

Mini Explorers Limited

54 High Street, SANDY, Bedfordshire, SG19 1AJ

Inspection date

Previous inspection date

27/09/2012

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend 2

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children 2

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Practitioners make the most of opportunities to promote children's learning through play because teaching is rooted in a secure knowledge and understanding of how young children learn. The organisation of resources fully facilitates individual choice to enhance child-initiated learning.
- Children's language development is particularly well supported. Children are confident communicators who take part in regular conversations. Practitioners are skilled at extending their vocabulary and supporting them to experiment with initial sounds and letters.
- Children's personal, social and emotional development is given a very high priority. They show high levels of independence, curiosity and imagination, and demonstrate extremely positive behaviour and self-assurance.
- The successful implementation of the key person system ensures that relationships with children and their families are supportive.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Monitoring processes do not yet fully ensure consistent implementation of the developed procedures for assessment and parents contributions are not routinely sought to enhance activity planning.
- Opportunities for the younger children to play and extend their learning in the outside environment have not yet been fully developed.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are scheduled:

- at least once in every inspection cycle. The current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged as inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage; or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised for inspection where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the main unit for toddlers and older children, the baby unit, and in the outside area. The inspector spoke with children within all areas.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and the managing director.

The inspector looked at children's assessment records, planning documentation, the induction procedures for practitioners, and evidence of appraisals and reflective practice, as well as practitioners training and development programmes. The inspector also looked at documentation for safeguarding and a range of other documentation.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.

Inspector

Lynne Talbot

Full Report

Information about the setting

Mini Explorers Limited was registered in the current premises in 2012; it was previously registered in 2006. The provision operates from premises in Sandy, Bedfordshire within four large open plan play rooms and a separate baby unit. The provision serves the local and wider community. It is accessible to all children but there is a staircase in the main building to access two further playrooms. There is an enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The provision opens Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 8am to 6pm with extended hours available from 7am to 6.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The provision offers 48 places to children under eight years of whom 15 may be in the early years age group, and of whom, 15 may be under two years. There are currently 42 children on roll.

The provision provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The provision employs 12 members of childcare staff, including the manager and managing director. Of these, nine hold appropriate early years qualifications at level two or above.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- extend the systems for performance management to ensure that practitioners implement the provided procedures for regular and precise assessments of all children
- broaden the assessment procedures by offering additional opportunities for parents to share information about their child's learning and development at home and show how the planned learning incorporates information from parents
- enhance the environment to challenge and encourage babies and younger toddlers to use all of their senses outdoors.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Practitioners have a very good understanding of how to engage children in playing and exploring. Children are motivated and show an enthusiasm for learning which results in them meeting, or being in advance of, their developmental milestones. Practitioners understand the characteristics of effective learning and teaching. They plan first hand experiences and challenges appropriate to the development of the children to enhance children's learning and development. The generally well resourced learning environment helps to ensure that every opportunity is made to support and extend children's learning across all areas.

Children's communication and language, and early writing skills are developing well. Children enjoy making books themselves, such as those containing pictures of flowers that they have collected. They practise emergent writing inside the books throughout the day. Children enjoy singing and stories regularly; they join in with familiar rhymes and provide the ending to recurring lines. They spontaneously identify initial sounds and letters such as 'm' for mummy, and compare letters that they see around them to identify objects that begin with the sound.

Secure planning, in all areas of the provision across the seven areas of learning, ensures that all aspects are sufficiently included. Toddlers and older children benefit from opportunities to play outside in an extremely well equipped outdoor area through free-flow play. They also take part in regular excursions in the local community area, both the urban and natural environment. Children learn about the features of their environment and make plans to carry out shopping trips for ingredients that they need to cook with. They search areas to bring items back to the provision to carry out construction projects. This is a key strength of this provision. However, babies and younger toddlers have fewer opportunities to spend time outdoors to extend their skills and their section of the outdoor provision is less developed offering fewer stimulating resources. Practitioners within the baby and younger children's facility do, however, skilfully use tactile experiences such as sand and malleable dough, or music sessions to extend children's physical experiences.

Children are extremely confident in initiating activities and communicating their ideas. The use of visual aids and written clues, in several languages within books that have been made and areas of play, promote children's early language skills. Children, including those who are non-verbal, are very secure in expressing themselves. For example, a music session takes place as a result of a younger toddler pointing to the instruments the previous evening. Children confidently offer items to other children, explain what they are doing, count and name colours within their play using their emergent knowledge.

