

The Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Susan Scott

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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 Children's Centre is situated in purpose-built premises in the grounds of Canterbury College. The nursery prioritises places for students and staff attending the college, and any remaining places are allocated to the public. There are two main playrooms: one is dedicated to children aged from 2 years to approaching 3 years; the other is used by pre-school aged children. There are two rooms used for sleeping and dining and an additional sensory room. Children have access to fully enclosed outdoor play areas, which are adjacent to their base rooms.

There are seven staff working directly with children, all of whom are qualified. Three are qualified to National Vocational level 4, two to level 3 and two apprentices are qualified to level 2. There is also a part time kitchen assistant.

There are currently 26 children on roll and 11 are funded 3 and 4 year olds. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register to care for up to 44 children in the early years age group at any one time and is open for most of the year. There are children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who attend and some with English was an additional language. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA).

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children feel safe because there are good systems in place to safeguard their welfare and enable them to feel secure and happy at the nursery. Frequent observations and assessments promote a good understanding of children's individual needs and preferences. Overall, staff use these to plan for the children's progress effectively. Children experience interesting visitors, enjoy local trips and varied outdoor activities which promote their progress and development. The nursery constantly evaluates the provision and continuously improves the service with targeted action plans. Children's experiences are very positive and these are supported by an effective partnership with parents, carers and other provision involved in caring for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- establish opportunities for play and learning that acknowledges children's particular religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds
- provide an environment in which creativity, originality and expressiveness are valued.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and a clear understanding of procedures for dealing with a variety of concerns. The records, policies and procedures are well understood by staff. Staff are vigilant and keep good records, including a visitor record. This effectively supports the welfare of children and enables them all to feel settled and secure at the provision. There are thorough risk assessments in place to ensure all children play and learn in a safe environment. Accident and medication records and written consents provide further safeguards for children. Parents are given good information on a variety of issues, including how to raise concerns. Activities and play resources are plentiful, age-appropriate and checked regularly to ensure they are safe for use. The staff are vigilant so that children are well supervised at all times, both indoors and outside. Daily safety checks and regular cleaning rotas ensure that resources and equipment meet safety standards. For example, the kitchen is very clean and staff complete a variety of records so that food is stored and served safely, enabling them to meet the highest food hygiene standards.

Frequent self-evaluation encourages staff to contribute their ideas and observations for further development. For example, tablecloths have been introduced at lunchtime to enable children to extend their experiences of dining. Well organised staff meetings enable staff to take an active part and review and monitor practice in various areas of their work. The staff and manager attend a wide range of courses and the college provide on-site training facilities and expertise to support them. This promotes their professional development which ensures that they keep up to date with good practice. Good awareness of the needs of children and a shared vision for the development of the setting enables continuous improvement in the quality of the provision.

The staff organise the premises, resources and equipment successfully so that they meet each child's needs and offer plenty of choices. Resources are age-appropriate and accessible to all children; these are well organised and mainly stored in boxes on low shelves or in units so that children are able make informed choices about their play. Staff use some resources and activities to reflect carried languages and cultures but have not used all the relevant information about children to enhance their activities or celebrations of multi-cultural festivals. They do, however, respond sensitively to children's individual requirements and developmental needs, which effectively supports the inclusion of all children. The staff communicate effectively with each other and provide positive support and encouragement for all children.

A good two-way flow of information ensures staff regularly make parents aware of children's achievements and any concerns they may have. The children benefit from visits made by staff to specialist and other local provisions they attend. This supports continuity and enables staff to plan for individual support and progress. Children also benefit from the services and advice of local authority specialists which encourages their progress and development. Staff have a very positive relationship with parents and other agencies, which enables them to work together

to meet the needs of individuals. Information is shared through learning journals, consultations and the 'unique stories' to enable continuing parental contributions. Parents receive a variety of newsletters and topical information on the display board keeps them informed of events at the setting and invites their participation. For example, there are invitations and information about the Christmas party and a letter to Santa for children to complete with parental help. Children enjoy taking a teddy home and reporting back to the children and staff on experiences the teddy has shared with them. Parents say they have very positive relationships with staff, who are very approachable and make them feel welcome and valued. They are given information about their child's key person and receive frequent feedback and are confident in the staff's ability to address any issues they raise. All parents spoken to report that their children really enjoy attending.

