

# The Learning Tree Kindergarten & Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 256834  
**Inspection date** 02/06/2011  
**Inspector** Lynne Talbot

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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 Tree Kindergarten and Nursery School opened in 1990. The provision operates from a semi-detached Victorian house close to the centre of Peterborough and serves the local and wider area. The building has three levels. The baby and library rooms are based in the basement area, children aged two to three years are accommodated on the ground floor, and the pre-school unit is based on the first floor. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

The provision is open each weekday all year round, with the exception of Bank Holidays and Christmas Eve. Sessions are from 8am to 5.30pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 42 children may attend the provision at any one time. The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 109 children on roll, all of whom are within the early years age range. The provision provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. The provision is also registered to offer care to children aged over five years. Children occupying these places share the same facilities as the children in the early years age range. There are currently no children on roll in this age range.

Some children attend other settings, such as the early years unit of the local primary school or childminders. The provision supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The provision employs 18 members of childcare staff as well as a chef and assistant chef. The principal holds Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). All childcare staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2, 3 or 4 and two staff have Early Years Degrees.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage builds from every child's individual interest and stage of development, supported by responsive planning. This ensures that children receive imaginative experiences that foster rapid progress in their learning and development. The staff group create a highly welcoming environment using focused safeguarding procedures and robust risk assessments. They ensure that they have cohesive knowledge of each child's needs to ensure that every child is totally included. Partnerships with parents and carers, together with those with all other agencies, are key strengths, showing clear dedication to meeting all children's needs. The principal and manager communicate a very clear vision and drive to secure continued development, with reflective practice well established but continuing to develop.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person

should consider:

- planning and providing experiences which are appropriate to each child's stage of development as they progress towards the early learning goals; this refers to opportunities for children to identify the uses of everyday technology and use information and communication technology and programmable toys to support their learning
- continuing to offer children some control of their learning so they develop the confidence to make decisions based on thinking things through in a logical way; with particular reference to developing their knowledge of safety within their surroundings and recognising potential risks.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding are implemented robustly to ensure that children are fully protected. Managers involve the staff who attend updated training, such as within degree courses, in reviewing all policies and working practices to continually review safeguarding measures. This vigilant approach, daily routines and staff professionalism ensure that safeguarding procedures work at all times. Close monitoring of visitors and the numbered press button entry system, for which the code changes every three to six months, support the overall security. The principal and senior managers ensure that all persons required undertake the appropriate checks to safeguard children. Children are safeguarded by the extensive recruitment and vetting procedures, including the in-depth induction of new staff. Probationary periods for new staff, some peer observation by managers and appraisal systems all form part of the excellent reflective practice that takes place. The principal and manager are exceptionally successful in inspiring the staff team to work towards sustaining ambitious targets. High expectations and superior standards are embedded across all areas of practice. All staff pursue continued professional development and cascade new knowledge to the team within staff meetings before going on to implement new practice. Vigilant risk assessments for the premises and outings undertaken are scrutinised to ensure their efficiency. Self-evaluation at all levels is established and reflects rigorous monitoring and analysis to bring about sustained improvement. Action development and improvement plans are made, looking at specific areas for development, such as improving the transition documents and engaging parents within the pre-reading process to foster literacy. The nursery has undertaken work to incorporate the Every Child A Talker (ECAT) project and is focusing on communication using monitoring tools within the nursery to support children. Parents and carers contribute to self-evaluation through reviews and questionnaires, ensuring that all parents are involved thereby supporting inclusion.

Children's individual learning styles are fully respected. The provision works across three floors, with the youngest children on the ground floor. The induction for new children and families is thorough and dictated at the pace for each child and family need. Transition procedures and information for families as children move from room to room are highly informative and aid security. The environment is highly conducive to learning, extremely safe and well cared for, with an excellent range

of quality play provision used to achieve the planned goals. The staff team are extremely well deployed throughout the day. Although children cannot have free movement between the indoor and outdoor area, this is managed extremely well to ensure that the outdoor environment is accessed as widely as possible for the full range of learning opportunities that it offers. Partnerships with parents and others are exemplary and key strengths. The inclusive systems of communication used to engage parents and carers ensure that there are consistent and productive partnerships, resulting in strong levels of engagement. For example, parents contribute to the records of achievement throughout their child's time in the nursery. Open evenings and days are planned to involve parents in children's learning, such as an heuristic play evening and a creative play evening with a visiting cartoonist. This promotes an awareness of the relevance of specific areas of learning. Frequent questionnaires involve parents in ongoing development, such as the review of the records of achievement. Parents commented that they find them 'brilliant - not only is it a record of our child's progress but it also serves as a wonderful memory for all of us of the first five years'. They further add that they 'will use the record as a part of our child's home visit with his primary teacher' and that they are 'very impressed with the level of presentation, detail and effort that went into collating the learning record'. Consequently, the outcome in children's achievement and the well-being for all children is exceptionally high.