Systems to assess children's starting points on entry and transitions across the provision, and onto new settings, are strong. Parents are invited to contribute to starting points through 'all about me' forms and within thorough settling-in sessions. Transition is completed using summary assessments that are detailed and informative. Programmes for visits help to settle children within new placements. Practitioners ensure that information gained from other settings helps them to build on the learning for children who remain with them. The key person system is supportive and parents note that they are kept well-

informed about their children's learning and development. However, the assessment procedures do not yet make the most of information either provided by, or to, the parents. For instance to show how planned learning builds on information received, or offering ideas for learning in the home. Consequently, the full range of information is not shown to be fully used to promote children's development to the very optimum.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The successful key person system and the highly effective deployment of practitioners ensure that all children form secure emotional attachments. All children, from the youngest baby, show an extremely strong sense of belonging within the provision. This is enhanced by the use of a word of the week, currently 'please', that encourages children to become aware of the effect of their behaviour on others. Children play an active role in fundraising for charities, including funds for a brain injury unit and several charities that support children's needs. In this way they become aware of the needs of others around them. They engage in national events, such as the Queen's Jubilee, the Olympics and the Paralympics, through activities.

Children display high levels of confidence and self-esteem, and display an awareness of responsibility within the provision. For example, children relish opportunities to bake cakes for everyone to share for tea and they visit the local greengrocers to buy fruits to make fruit salad for a meal. They prepare placemats and pass round plates to the group when having a picnic tea. All children settle well because practitioners have a very good understanding of their individual likes, needs and routines. Babies develop secure attachments and enjoy attention from adults as they move around the room. For instance, they bring play materials to show to adults and place hats on their heads to make them laugh! Early investigative and curiosity skills are promoted through the use of a wide range of resources. For example, babies use feathers, glitter and tactile materials to explore expressive arts and design, they play musical instruments, and use textured materials. Older toddlers use materials such as sugar cubes, and sugar and egg white, to build igloos when engaged in project works.

Children develop excellent self-care skills and develop a very good understanding of healthy practice. Meals are enjoyed together either in the restaurant in the baby unit, where all children gather to promote social mealtimes alongside younger siblings, or in the main unit. Children love to help to clean and tidy away after meals as they discuss cleanliness and the links between germs and health. A planned menu, prepared from healthy ingredients and some items from local suppliers, is shared with parents. All children's needs are able to be accommodated and practitioners are vigilant in ensuring that specific foods or ingredients are supplied and stored safely.

Children's understanding of safety is promoted at all times. Children learn to take risks within a safe environment when they climb or balance on equipment in the garden. Regular excursions provide daily opportunities to practise road safety in the community. Routine emergency evacuation is completed and enhances children's understanding of personal safety.

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

The management team have high expectations for the quality of care that is offered to children and families. Regular review of all paperwork and procedures takes place to ensure that all requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. The identification of priorities through reflective practice provides systematic improvement to the quality of the provision. For example, the management team identified the need to improve the induction system for new staff and, as such, implemented a reviewed induction with all staff members. The robust recruitment system, probationary period, and appraisal systems ensure that practitioners' strengths are valued and recognised. Targets are set that identify areas for development and all staff engage in training across a range of subjects to enhance their practice. There are clear systems to observe, assess and monitor each child's progress. Plans are underway to instigate observation by management with regard to practitioners. However, at present, the monitoring system is insufficiently rigorous to ensure that all procedures set in place are carried out in a suitable manner. Consequently, whilst all children are safe and secure, and learning and developing well, the systems do not demonstrate that the same level of assessment is completed for all children with the same regularity. Also, the systems set in place to enhance verbal feedback to parents each day are not consistently completed.

Practitioners with specific responsibilities liaise closely, where required, with external professionals. Parents are invited to share their cultural background within the setting wherever possible. Children have enjoyed exploring aspects of New Zealand with help from a parent, and they explore countries such as Ireland and France together. Partnerships such as those with parents enables them to play an active role in their child's day. Parents' views are sought through discussion and formally through performance questionnaires. Newsletters are issued weekly to keep parents fully informed.

Arrangements for safeguarding children within the provision are a key strength. All practitioners have a robust knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues and the procedures to follow. The management team has robust systems in place to ensure that safeguarding is given priority throughout all areas of care. Practitioners create an environment that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children engage in active learning. The environment is particularly safe with exemplary assessments of risk taking place throughout all areas. Security systems are robust and include CCTV both outside the main entrance and in all playrooms. All children are secure, enjoy their play and learning, and are learning to be independent and self-assured. Consequently children have a positive experience that forms a very good base for developing skills for the future.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are	Met
--	------------

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are	Met
---	------------

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
-------	-----------	-------------

Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY439807
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire

Inspection number	787916
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 11
Total number of places	48
Number of children on roll	42
Name of provider	Mini Explorers Ltd
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01767689688

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises that are usually their own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

