

The Willows

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Rachel Edwards

Setting address	Willow Brook Centre, Bowmont Water, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7GA
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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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 Willows Pre-School opened in 2002 and is run by a voluntary committee. The pre-school operates from a self contained building within the Willow Brook Leisure Centre. There is a secure outdoor play area. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register to care for a maximum of 26 children in the early years age group; none may be under two years. The pre-school is open each weekday during school term times from 8.50am to 3pm, except Thursdays when it is only open in the morning. The pre-school provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds and some two-year-olds. There are currently 64 children aged from two years to four years on roll. Children come from the local area. The pre-school supports a small number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who are learning English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 11 staff, who work directly with the children, this includes three support staff. The manager holds an early years degree and is working towards gaining Early Years Professional Status. The deputy holds a relevant level 3 qualification, four other staff hold qualifications at level 2 and one other is working towards a qualification at level 3.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely safe, well cared for and make excellent progress at this effectively organised and vibrant pre-school. There is a strong focus on staff development and training and this is reflected in the high quality teaching. Staff organise the day to focus on the needs of each child. Children benefit from the highly positive relationships with parents and other professionals, which ensure a generally consistent approach and high quality support. The pre-school is highly reflective and clearly identifies areas for development so that it is well placed to improve further on the already outstanding practice.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- extending further the system of involving parents in their children's assessment arrangements by inviting them to make their own comments in their children's progress files.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety is a priority. There are effective policies and procedures to safeguard children and practice is rigorously monitored. Safe recruitment practices and thorough checking assesses the suitability of staff. All adults understand their responsibilities and are confident in carrying them out, including working with other agencies to safeguard children. Concerns and complaints are investigated thoroughly, practice reviewed and action taken if necessary to improve children's safety. The manager and staff carefully assess potential risks and take effective steps to prevent accidents. This includes particular risks for individual children, such as those with allergies or disabilities.

The enthusiastic and caring staff create a stimulating environment where children feel secure and are eager to join in. Staff plan the day carefully and tailor routines to meet each child's care and learning needs. They work effectively as a team, sharing key areas of responsibility. For example, by monitoring equality of opportunity or taking responsibility for different areas of the curriculum. Good adult-to-child ratios mean that children get the individual attention they need to flourish. Children have easy access to high quality play materials that fully support all areas of their development. They benefit from being able to play outside when they want and in all weathers.

The manager is highly motivated and communicates well with staff. She values their contributions and all are enthusiastic and committed to providing the very best for the children. For example, they review their own and colleagues work in a positive, supportive atmosphere. They welcome advice from their local authority and other sources, attend training and keenly apply what they learn. Parents and children's views are sought and taken into account. Staff meet regularly to discuss individual children's care and learning, and how to improve their practice. There is an active training and development programme for all staff to ensure adults have up to date skills to support children, including those with additional needs. There are clear plans for development and improvement for children.

The pre-school actively encourages parental involvement. They are invited to serve on the management committee and to help in pre-school. Children's home languages are used in signs around the nursery, books and notices for parents. Parents report that they feel welcome and valued. Every child is treated as an individual. They have their own key person who knows them very well, and with whom they have a warm and caring relationship. Home visits are offered for some children and are especially beneficial for children with additional needs. The key person liaises closely with parents and leads the assessment and planning for that child. They make sure that colleagues are aware of any child's particular needs or interests so that everyone can support their care and learning very effectively. Parents are regularly updated on their children's progress. In addition to daily conversations, they are offered monthly appointments with key workers to review children's progress. However, parents do not contribute regularly to children's developmental records to build a full picture of interests and achievements outside pre-school. Excellent links with other settings and schools provide continuity and

help children make a smooth transition.

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

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at pre-school. Caring staff help new children settle quickly. Staff have an in depth understanding children's development and how they learn. They use this to excellent effect as they guide, inspire and excite children to make outstanding progress. The pre-school has an ethos of children taking charge of their own learning. Children become highly independent, confident and able to make choices. They learn through making their own discoveries, skilfully guided by staff who know when to intervene and when to stand back.

Children's language and communication are developed exceptionally well. They are introduced to signing from the start so there is a common language. Children are motivated to talk and communicate in different ways as they share in enjoyable activities. For example, some children put on a puppet show for an appreciative audience. Staff provide places where children like to talk. For example, a cosy enclosed outdoor 'den' with cushions and books, and a well resourced home corner. Children imaginatively use rolling tracks to make enclosed spaces, where they chat with friends. There is plenty of encouragement to make marks and progress to early writing. Staff recognise some boys reluctance to use writing materials so provide exciting alternatives, such as squirting paint bottles.

Children can count and sort confidently and compare using a variety of materials. They use their developing mathematical understanding in practical ways, such as estimating how much gravel they need for the garden. They use technology in interesting ways, such as making a video or searching the internet to buy a new computer mouse. The range of skills they are acquiring will help them progress well in their future learning.

Children play cooperatively, organising themselves well, for example they say 'you be the mixers, I'm the carrier', as they busily fetch water for the large sand pit. Another group find tools and with much chatter and discussion 'fix' the roof on the outdoor playhouse. Despite their young age, most children behave exceptionally well, sharing and taking turns willingly. Staff reinforce good behaviour with innovative ideas such as the 'kindness jar'. Staff reward considerate behaviour by inviting children to post a coin into the jar. Children jointly decide how to spend the money and a popular choice is to make a 'kindness cake'. They help write the shopping list and buy the ingredients. Such thoughtfully planned activities incorporate a great deal of learning in an enjoyable, meaningful way.

Children's health and safety is promoted exceedingly well. Staff sensitively help with toilet training and children learn to manage this confidently on their own. They know to wash hands before eating and are reminded by a sequence of photographs. They enjoy sitting with friends to enjoy a delicious variety of fresh fruit. Children safely use knives to slice fruit and spread toast. Children spend a

great deal of time outside, where they can play boisterously so are happy to sit and concentrate at other times, such as listening attentively to a well-read story. Staff make children aware of dangers so they gradually become responsible for their own safety, for example, by holding onto a rope when walking to the library.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	1

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