

Apsley Lock Pre-school

BLRA Community Room, Unit 4 Evens Wharf, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP3 9WU

Inspection date	07/03/2013
Previous inspection date	21/06/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	2
	Previous inspection:	3
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

- Children settle in easily and make positive relationships because staff are flexible and sensitive to meeting individual needs. This allows children to quickly become confident with those around them.
- Children make good progress in all areas of learning and development, in relation to their starting points. This is because staff are skilful in building on children's interests and what they already know, and differentiating between children who need extra support or challenge.
- There is a strong commitment to the ongoing development of the pre-school. The leadership team continually reviews all areas of the provision and sets plans to ensure that there is continuous improvement to the resources, environment and opportunities for children.

It is not yet outstanding because

- On occasions, some adult-led art and craft activities involve children reproducing ideas and using materials set by the adult. This restricts children's ability to freely express or find their own ways to represent their ideas using a range of different media and materials.

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
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged 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 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
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the main hall.
- The inspector held discussions with the chair of the committee, the manager and staff members.
- The inspector checked evidence of staff suitability and a selection of other records and policies.
- The inspector examined children's learning journals, assessment records and planning documents.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day and views expressed in questionnaires.

Inspector

Hilary Preece

Full Report

Information about the setting

Apsley Lock Pre-school was registered in 2005 and is on the Early Years Register. It is situated in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents. The pre-school serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from Belswains Lane Residents Association community building. There is no enclosed area available for outdoor play but children are taken on regular outings to local play facilities.

The nursery employs five members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, one at level 2 and one is working towards level 2.

The pre-school opens Monday to Friday during school term time. Sessions are from 9.15am to 12.15pm. There is an optional lunch club running on Mondays to Thursdays from 12.15pm to 12.55pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 24 children attending who are within the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- review the educational programme for expressive arts and design to allow children greater opportunities for self-expression and exploring and investigating a range of materials and techniques during adult-led activities.

Inspection judgements

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

The pre-school provides a stimulating indoor learning environment and educational programme. This, together with a knowledgeable and well-deployed staff team, helps all children to have an enjoyable experience and make good progress in their learning. Children confidently decide what to play with while the staff work alongside them to ask questions and challenge their thinking. For example, the staff help less communicative children to develop their listening, understanding and speaking by modelling clear and simple language to describe their actions or using picture cards to emphasise meaning. Children who speak English as an additional language use dual-language books so have the opportunity to communicate in both languages. For those more able children, the staff set challenges and problems to solve. For example, during a game they encourage children to count a number of objects and predict how many there are if one or two objects are added or taken away. Children rise to the challenge and are keen to solve

progressively harder addition and subtraction problems.

Children have well-developed imaginations and thoroughly enjoy role play. For example, the staff build on children's interest in a new set of keys by suggesting they use them to drive the play boat. Children enthusiastically jump into the boat and one announces, 'We are going on a boat to London!' Another waves and adds, 'Bye, we are going to London to see some ducks!' The staff ask questions from time to time but allow the children to develop their thinking and ideas in cooperation together. However, during some adult-led craft activities there is less opportunity for children to express their own ideas and to freely experiment with different media. This is because resources are already prepared and children are expected to reproduce a picture based on someone else's ideas rather than their own. As a result, children find these experiences less meaningful and do not learn as much.

Children enjoy taking part in group activities and cooperate well together. They learn to sit still, to listen and respond during stories, songs and discussions. They show an interest in a topic on dinosaurs and some talk confidently about dinosaur bones and skeletons. Staff build their knowledge by using cardboard cut-outs of bones to compare sizes and introduce new language, such as 'thicker' and 'thinner,' when helping children to describe them. One child demonstrates her knowledge of size by describing one bone as 'little' and the other as 'medium'. Children are excited about what they learn and follow-up what they have learned by hunting for dinosaur eggs in a tray of gravel and bark. Here, staff continue to develop their thinking and understanding by encouraging them to count dinosaur feet and feel the different textures of their bodies. Children, therefore, make good progress in their learning and develop a range of skills that prepare them for the next steps as they move on to nursery or school.

The staff keep thorough assessments of children's achievements and progress, based on their observations and information provided by parents and carers. They know each child very well and accurately identify what they are doing to support and extend learning and development. They are very aware of those children that need additional support in some areas of learning and those that need to be challenged. This ensures that all children are helped to reach their potential, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances. Parents are kept well informed about how to support their children's learning at home. They receive useful information about the educational programme and specific information about daily activities and what children have learned from these. There are regular opportunities to see and contribute to their children's learning records and to review their progress at consultation sessions. Parents are also invited to share information about their cultural identity and to celebrate festivals, such as Eid, with children in the setting. Therefore, parents are actively encouraged to support their children's learning and development at home and within the setting.