The provision places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of its work. They are highly committed to working in partnership with others and play a proactive role in establishing effective working relationships. Links are maintained with information passed between the provisions using clear and detailed transition summaries. Teachers at the feeder schools are invited into the provision. The provision works closely with several other professional agencies where support for children is required. Within the provision they incorporate visual timetables and symbols, clear and detailed individual plans, and signing to help all children to be fully involved in all areas. They show a committed and forward-thinking attitude towards the overall care for every child and make links to work cohesively. To further support this inclusive attitude for all, the provision incorporate the Mosaic approach to listen to the children's perspectives of their lives and expand on them. The managers and staff make the most of events and festivals to broaden children's awareness of each other's home culture. For instance, key words in other languages, such as Polish and Iranian, are learned and shared, and they celebrate events and festivals to stimulate children's interest. The provision invites people into the group to share their culture or profession, seeking to challenge stereotyping by encouraging children to view and be aware of people carrying out different roles within the community. This helps children to appreciate the local and wider society around them.

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

Children are offered well-planned activities that help them to make rapid progress in their learning and development. Assessment through intricate recorded observation is clear and the information gained is used proactively to identify next steps and goals. Progression is fully detailed and closely monitored. Staff develop

excellent learning and care plans which form a part of children's personal profiles. Children's current interests and observed development feed the daily planning, which continues to adapt. Consequently, children make significant gains in their learning. All children are physically active. The provision has fully embraced the outdoor learning opportunities advocated within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children have innovative opportunities to engage in a wide range of physical activities and gain a superb understanding about the importance of regular exercise as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. All children explore the natural world through free digging and are seen to make 'potions' adding fallen leaves and fruits into soil as they play together. Children are exceptionally kind to each other and take turns with equipment, showing an advanced understanding of fairness. For example, one child says to another, 'I haven't had a long turn yet, is it my turn now?' and their friend quickly agrees that it is. All children visit the local meadows and lake, and the nearby bluebell woods where they explore the seasons. Staff engage children in imaginative exploration by hiding letters from the 'fairies' in the woods for children to seek and they are delighted when they are helped to read the notes, showing great pleasure in the use of letters and mark making. Younger children explore drama and literacy when they enjoy the vast range of story sacks and puppets to include them in roles within the familiar stories, such as the baby owl story. Younger children explore an excellent range of heuristic play where they explore textures and materials, develop concentration skills and dexterity. Staff are skilled in capitalising on children's emerging interest. For instance, babies show an interest in the pop-up tunnel, prompting the staff to offer them the Tepee to explore and extending opportunities for them to be physically active. Children have the advantage of using the downstairs library, with ample free floor space for active play, and a dedicated messy room for older children where they can freely investigate materials, such as cooked coloured spaghetti and rice, malleable dough and sand. Woodwork provides scope for supervised risktaking, with children using skill to estimate size and shape, plan and build using tools, and working safely.

All children, including babies, show an extremely strong sense of security and belonging within the nursery. Babies and younger children explore their surroundings, seek attention from staff, and show delight as they laugh and giggle together. Children recognise that others have feelings and respect each other. For instance, children ask each other to share the provision, such as dough, and their friends readily divide their portion to share. Children demonstrate levels of understanding of personal safety moving safely around the provision, complying with boundaries and becoming involved in play activities with staff where they discuss road safety and the dangers from cars on the road. However, they have fewer opportunities to identify risks and hazards within the environment on a day-to-day basis. This means they are not practising making decisions based on assessment. Care for others is a theme that runs throughout the nursery and extends into the community. Children take part in fundraising, holding cake stalls and dealing with the whole process of selling the produce themselves. They are involved in making parcels to send to Africa and food for the homeless in the local community. Children use the community facilities to explore history and the world around them, such as visiting the museum. They attend events at the theatre to enhance their involvement in literacy, drama and storytelling. Children's behaviour is exemplary and they show an excellent awareness of responsibility, both in the nursery and extending as part of their community.

Older children extend mark making, an awareness of number and size, and counting across all areas, reading signs, making marks in a variety of medium and counting the stairs as they climb them. Activities to support the development of letters and sounds are adapted to meet every child's level of interest. Children are competent in using some modern technology. Older children use cameras to take photographs as part of the Mosaic tours. Babies and younger children explore high quality mechanical toys. However, the use of information and communication technology and programmable toys to support learning is limited, which means that children do not fully explore early technology to advance their learning. Children are extremely well nourished, enjoying meals prepared by skilled and award-winning cooks offered on a seasonal menu. The menu demonstrates the diverse society in which children live, including a wide range of planned meals that adapt to any specific need or requirement according to dietary, religious or cultural need. Children sit together in the dining room to enhance their social experience. They are helped to understand the need to maintain the environment through activities focusing on recycling. The provision works with children to look at energy sustainability. For example, following discussions the children wear badges saying 'energy police' and then remind staff about turning off the lights to save energy. Children show high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration in this dynamic setting. They respond to challenges with great enthusiasm, showing the attitudes necessary to support them through future learning situations.



## 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

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
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	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	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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	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

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