

# The Secret Garden Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY419779

**Inspection date**

05/07/2011

**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*.

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 Secret Garden Pre-School was originally managed by a committee but has been privately owned since 2004. It operates from a purpose built setting in Princes Risborough in Buckinghamshire adjacent to Princes Risborough School and Risborough Children's Centre. The premises comprise of a main playroom with a kitchen, accessible toilet, children's bathroom, store cupboard, office and a foyer area. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outdoor play and use of the school field and Children's Centre play area.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 39 children from 2 years to under 8 years. There are currently 65 children on roll. The setting receives funding for three and four year olds and there are currently 23 children in receipt of this funding. Children attend a variety of sessions throughout the week and come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday during term times only from 8.50am to 11.50am or 12 noon until 3pm with some children staying all day. The setting has systems in place to support children with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language. There are nine staff who work with the children plus an administrator. The owner/manager holds a Level 6 childcare qualification, six staff hold Level 3 and two hold Level 2 childcare qualifications. The pre-school has gained the Buckinghamshire Quality Assurance Award and is working towards the new Quality Improvement Plan; they receive support from Bucks Early Years and Childcare Service and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

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

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in this vibrant setting where their needs are met to an extremely high standard. They make excellent progress in their learning and development due to the seamless delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements by the committed and enthusiastic staff who constantly evaluate all aspects of the service provided. The setting demonstrates a significant capacity for continuous improvement and since the move to new premises have adapted a number of routines and developed several areas, for example, creating opportunities for children to plant herbs and vegetables outside. Staff training remains a high priority and this means children benefit from new ideas, for example, making dens following a recent imaginative play course.

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

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- help children to learn about why their bodies need water by encouraging them to have regular drinks and ensure the jug of water and beakers are accessible to all children.

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

There are rigorous procedures in place to safeguarding children. Staff are very aware of their responsibility to protect children from possible abuse and attend in-house workshops lead by the owner/manager and local authority courses to ensure they know how to deal with any concerns. The owner/manager is the setting's designated safeguarding officer and has implemented some new systems in light of recent high profile cases so that mobile telephones are no longer allowed within the playroom and the use of social networking sites are closely monitored. All areas of the setting are safe for children due to the stringent risk assessments that have been carried out to identify potential hazards. Children are reminded to play safely, for example, if found running they are reminded to use their 'walking feet'. The premises remain extremely secure as there is an intercom installed at the front door and key pad entry systems fitted to the play room and office. Staff monitor who enters the building and visitors sign in and out. Staff are easily identified as they wear a uniform and name badge; their photographs are also on display in the foyer and on the setting's website. Children practise the evacuation drill on a regular basis and as a result know how to leave the building quickly and safely. A range of well-maintained fire safety equipment is present in the event of a fire, such as, extinguishers and a fire blanket. The owner/manager is passionate about the pre-school and strives to maintain the highest of standards. She leads the enthusiastic staff team by example and provides ample opportunities for them to develop professionally and make an impact on the setting's practice, for example, by contributing to the self-evaluation form. This honestly and accurately demonstrates how the requirements are met and includes many plans for the future. Staff and senior management meetings are held on a regular basis to plan activities, review practice and work towards the Quality Improvement Plan introduced by the local authority. Staff carry out their duties confidently and follow well-established rotas and routines which mean the sessions run very smoothly.

The premises have been built to a high specification providing a spacious, clean environment for children. It is enhanced by the many colourful posters, photographs and displays of children's artwork and set out to fully encourage their independence and help them make choices. For example, they self-select from the bespoke shelving units containing clearly labelled tubs of toys. Areas have been designated for creative activities, including imaginary role play and looking at books. Children have free-flow play indoors and outdoors throughout the session. The setting is extremely well resourced with an exciting range of high quality toys, furniture and equipment to cover all areas of learning. All children are included within the setting. Staff know the children very well using information gathered on pre-visits, through discussions with parents, the completion of an 'All About Me' form and their own observations. During registration time sign language is used effectively so that all children can communicate and say 'hello' and also at other

