

Children's Centre at the Mall (Luton)

Inspection report for early years provision

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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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

The Children's Centre at The Mall (Luton) nursery and creche opened in 1986. It is part of the Sure Start children's centre programme and is managed by a parent committee who are responsible for the financial and legal side of the centre. It operates from one main room within an indoor shopping complex in the centre of Luton, Bedfordshire. The setting is on the first floor and there are lifts to this area. Children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

The setting offers full day care, wraparound care, funded education sessions and a shopper's creche. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. The setting is open each weekday for 51 weeks of the year and sessions are from 8am to 6pm, with Saturday sessions from 9am to 4.30pm. Children may attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register to provide 60 places, with a maximum of 32 of these being used for the provision of full day care. There are currently 153 children on roll who are within the early years age group. The setting serves a wide catchment area and maintains close links with the children's centre. It currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and several children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting is also registered to offer care to children aged over five years. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. Children occupying these places share the same facilities as the children in the early years age range. There are currently a number of children on roll in this age group and this varies daily, according to demand for the creche places.

The setting employs 23 members of child care staff. Of these, one staff member holds an appropriate early years qualification at Level 2 and 21 staff hold qualifications at Level 3 or above. One staff member has qualified teacher status. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The setting uses effective self-evaluation procedures to continuously review their practice, supporting them in prioritising improvements and thereby maintaining a service which is responsive to children's needs. Staff work well with parents and carers, enabling them to obtain a thorough understanding of each child's needs and ensure that these are consistently met and that children are offered appropriate support in order to be meaningfully included. Clear assessment methods mean that staff are aware of children's current interests and can plan activities to promote their development. The excellent use of all resources means that children are offered an extended range of activities and learning opportunities. A further key strength is the attention to detail in all procedures relating to safeguarding children, ensuring that children are cared for in a safe environment and their welfare is promoted at all times.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further the assessment and planning procedures to include an initial assessment of children's progress and show how their next steps are consistently fed into the overall planning in order to provide further experiences which are appropriate to each child's stage of development
- improve further the systems for organisation of the setting by continuing to develop the use of self-evaluation to support ongoing improvements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's well-being is significantly enhanced and their welfare consistently promoted because the setting has highly effective safeguarding procedures. All staff have attended relevant training and demonstrate a comprehensive awareness of this area. There are very good relationships with other agencies, enabling all to work together to promote children's welfare. The setting has 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, they understand the relevance of the setting's procedures for the safe accessing of the outdoor play area.

Staff demonstrate a good awareness of inclusive practice. The setting's policies and procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure that these reflect the needs of the children and their families. Staff work well to narrow the achievement gap, successfully utilising additional programmes, for example, 'Every Child a Talker', to help promote children's development in areas such as communication, language and literacy. The good relationships with parents and carers mean that they are kept well informed of children's progress and activities, for example, through daily discussions, newsletters and regular opportunities to share children's assessment records. Staff make good use of newsletters to provide information about ways in which parents and carers can support their child's learning at home. There are no children on roll who also attend other early years provision. However, the manager and staff understand the importance of working closely with other providers to support children's continuity of care when the need arises.

The manager and staff demonstrate a genuine enthusiasm for their work and have a clear vision for the future development of the setting. The continuous review of their practice means that they have a realistic overview of their work and can prioritise changes that improve the outcomes for children. For example, recent changes include improvements to the outdoor play facilities, meaning that children

are offered an extended range of opportunities in this area. However, self-evaluation does not always effectively utilise associated action planning to inform the full review of practice and to evaluate the impact of changes made. Staff make excellent use of all resources to support the promotion of children's learning and development. For example, play areas are under constant review and are adapted to meet the varying needs and interests of the children. Staff also utilise local resources, such as the library, parks and a carnival arts centre, in order to offer children further opportunities.

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

Children make good progress in their learning and are supported in achieving because staff have a secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are well supported by an advisory teacher. They observe children as they play, assessing their progress and using the majority of this information to inform the planning of activities, thus supporting children's individual development. However, this is not fully promoted because the assessment and planning procedures do not clearly show an initial assessment of children's starting points and how their next developmental steps are consistently fed into the overall planning. Staff encourage children to develop their own play, supporting this, for example, through interaction and the use of open questions, to extend children's ideas and understanding. This supports children in playing an active role in their learning and thus developing skills for the future.

The setting's thoughtful procedures help children to feel settled. For example, staff carry out home visits before children start, enabling them to get to know the children and meaning that new children see a familiar face at their first session. Children's self-esteem and development are promoted as their home language is respected and they are supported in learning English. For example, Polish-speaking staff members talk with children in their home language and gently introduce English vocabulary, increasing this as children become more confident. Good staff interaction means that children's learning and development are consistently promoted. For example, they gain a knowledge of living things as they work in small groups with staff members, examining the life cycle of the butterfly, reading related books, looking at model butterflies through a magnifying glass, and completing an associated puzzle.

Well-planned and resourced activities encourage children to experiment and think critically. For example, a group of children engage in an activity with corn flour and ice; they become engrossed as they mix the flour with water, adding ice cubes and paint. They note how the appearance and consistency changes, going on to use straws to blow bubbles into the mixture. The thoughtful provision of resources means that children are able to explore the uses of information and communication technology and thus gain further skills for the future. For example, they use computers, calculators and programmable toys. The good use of the outdoor play area means that children are offered an additional variety of activities. For example, they grow herbs and fruit, play large musical instruments, experiment

with water chutes and sit in tents to read books.

Children are supported in developing a clear understanding of appropriate behaviour. Staff act as good role models, remaining calm, polite, attentive and modelling good manners. They explain to children the implications of their behaviour and encourage them to share and work together. For example, children use sand timers to organise turn taking. Children's understanding of diversity is promoted as they access relevant resources and participate in activities and discussions. For example, they celebrate a range of festivals, using reference books to research these, tasting traditional dishes, learning related songs and reading relevant stories. The good procedures for working with parents and carers mean that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who use English as an additional language are offered appropriate support to enable them to participate meaningfully. For example, staff make appropriate use of a visual timetable to support communication.

Staff introduce activities and resources to support the development of all children. For example, after noting that the majority of boys were not accessing mark making materials, they introduced a 'mark making wall'. All children now enjoy using this resource, experimenting with different painting tools and often using their hands to paint. Children are encouraged to understand the relevance of healthy lifestyles. For example, their awareness of the importance of exercise is promoted as they participate in physical activities, noting the effects of exercise, such as raised temperature and increased heartbeat.

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

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| 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

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|--|---|
| 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 | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| 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

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| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which children develop skills for the future | 2 |

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

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| 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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