

Dolly Mixtures

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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*.

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Description of the setting

Dolly Mixtures pre-school has been open for over 20 years and moved to its current premises in 2004. It is privately owned and operates from one main room in Great Ashby Community Centre, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. The setting is accessible to all children and there is a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

The setting provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. It is open each weekday during term-time only and sessions are from 9am to 12 noon. Children may attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register to provide 26 places there are currently 29 children on roll who are within this age group. The setting serves the local and neighbouring communities. A small number of children attend other settings such as nurseries and childminders. The setting currently supports a small number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and some children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs six members of child care staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 3 or above. One staff member is currently working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children's needs are consistently met and they make good progress because staff work exceptionally well with parents and develop a thorough understanding of children's interests and needs. They use this knowledge to inform daily planning and ensure that children are always included and they are offered activities that promote their learning. Key strengths of the setting are the excellent procedures relating to safeguarding and their commitment to promoting equality. Children therefore play confidently in a safe environment, developing a highly positive sense of self and an excellent awareness of the needs and lifestyles of others. Thorough self-evaluation procedures support the ongoing review of the setting, enabling staff to prioritise improvements and offer a service which is responsive to the needs of children and their families.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further the consistent access to outdoor play and offer children opportunities to find out about their environment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's well-being is significantly enhanced and their welfare consistently promoted because there are highly effective safeguarding procedures. All staff have attended additional training and demonstrate a comprehensive awareness of this area. There are robust procedures to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Thorough policies and procedures are implemented consistently to ensure that any concerns about children are prioritised and well managed. Comprehensive risk assessments and thorough daily checks ensure that children's safety is promoted. Excellent daily practice and ongoing explanations from staff enable children to gain a mature understanding of safety issues. For example, children learn about road safety through discussions, specific topic work, role play and a visit from a road safety officer.

Managers and staff demonstrate a genuine commitment to improving the setting's practice and therefore, the outcomes for children. Their honest monitoring and review of their work and the use of feedback from parents and children support the ongoing evaluation of the setting. This ensures that they have a clear overview of their practice and are aware of areas for improvement. For example, recent changes include the introduction of 'home folders', where parents provide information about recent events, with staff actively using this to inform planning and ensure that children's current interests are included. All staff have an excellent understanding of anti-discriminatory practice, offering a service which is inclusive for all children. The needs of all children and the promotion of equal opportunities lie at the heart of this setting. Staff use every opportunity to note children's ever-changing needs and interests, continuously adapting their practice and the provision of resources and activities to meet these. This means that they are highly effective in ensuring that all children are meaningfully included and well integrated. Resources are generally used well to support children's learning and development. For example, staff set out the hall to make good use of the space available. They use some community resources, such as the local shops, but do not consistently make full use of the outdoor play area and other community resources to offer children an extended range of opportunities.

Staff maintain highly effective partnerships with parents and carers. The use of a range of communication methods ensures that there are positive relationships and parents are exceptionally well informed of their children's progress and activities. For example, staff talk daily with parents, regularly share children's assessment records and ensure that current activity planning is accessible at each session. Regular newsletters also provide information about current activities and ideas for parents to continue their child's learning at home. The setting also has good procedures for liaising with other professionals involved with the children. For example, they share information with nurseries and childminders, enabling them to work together to promote children's development.

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

Children make good progress in all areas of learning because staff have a confident knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They utilise thorough procedures for observing and assessing children as they play, actively using information gained from this to inform activity planning. This ensures that children's interests are recognised and their individual development is supported. The excellent procedures relating to safety and safeguarding mean that children are cared for in a safe, well-planned environment and their behaviour demonstrates that they feel secure. For example, they move confidently around the setting making independent choices about their play and readily including staff members in this.

Staff confidently encourage children to develop their own play, whilst adapting the planning to suit the needs and interests of the children. Children's independence is therefore promoted, enabling them to play an active role in their learning and thus develop skills for the future. They show curiosity and a desire to explore and learn. For example, children experiment with a construction set, initially building simple towers and going on to construct more intricate models, discussing these with their peers and staff. The thoughtful provision of resources enhances children's enjoyment and promotes their development. For example, children enjoy playing with shredded paper, gathering it up and watching as it drops, comparing it to snow and then using their creative and imaginative skills as they model the paper into animal shapes. The thoughtful layout of the main play area means that children are offered a wide range of play opportunities indoors. However, outdoor areas are not fully utilised in order to extend children's understanding of their environment.

The consistent approach to behaviour management enables children to feel secure and develop their understanding of appropriate behaviour. Staff offer children ongoing explanations, encouraging them to understand each other and work together. Children respond positively to this and demonstrate a mature sense of responsibility. All children are highly valued as individuals and engage in a wide range of meaningful activities that help them to value diversity and understand the lifestyles of others. They celebrate festivals such as Christmas, Diwali and Chinese New Year, with staff providing appropriate resources so that children can incorporate their knowledge of these traditions into their role play. Staff also take photographs of these activities, making them into laminated books which are readily available for the children to refer to. Children are encouraged to recognise and discuss different needs. For example, following a discussion about the use of glasses, children made their own glasses and engaged in role play relating to visiting the opticians. The excellent procedures for working with parents and others mean that staff are able to adapt activities and offer appropriate support to children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Staff recognise that all children play and learn differently and so work to make sure that they offer various ways of learning and thereby narrow the achievement

gap. For example, after noting that many of the children prefer physical activity, staff offer them opportunities to count and recognise numbers through a game where children run and move around the room identifying large laminated numbers on the walls as a staff member calls them out. Staff also make good use of children's interests to help promote their development. For example, after noting that children particularly enjoy crawling under the tables, staff provide additional resources for children to make camps and tents; the children explore the resources and soon become engrossed in using material, boxes and tables to build tents, dens and tunnels, incorporating these into their role play.

Children's self-esteem is promoted and they develop a sense of belonging as staff are always seeking to make sure that the resources reflect children's interests. For example, although children have asked to use the computers, staff note that they are not being used and ask children what other equipment they would like; children choose digital cameras and enjoy taking photographs and looking at them on the screen. Activities such as these promote their understanding of the uses of information and communication technology and therefore support them in gaining skills for use in future life. Children are gaining a clear understanding of the relevance of good health practices. For example, they are offered regular opportunities for physical exercise, discussing the importance of warming up and the effects of exercise, such as raised heart beats.

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	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	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	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	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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