

Maryland Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

Gill Little

Setting address

Parish centre, Glebe Way, Amersham, Buckinghamshire,
HP6 5ND

Telephone number

01494 433426 or 724038

Email

MARYLAND@STLEOSCB.ORG.UK

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

Maryland Pre-School has been in operation for over 30 years and is run by St. Leonard's Church as part of its outreach programme to families in the community. It operates from St Leonard's Church Hall in Amersham. The pre-school has access to a large hall, kitchen and cloakroom facilities. A small first floor room is accessed by stairs. A fully enclosed garden is available for outdoor play. Children attend from the local area.

The pre-school is registered to care for a maximum of 30 children in the early years age range. It currently has 48 children on roll. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school operates on weekdays from 9am until 12 noon during school term times. A lunch club is available on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 12 noon until 1pm. It is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged three and four. It has some partnership arrangements with other early years settings.

The pre-school employs 10 staff of whom eight hold relevant qualifications, including Qualified Teacher Status. In addition, one member of staff is working towards a further qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in this safe, stimulating and welcoming environment. Staff make very good use of the outdoor space and provide some excellent activities, although adult-led learning sessions can be too lengthy. Well-established partnerships with parents effectively support staff in meeting children's individual needs. Partnerships with all other early years settings which children attend are not yet fully established although staff do work closely with the church, local school and external agencies to support children and their families. There is a very positive approach to continuous improvement as staff are continually reviewing their practice, tackling key areas of weakness systematically and effectively building on areas of strength.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review the structure of the session to extend the time available for child-led play

- develop partnerships with all other early years settings which children attend in order to enhance continuity in their education and care.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to promoting children's safety. They have a good understanding of safeguarding children procedures as they routinely receive training in this area. Robust recruitment and induction procedures ensure that all staff and volunteers have appropriate background checks and understand the setting's policies. Routine risk assessments, together with close supervision and rigorous security on the main door, help to keep children safe at all times. A wide range of well maintained documentation, which is reviewed regularly, supports the safe and efficient management of the setting.

Staff provide a good range of easily accessible resources and activities to support children's learning. They make very good use of the garden area providing an inviting range of adult-led and free play activities. While adult-led learning sessions are very valuable they can go on for too long which has some limitations on the time available for child-led play.

Staff actively promote equality and diversity. They provide effective support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. They work closely with outside agencies where necessary and use effective strategies to close identified achievement gaps. Staff develop positive relationships with parents who are very complimentary about the setting commenting particularly on the friendly and welcoming environment. Staff keep parents well informed about their children's learning and development through regular discussions and parent evenings. They actively encourage parents to support children's learning at home by providing workshops on particular areas of the curriculum, such as sounds and letters. Staff have not yet fully established partnerships with all other early years settings which children attend which has some limitations in enhancing continuity in their education and care. However, they do have some positive links in place, for example, they share progress records with a local childminder for the children she cares for and are actively supporting a local school with their interest in the 'Every Child a Talker' programme.

The views of staff, committee, parents and children all feed into the self-evaluation process which is effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. Staff have a very positive attitude to new ideas and new ways of working, continually reviewing their practice and its impact on children. They actively embrace training opportunities and there are good levels of qualifications among the staff team.

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

Children display a strong sense of belonging in the setting and their behaviour is good. They are familiar with routines and have a positive approach to learning. They show confidence in exploring their environment and they are building strong relationships with their friends and with staff. A range of resources and activities reflecting diversity effectively help children to learn about people who are different from themselves.

Children thoroughly enjoy exploring the interesting activities available in the garden. They help to plant tomatoes which they have grown from seed and staff enhance their mathematical development very effectively through high-quality interactions. For example, children count how many tomato plants there are, how many are left when one is planted, and which ones are the tallest and smallest. Children become engrossed in a sponge painting activity using a long strip of paper spread out across several tables. They spend an extended period of time exploring different colours, textures and shapes and are supported well by a parent volunteer. They explore shells and toy animals in a water tray and, with the support of staff, they consider whether the shells will float or sink and they join in with nursery rhymes as they play. A group of boys thoroughly enjoy the outdoor space, setting out road signs and riding around in toy cars using up their physical energy in a safe and respectful manner. All children thoroughly enjoy a whole group of adult-led story outdoors. A puppet announces the activity which immediately engages most children's attention and staff include children in acting out the story using props and dressing up clothes. This very effectively brings the story to life, captures the children's imagination and encourages them to continue with the role-play once the story is finished. With a reminder from staff they remember that the 'lion' is a child dressed up and that they must be gentle with him.

In preparation for snack time, children go to the toilet and wash their hands hygienically with staff support and supervision. However, this takes a considerable amount of time. While other groups are waiting they engage in some valuable adult-led activities, such as a shape game and 'show and tell', and this is followed by another whole group adult-led activity focusing on sounds, letters and numbers. Children then enjoy a very sociable snack time which effectively supports the church ethos of the group in helping children to develop valuable social skills. They enjoy healthy foods, such as apple, cheese and bread sticks and learn to drink more water during the current hot weather. They then return outside for the adult-led story activity. This whole process takes over an hour, and while valuable learning is taking place, it is a long time for some children to sit and listen, particularly younger children and those with shorter attention spans.

Staff monitor children's progress regularly and keep individual files to illustrate their development towards the early learning goals. They identify some next steps in learning and incorporate these into ongoing activities. They ensure that planning is flexible to take account of children's individual interests and capabilities and they are currently working on this process with support from their early years advisory

teacher.

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	3
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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