times, such as, snack time where children sign 'water' or 'milk' and 'please' and 'thank you'. The visual timetable also helps all children understand the daily routine particularly those for whom English is an additional language. Children with special educational needs are fully supported by their key person and the setting's special educational needs coordinator. They work closely with parents and other professionals to identify children's needs and ensure specific support is provided, for example, creating an 'Individual Education Plan' with targeted areas of development. The home/school books in use are a good way of communicating between parents and carers with them often adding photographs and information about family outings and events. Feedback is given by staff verbally and there are several opportunities throughout the year to share assessment records. Through the self evaluation process staff have identified that it would be very useful if parents could contribute their own observations about what their child can do at home to create a comprehensive record of their progress and achievements. Parents spoken to during the inspection are positive about the pre-school and what it offers; a parent visiting with her child for the second time says 'it's fantastic; I love it!' Existing parents comment 'I'm really impressed; it's very structured and I find the parent consultation meetings very useful', another states 'I'm pleased with what goes on here. I like the way they are learning things like how to dress and undress. The Butterfly group is absolutely marvellous at bringing on skills, such as, writing their name. The children are happy and so am I'. Some parents who have experienced the setting at both premises miss the large outdoor area but acknowledge the children do have opportunities for free flow play now. The setting is proactive in keeping parents and carers informed through a variety of ways, including a notice board, regular newsletters, its website which includes a parents forum and a social network page which only they can access. Parents are asked to complete regular questionnaires to ensure their views are known and acted upon. Partnerships with other providers are good. Communication books are used between the pre-school and childminders so they are aware of the child's achievements that day. Prior to transferring to school the setting invites teachers to visit so they can observe the children in a familiar setting; they are keen to continue to improve these links, particularly when a child attends school in the morning and pre-school in the afternoon.

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

Children participate in a wealth of activities that cover all areas of learning as staff are skilled at finding out about their needs, likes and interests. The setting has fully embraced child-centred planning and use a 'wish upon a star' board for children to record what they would like to do, for example, a child asked to see another child's tortoises as she had been talking about them so staff organised for the tortoises to visit. Children's starting points for learning are established by staff who then use their observational skills to record children's progress and achievements throughout their time at the pre-school. This information is recorded in a 'Learning Journey' which includes extensive photographic evidence showing that children are making excellent progress. Children have a strong sense of belonging; many have been through the change of premises which has been

handled very well to ensure they feel secure and safe in their new setting. Children move about freely and confidently making independent choices. They are familiar with the established routines, such as, snack time, approach adults freely to initiate conversations and develop trusting relationships with staff; one child notices that a member of staff is absent and asks where he is. Children are beginning to learn about healthy lifestyles. They enjoy a variety of nutritious snacks and talk about the fact that food provides energy to make their body work. They enjoy a drink of water or milk with their snack and signs on display state drinks are freely available throughout the session. However, the jug of water and beakers are situated just out of children's reach on a work surface making it inaccessible to most of them. During hot weather there are no regular reminders from staff to encourage children to have a drink so they learn about why they need to remain hydrated and the effect water has on their bodies. Children who stay for lunch bring a packed lunch from home which is stored appropriately so it stays fresh. Staff provide plenty of information for parents about healthy options and often advise parents if they feel portion sizes are too big. Children have excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills and engage in outdoor play. They pedal tricycles, push-a-long toys with their feet, bounce on the low level trampoline and climb up and slide down the climbing frame. Children also have use of the adjacent Children's Centre play area and the school field where they can run freely and explore. Other aspects of children's learning are developed in the colourful, stimulating outdoor area; they are able to make marks on the chalkboards at their level, make words with the magnetic letters on the magnetic boards attached to the wall, scoop sand at the sand tray and pour water into bottles and containers at the water tray.

Children make a positive contribution to the setting as they behave very well. They react positively to the abundance of praise given by the staff and enjoy receiving stickers that acknowledge when they have been helpful. The 'Kindness Tree' display is used effectively to highlight good deeds, such as, sharing a toy with another child. Staff manage 'super hero' imaginary role play well so that it does not impact negatively within the setting. They are aware of the research that recognises the benefits this type of play provides, especially to boys, however, they do not actively encourage this play, never join in and monitor any violence towards others to ensure children have fun and play safely. Children have an excellent awareness of their local community and the wider world. They take part in events, such as, a sponsored walk to raise money for charity, enjoy visits from the local police community support officers and are intrigued by a visit from some stick insects and African land snails. Children develop a high level of cultural awareness through adult-led activities, such as, making sweet rice as part of their celebrations for the Hindu New Year. Children are very independent and are learning skills for the future all the time, for example, at snack time, they use small knives to cut the fruit, count how many pieces of apple are needed and learn to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Children recognise the importance of recycling as they add used paper to the recycling bin in the playroom. The 'Butterflies' group is very successful in preparing children for transfer to school and is a chance to consolidate their learning, for example, they are encouraged to speak out loud and describe their visit to their new school, listen to others while they speak, count to 10 and beyond and use percussion instruments to tap out the rhythm of simple nursery rhymes. Children have many opportunities to develop their language and

staff interact well to support them, for example, by asking lots of open-ended questions, explaining what is going on and chatting freely. Children experience a wide range of activities and resources that develop their problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills, for example, a child stops for a rest on his tricycle and counts the numbers to 10 displayed on the fence. They use mathematical language, for example, while playing at the water tray a child says 'it's full up now' and 'I need some more water'. Children show high levels of engagement and develop basic Information Communication and Technology skills as they use the laptop computer, for example, a child manipulates the mouse and 'drags' features and accessories to make a funny face on the screen which causes great hilarity from the children looking on who are waiting for the sand timer to indicate that it is their turn.

## 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	1
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	1
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

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

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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