support from the Local Education Authority and the Pre-school Learning Alliance and has implemented many of their suggestions, which staff have found to be helpful. There is a well-targeted action plan to help the pre-school sustain continuous improvement

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

Children enjoy attending the pre-school and describe it as 'a nice place to play with friends'. They develop trusting relationships with their key persons, who are familiar with their individual needs and provide emotional and practical support. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff to develop their social skills and good behaviour.

Children develop good communication skills, as staff spend much of their time listening and chatting to them. Children listen attentively to stories and enthusiastically join in singing sessions. Children who speak English as an additional language particularly benefit from these daily sessions, as new words are introduced in an enjoyable way. Toys such as jigsaws, which promote simple problem solving, are available for children to use. In addition, the pre-school has a range of resources that support children's understanding about technology.

Children show interest in the world around them. Well-organised outings are frequently taken, which the children eagerly look forward to. They are involved in charity events and celebrating various festivals which reinforces their understanding of the wider community. Resources that support imaginative play are available every day to children. They have plenty of time to develop their play, as staff are confident in allowing them to follow their own interests. At the time of the inspection visit, for example, a group of boys and girls worked together to arrange a line of chairs to represent a bus. This play was skilfully extended by a staff member who encouraged the children to join in with her singing of 'The wheels of the bus go round and round'.

Children learn how to stay safe as they help with tidying away toys, practise fire evacuation routines and talk regularly about safety issues such as traffic awareness. They learn about healthy lifestyles, including good hygiene procedures. Hand washing before snack, for example, is supervised and children know that it is important to rub their hands together to remove germs. Children have easy access to drinking water throughout the morning session and confidently pour themselves a drink when they are thirsty. The pre-school has recently adopted small group snack sessions where children are offered a choice of fresh and dried fruit and a drink. These sessions are relaxed and children are given an opportunity to enjoy the range of healthy foods on offer.

Overall, children are happy and secure in this welcoming pre-school.

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?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
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	3
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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	3
The extent to which children feel safe	3
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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