

The Embankment Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Tracey Outram

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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

The Embankment Children's Centre opened in 2006. The centre is managed by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. It operates from a self-contained unit within The Embankment Centre in Thurnscoe, near Barnsley. The children have access to a secured outside play area, sensory garden and sensory room.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 42 children aged from birth to five years. There are currently 57 children on roll. The nursery operates throughout the year with the exception of statutory public holidays. Children attend for a variety of sessions Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 6pm. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four years.

There are eleven members of staff who work with the children on a daily basis. Of these, nine staff members hold qualifications at level 3. One member of staff holds a level four qualification and another holds a level five qualification. In addition, the assistant centre manager holds a level six qualification and has completed Early Years Professional Status. The setting is also supported by the children centre manager and a qualified teacher who works closely with staff.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Within the safe, welcoming and inclusive environment children and families are treated as individuals. Members of staff take positive steps to create purposeful partnerships and they make effective plans to address each child's individual care and learning requirements. The nursery actively embraces quality improvement and plans for the future development of the setting are clearly identified and prioritised. This results in the nursery having a good capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- enhance the organisation and use of the outdoor play area to provide children with a range of planned and independent learning experiences
- develop the use of sustained shared thinking by supporting and extending children's thinking thereby helping them to make connections in their learning
- improve partnership working with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage who share the care of the children, and improve opportunities for parents to contribute, in a meaningful way, to the children

s records and the process of self-evaluation.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place, which have a positive effect on the good health and safety of the children attending the nursery. For example, members of staff are frequently programmed to update their safeguarding training and they demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. This includes having a secure understanding of how to report any concerns to the local investigating agencies. In addition, any hazards are effectively reduced because comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken for both the indoor and outdoor play areas. Good recruitment, vetting and induction procedures are in place to ensure that all adults having access to the children are suitable to do so.

The staff within the setting are deployed effectively and the nursery environment is comfortable, attractive and well resourced. The children have free access to the outdoor play area. Therefore, they are able to explore their surroundings and use resources on a different scale than when indoors. However, the planning for the outside play area lacks some organisation and structure. Consequently, the area is not used to its maximum potential. The setting takes positive steps to counter discrimination and promote inclusive practice. Members of staff have a good understanding of children's backgrounds and needs and effective procedures are in place for identifying a child's need for additional support. This helps to close achievements gaps and ensures that children's experience within the setting is purposeful and rewarding.

Partnership working is central to the ethos of the setting and the nursery successfully engages with many other professionals and key agencies. This supports individual children and families. However, links with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage who share the care of the children are not yet fully developed. Parents and carers are encouraged to share what they know about their children at the start of the placement in order to support the transition from home. They are also treated respectfully and provided with valuable information about the setting and the activities provided. Parents and carers are frequently informed of their children's progress and they are encouraged to access their children's development records. However, the systems of including all parents in making plans for the next steps in their children's learning are not fully explored. Similarly, while parents have access to a 'parent's forum' their suggestions and views do not yet heavily influence the setting's plans for the future.

The newly formed management team provide strong leadership. They consistently communicate high expectations to staff about securing sustainable improvements. In addition, the process of self-evaluation is effectively used by the management and staff team to accurately identify and prioritise areas for future development. Consequently, the nursery has taken effective action to tackle areas of the provision requiring improvement including those identified at the last inspection. For example, rigorous monitoring of the planning, staff competencies and utilising

the skills of partner agencies has improved the service and outcomes for children. However, the management are realistic in the goals they set and they recognise that partnership with parents and outdoor play are among the planned areas for development.

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

Effective monitoring by management and strong leadership from the consultant teacher has helped staff to increase their knowledge and understanding of the purpose of observation and assessment. Consequently, staff are highly aware of the value of using the children's personal interests as a basis for activity planning, and they well placed to reflect on the progress children make.

The children are making secure progress in their learning and they are developing good skills for the future. For example, babies are encouraged to become skilful communicators. They make eye contact, smile, gurgle and squeal to show their pleasure as they happily explore treasure baskets, use puppets and enjoy interactive books. Likewise, as they enjoy tasting fresh fruit at snack time they are introduced to descriptive words such as 'sweet' and 'juicy' which help them to convey meaning. In addition, the toddlers and the older children are developing good speaking and listening skills. They enjoy singing, listening to stories, role-play, mark making and drawing, all of which encourage communication and engender firm foundations for literacy. However, while language freely flows and staff ask many open-ended questions there are fewer opportunities for children and staff to engage in sustained shared thinking. Consequently, this does not consistently challenge and encourage the children's critical thinking abilities. Throughout the setting all children have good opportunities to develop their understanding of problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy. For example, babies seek out patterns, point to familiar items and notice changes in the grouping of items they are exploring with staff. Toddlers name familiar shapes with accuracy and older children skilfully count objects, recognise numbers in their symbolic form and use mathematical language such as more and less. Within the setting the children have opportunities to enjoy first-hand experiences that encourage exploration. They use a range of natural resources and enjoy activities such as making jelly. This successfully introduces children to science as they discover different melting points and explore solids and liquids. The children also learn how technology is used in everyday life as they use the computer, CD player and other programme equipment.

The nursery provides an enabling environment in which every child is supported to develop a strong sense of belonging. Babies and the older children play safely within the child-friendly environment, and they demonstrate a good understanding of the safety rules that are in place to keep them free from harm. In addition, the children show high levels of awareness in relation to healthy lifestyles. They confidently deal with personal hygiene routines and demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. For example, the older children and toddlers are eager to engage in physical play such as climbing, running and playing football. Similarly, the babies use their increasing

mobility to reach out for objects and toys that capture their interest and curiosity.

The successful use of a key person system enables children to make secure attachments with staff and this contributes to their emotional wellbeing and feeling of security in the nursery. Overall, the children's behaviour is good. They demonstrate high self-esteem and the ability to accept others and build firm friendships.

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	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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