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

Parents report that their children settle easily. They appreciate the flexible arrangements which allow them to stay with their children for as long as needed in order for them to separate without too much anxiety. This gradual settling in process allows children to get

to know and build secure emotional attachments with their key person. They relate well to their carers and, as a result, feel comfortable and develop the confidence and independence to explore their new environment. They understand expectations for behaviour, such as sitting on the carpet and listening at certain times. During free play they are prepared to modify their behaviour when things go wrong. Staff very swiftly, but sensitively, intervene to help children recognise the need to share resources with others who want to join in an imaginative role play game. Appropriate discussion and distraction techniques successfully diffuse the situation and allow children to cooperate and play together.

The staff attend to children's care needs well and with sensitivity. They work together with parents to support individual children with toileting or dietary needs. Staff provide an environment which encourages children to do things for themselves. For example, the snack table is set up to allow children to wash and dry their hands before eating and to select their preferred choice of fruit. Children are encouraged to use a knife to spread cracker biscuits and staff help them to pour milk or water into their cups. Any spills are dealt with calmly so children are not put off from trying again. Children, therefore, develop independence in self-care.

The pre-school does not have an outdoor area so children, overall, have fewer opportunities to be active and explore the natural environment. However, staff provide as many outings to the nearby play park as the weather allows. Children are protected on these outings because the staff follow robust safety procedures. They carry out careful checks on public areas before children have access to them and make sure that children stay together when walking by ensuring they hold on to a walking rope. This helps children gain an understanding of the need to keep safe near roads and the canal. Using the apparatus in the park allows the children to take some risk and practise using their bodies to climb steps and develop coordination. Sometimes children use simple climbing apparatus inside the hall and experiment with moving their bodies in time to music.

The pre-school has developed some effective links with schools that children move on to. School teachers are invited to visit the pre-school, which provides an opportunity for children to begin to get to know the teachers and for sharing information before they move on. Children also make visits to their schools to prepare them for transition. The manager recognises there is capacity to extend this further because sometimes children become anxious after these visits. Therefore, she is planning to develop resources, such as photographs and information about the new environment, to use with children to further support their transition.

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

This pre-school has strong leadership and is managed well. There is good communication between the parent committee, the manager, staff and volunteers. This creates a supportive culture of mutual respect and an environment in which staff are well motivated. A new manager has built a strong team who are knowledgeable and share the same high

expectations for practice. Following the last inspection, she quickly addressed the recommendations by developing resources to ensure children were more challenged in their play and reviewed the planning and monitoring systems to ensure there is no differentiation in the progress that different groups of children make. The pre-school uses a wide range of rigorous audit tools to critically reflect on and review the effectiveness of its practice. These include quality assurance audits, local authority audits, speech and language audits and parent questionnaires. From these, the pre-school identifies areas for improvement and sets realistic and achievable targets. This means self-evaluation is very effective in maintaining a continuous cycle of, and strong capacity for, further improvement.

All those connected with the provision understand their roles and legal responsibilities in ensuring that children are safeguarded and their learning is promoted. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and fully accessible to all those that need to know. For example, all parents receive a disc containing the full set of policies for reference and staff have a comprehensive handbook which guides their practice. Staff demonstrate that they are well informed about safeguarding issues and are confident to implement their procedures when necessary. Recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure that staff are suitable and equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to work with young children. Ongoing training and professional development is supported well. Staff have regular mentor meetings with management and annual appraisals as a means of monitoring their performance. Individual staff members indicate that they very much value the support and guidance they receive.

The manager closely monitors all aspects of children's learning, including planning and assessment systems. Monitoring is very precise and includes a regular review of every child's learning records. This provides her with a very well-developed knowledge about each child's skills, abilities and progress, and allows her to ensure staff are working consistently to support children's learning. The pre-school works well with parents and other professionals or agencies when there is a need for seeking additional support or guidance. This contributes to ensuring that the needs of all children 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 action. 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	EY302558
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	877885
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	20
Number of children on roll	24
Name of provider	Apsley Lock Pre-school
Date of previous inspection	21/06/2010
Telephone number	07891 093523

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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, which are usually the childminder's 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.

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