

The Learning Mill

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number

EY413620

Inspection date

18/01/2011

Inspector

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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

The Learning Mill was registered in 2010. It operates from a refurbished building in the centre of Leek, Staffordshire and serves the local and surrounding areas. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor area. The setting is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6pm all year round.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 70 children may attend the setting at any one time. Currently there are 52 children on roll, all of whom are within the early years age range. The setting supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

There are seven members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are relaxed, happy, confident and well cared for. Individual needs are fully met as staff work positively with parents and other professionals to get to know each child's requirements and how best to meet them. Good progress is made towards the early learning goals as staff provide a wide range of engaging activities based on children's interests. Most policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children. The setting is focused on continual improvement and the strong leadership and keen vision mean that all staff are ambitious and extremely enthusiastic about raising standards.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- obtain prior written permission for each and every medicine from parents before any medication is given (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare).
- 14/02/2011

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

- carry out regular evacuation drills and record in a fire log book any problems encountered and how they were resolved
- ensure that the risk assessment accurately reflects practice.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. A clear written policy is in place to underpin sound practice and this includes robust recruitment procedures to safeguard children from unsuitable individuals. Possible signs and symptoms of abuse are identified and staff are knowledgeable about how to pass on any concerns. Staff are generally vigilant throughout the day, ensuring children are well supervised and protected from accidental harm. However, on the day of inspection, the daily risk assessment indicated that socket covers had been checked, but two covers had not been replaced. Children learn how to keep themselves safe. For instance, they know it is important to hold onto the bannister as they go up and down the stairs. They follow instruction promptly and even remind each other to 'hold on'. An emergency evacuation procedure is in place, but this has not yet been practised with the children.

Parents are warmly welcomed into the setting and staff work in partnership with them to ensure every child's needs are understood and met. Relevant information regarding any allergies or cultural requirements is collated and an individual risk assessment is drawn up to ensure that children receive care appropriate to their needs. Any special needs are fully discussed and outside support is obtained as required. Staff are sensitive to ensure all children are fully included. For instance, in baking activities, children with food allergies are still involved, but mix ingredients that do not pose a hazard to them. Parents are informed of their child's progress and encouraged to add to staff understanding of what their child can do. Children take home paper cut-outs in favourite shapes and return to nursery with parent's observations of skills they have acquired. These are celebrated at the setting. As a result, staff are clear about each child's ability and successfully provide focused activities to develop their skills further. Furthermore, children's confidence soars as they are praised for their achievements.

Staff attend regular training to enhance their skills, and their enthusiasm for improving outcomes for children is impressive. They display a high level of commitment to their roles and are keen to take on advice and guidance as necessary. The manager is highly effective in embedding ambition in all staff. She works alongside staff, observing and providing support to help them develop. Valuing all staff members, she encourages them all to share her vision to provide outstanding childcare. Staff report that their confidence is growing in their roles and that their views are taken into account at staff meetings. Consequently, the staff group all work as an extremely positive and successful team. This results in an uplifting and forward thinking environment where raising standards for children is the key priority. Strengths and weaknesses of the provision have been identified and plans for future improvement are targeted towards enhancing children's experiences. For instance, a plan is in place to develop the outside area further.

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

Children make good progress as they are provided with a wide range of interactive and fun activities that meet their learning and development needs. They are fully immersed in imaginative play, talking on pretend telephones and making appointments in the hair salon. They enjoy re-enacting the story of 'The Gruffalo' as a role play area is made into his cave. Children's imagination is sparked as breakfast for the day is 'scrambled snakes' (spaghetti on toast) in line with this theme. Early literacy skills are developed as they recognise their own names on their coat pegs and at registration time. They learn the sounds of their initial as the pictures beside their names are also matched to encourage this. Staff are highly effective in promoting their understanding, reading stories with enthusiasm and emphasis and bringing children's attention to the sound of different words. For instance, during a song about cheeky crocodiles, children recognise the 'S' sound and then list other words that start with the same letter.

Children's personal, emotional and social skills are also successfully promoted. The cheerful atmosphere and friendly, calm staff help children to feel at ease and develop self-esteem. They receive plenty of attention as staff play alongside them and willingly respond to their requests for certain games or affection. Babies are held and cuddled frequently and older children regularly seek out staff to sit with them and chat. Physical development is also flourishing as children enjoy regular access to the outside area. They develop skills, such as, balancing, climbing and hand-to-eye coordination. Movement and music sessions also promote physical development indoors. Children respond positively to the dance teacher and 'melody bear', dancing imaginatively.

Staff observe children as they play. They track their achievements and ensure that any gaps in development are promptly followed up. Activities cover all six areas of learning and children have plenty of time to express their preferences as they move freely around the rooms, accessing toys and resources of their choice. Babies have fun exploring their senses as they feel the texture of cooked pasta or baked beans. Older children experiment with different textures as they design pictures and displays, making 'clouds' with paint and screwed up tissues and painting 'The Gruffalo' with a mixture of paint and oats. All areas are extremely well set out to meet their needs. For instance, in the baby room, the environment is divided into two distinct areas, ensuring that sleeping children are not disturbed.

Children's health is generally well promoted as they follow clear hand-washing routines and are encouraged to make healthy choices. They enjoy a well-balanced menu which provides them with a full range of nutritional meals and snacks throughout the day. Any accidents are fully recorded and shared with parents to ensure continuity of care. However, the medication records are not fully compliant with legal requirements. Children behave extremely well. They show respect for each other and for the setting. They are involved in activities that benefit the wider community, taking part in local activities, such as, the harvest festival at the nearby church.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	2
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

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