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

Children settle quickly and happily in this welcoming and safe environment. They feel secure in the setting because staff create a calm and harmonious atmosphere which promotes their feelings of trust. Staff frequently record children's achievements; they note their observational assessments against each area of learning and use these to decide how to progress children's learning. Staff are implementing a speech and language programme to further promote children's learning. All staff are able to consult children's records and the read the plans made by their key person so they can ensure children make progress. Staff sensitively and accurately identify any additional needs, so that all children benefit from effective support to enable their progress. Children are consistently engaged in a variety of play and learning experiences that interest them, such as role play or painting.

The children have learned to take responsibility for personal care routines and independently help themselves to tissues which they bin after use and they put on aprons when they start painting. Children are reminded about safety, for example, when the staff talk to them about dangers of wearing tinsel around their neck. There are good measures in place to keep children safe as the nursery implements very good systems to keep children secure. For example, only qualified staff are able to give access to visitors who have to sign in at the main entrance to the college. There are security staff on the campus who can provide assistance if it is needed.

Children with particular dietary needs are well catered for; staff are familiar with children's allergies and can easily refer to records to check that children receive the correct food. All children enjoy healthy and nutritious lunches which are cooked in the college. Children enjoy good access to outdoor play during each session. They use these opportunities to ride bikes across the safety surface and use other resources, such as the zebra crossing mat. Children enjoy a variety of vigorous physical activities that builds upon their understanding of a healthy lifestyle, such as jumping from the step up to the garden area. They grow vegetables such as beans and potatoes and develop their knowledge of what makes a healthy diet

through cooking and eating these vegetables in soups.

Children particularly enjoy participating in activities alongside adults who enable all of them to make choices and express their opinions. For example, children engage in a game of picture lotto, learning to recognise similarities and differences. They enjoy varied painting and craft activities although some displays do not reflect their individual creativity or originality. Children develop their understanding of the world when they participate in a variety of celebrations, such as the festivals of Christmas and Diwali. They experience visits from a paramedic, a dentist and others who have roles within the community. Children explore their locality by going on visits to the local library and walking around the grounds of the college. They develop their understanding of society and their community by holding a cake sale at the local hospital. Children explore various themes, such as the seasons when they collect items like cones and leaves which they can also place on the interest table to refer to.

Children's developing communication skills are effectively supported by staff who read them their favourite story books and encourage them to participate by calling out key words. Staff ask questions and prompt children to talk about what they know. For example, children are encouraged to show the inspector that they know how to keep safe and healthy by dressing in warm clothes when they go out and practising road safety using the play crossing. Some staff tell children it is alright to talk to the visiting inspectors after introducing them but this is not consistently done.

Children happily select their own activities from the wide range available and are able to request staff provide a favourite resource for them if it is not visible. This supports the development of their confidence and enables them to build relationships with staff who encourage them to develop their independence and initiative. Children explore their senses by using dough and cooking vegetables which they have grown in soup; this enables them to learn about textures and properties. Children like to observe the giant snails and the fish when they first enter the nursery and learn about how to care for living things when they talk to staff about these.

All children are encouraged to use mark making resources staff value their efforts. They discuss the colours and shapes of things when they use the computer software with staff who support and guide them. Children are encouraged to build upon their skills by discussing quantity and numbers during activities. They are developing their fine motor and technical skills by using a computer and selecting their preferred software programmes. This promotes their learning, such as their listening skills and how to follow instructions.

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	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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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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