

Little Ashes Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	140859
Inspection date	20/01/2011
Inspector	Gill Little
Setting address	The Village Hall, Horsepond, Rotten Row, Great Brickhill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK17 9BA
Telephone number	07855 215154
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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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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 Ashes Pre-School has been registered since 1995 and is managed by a parent committee. It operates from the village hall in Great Brickhill, Milton Keynes and has use of an enclosed park area, adjoining recreational field and a woodland walk area with wooden balancing and climbing equipment. The building has wheelchair access and ample off-road parking. Children come from the local and surrounding areas.

The pre-school is registered to care for a maximum of 26 children under eight at any one time, all of whom may be in the early years age range. It currently cares for 35 children in this age group. The pre-school is also registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for children over five years. There are currently no children on roll in this age range. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The pre-school is open on weekdays during school term times from 9am until 12 noon with a lunch club each day from 12 noon until to 12.30pm. It is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four. It has partnership arrangements in place with other early years settings including the local primary school, local nurseries and childminders. The pre-school employs six staff all of whom hold relevant qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are able to make excellent progress in this highly stimulating, welcoming and safe environment. Equality is at the heart of the setting and staff are highly successful in meeting the needs of individual children. Partnerships with parents are exemplary and staff strive to fully involve them in the life of the pre-school. Partnerships with other settings which children attend are well established although have not yet reached their full potential. Self-evaluation procedures are outstanding and take full account of the views of staff, parents and children alike. The pre-school has made sustained improvements since the last inspection and demonstrates an excellent commitment to 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:

- extending partnerships with other settings which children attend.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff demonstrate a very secure understanding of safeguarding children procedures and they all receive regular training. They work exceptionally well as a team to continuously review policies and procedures which they implement consistently and robustly. All staff have appropriate background checks and the pre-school seeks to update these every three years. All staff hold childcare qualifications and attend a wide range of training courses; together with very good staff to child ratios, this has a significantly positive impact on the quality of the provision.

The pre-school environment is secure, clean and safe. As it is a community building staff have to pack away all equipment every day. However, they work extremely hard to provide a very wide range of stimulating activities and resources which they present to children very attractively. For example, they provide a 'farm shop' as part of a healthy living project complete with boxes of fruit, packets of food, shopping trolleys, a cash register, paper and pencils, and an interactive healthy eating display. Staff support children in ensuring that their environment is sustainable. For example, they have their own allotment within the village so that children can grow their own vegetables and learn about composting.

Staff are very successful in promoting equality and diversity. They know their key children very well through rigorous monitoring and excellent partnerships with parents. They ensure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully integrated into the life of the pre-school. They ensure that very able children continue to develop their particular skills rapidly while also providing experiences which are essential to supporting their broader development.

There is a highly inclusive approach to working in partnership with parents and carers. A new initiative of 'Stay and Play' enables families to book a session in the pre-school. This is an excellent opportunity not just for parents but also grandparents and other members of the extended family to join in with the pre-school session and spend time with their child's allocated key person. Staff send home children's Learning Journeys each school holiday which parents value highly as it gives them time to enjoy their child's record of development and to share it with extended members of the family. Parents are extremely complimentary about the pre-school stating how happy their children are, how much they look forward to their sessions and how special staff make their children feel.

Staff work well in partnership with other settings which children attend, such as local nurseries and childminders. They ensure that communication takes place on a regular basis to promote children's achievements and well-being but know that this is not always as effective as they would like it to be.

Staff morale is very high and they continually strive to improve; this is illustrated through an extremely comprehensive self-evaluation form which reflects practice very accurately. Staff take great care to fully involve children in the self-evaluation

process and they do so with confidence. For example, they add comments to their Learning Journeys and use 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down', as well as discussion, at the end of each session to indicate their views. Staff highly value feedback from parents and use questionnaires, a suggestions box and evaluation forms for 'Stay and Play' sessions as part of their self-evaluation process.

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

All children show an extremely strong sense of security. They enter the preschool confidently and happily, settling very quickly to their chosen activities. Their behaviour is exemplary for their ages and levels of development. They have an excellent understanding of routines and expectations, such as quickly settling on the carpet as soon as they hear their special song. They are highly independent in selecting resources to support their play. For example, one child at the play dough table states that he needs a knife with 'safe edges'. He easily finds the storage box he needs and rushes back excitedly to continue with his activity.

Children have excellent opportunities to learn about healthy living. This is a current focus in the pre-school and children demonstrate a very good understanding of healthy foods and hygiene. They confidently talk about the importance of using tissues and know that germs can make you poorly. They eagerly take part in cooking activities on a weekly basis and confidently use the interactive healthy eating display in the farm shop, sorting different foods into healthy and unhealthy groups. They talk animatedly about the importance of avoiding too many unhealthy foods, such as chocolate and toffees, stating that if they eat too much they will get 'fat tummies and rotten teeth'.

The pre-school does not have its own outdoor play area but staff make excellent use of the adjacent play park, recreational field and local woods on a daily basis in all weathers and all year round. Each session children are able to choose which outdoor areas they would like to visit. Staff are very responsive to their suggestions, including providing opportunities for children to go on outings in small groups. Staff maximise the potential of the extra space outdoors by providing large scale activities, such as using brooms to 'paint' water on paving slabs, creating large paintings with squeeze bottles and threading long ribbons through mesh fences. While on outings, children demonstrate a very good understanding of safety, listening carefully to instructions before they set off, walking sensibly and taking care not to brush against the 'prickly holly'.

Children benefit greatly from sensitive open-ended questioning and guidance from staff. For example, during a cooking activity, children consider how long they may need to bake peppers in the oven and what they may need to do to the couscous before it can be eaten. This gives all children, including those who are very able, the opportunity to consider their own ideas and solutions. The high staff ratio provides frequent opportunities for small group work and one-to-one attention which is highly beneficial to all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are able to focus carefully on individual needs, such

as helping children to pronounce words correctly.

All children are able to make at least good and often excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Key persons work closely with parents when children first attend in order to identify their starting points and interests. They make continuous high-quality observations of children's progress, recording their most significant steps in their Learning Journeys which they present beautifully. The key person plans specifically for their own key group within the overall planning structure of the pre-school. This enables them to very effectively focus on children's individual needs and incorporate their next steps in future activities.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	2
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	1
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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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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