

Flitwick Pre-School

36a High Street, Flitwick, BEDFORD, Bedfordshire, MK45 1DU

Inspection date

14/11/2013

Previous inspection date

16/09/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

4

Previous inspection:

2

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	4

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is inadequate

- The registered provider has not been sufficiently proactive in addressing identified issues relating to staff qualifications, meaning that a legal requirement is not met.
- The manager does not hold a qualification at level 3 in accordance with legal requirements and this means that she does not have a sufficient working knowledge of current best practice. Consequently, her lack of vision is limiting the drive for improvement and having a significant impact upon the quality of provision for children.
- Children who like to be outside do not have sufficient opportunity to choose where they play and learn because the outdoor spaces are not being used effectively to support children's learning across all areas on a daily basis, which is a requirement.
- Some adult-led activities are not effectively organised according to the needs and interests of the children. They are planned with the focus on gathering observations of the children instead of giving priority to the quality of teaching and learning.

It has the following strengths

- Children have developed secure relationships with the friendly staff team and they are happy at the pre-school. They engage in a suitable range of activities based on the seven areas of learning.
- The committee and staff are very keen to address the issues which are emerging at the pre-school and raise the overall quality of teaching to ensure that children make good progress.

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 was accompanied by another monitoring inspector and both observed activities in the main playroom and in the outside area.

The inspector held ongoing discussions with the pre-school deputy manager, staff
- members, the manager and had two telephone discussions with the chairperson of the management committee.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the pre-school deputy manager.
- The inspector talked with children present.

The inspector looked at a sample of children's assessment records, planning documentation, evidence of suitability of staff working within the setting, the provider's self-evaluation form and a range of other documentation including evidence of staff qualifications.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day.

Inspector

Susan Marriott

Full report

Information about the setting

Flitwick Pre-School was registered in 1992 as a result of the merging of two long-established pre-schools in Flitwick. It is on the Early Years Register. It is run by a voluntary management committee and operates from a single-storey building in the centre of Flitwick, Bedfordshire. Children have access to the enclosed outdoor play area.

The pre-school is open each weekday during term-time only and sessions are daily from 9.15am to 12.15pm, with an extended session until 3.15pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. There are currently 17 children on roll. The pre-school employs nine staff members, of whom one holds Qualified Teacher Status, one holds a relevant childcare qualification at level 4, two hold qualifications at level 3 and four hold qualifications at level 2. The pre-school is in receipt of funding for two-, three- and four-year-olds. The pre-school serves a wide catchment area. A small number of children attend other settings, such as childminders and other pre-schools. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- ensure that the manager holds at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification in order to improve the quality of children's daily experiences in the pre-school
- improve the knowledge and understanding of the committee management team of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to ensuring that staff have appropriate qualifications, skills and knowledge in order to improve the quality of children's daily experiences in the pre-school
- offer a quality learning experience for all children by effectively organising challenging and enjoyable activities which involve children in becoming active learners
- improve children's access to outdoor activities that are planned and taken on a daily basis in all weather conditions, for example, by enabling children to freely access the outdoor areas during every session.

Inspection judgements

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

The staff team are keen to implement what they have learnt through extensive training for the benefit of the children. However, the restriction placed upon the staff team by outdated working practice, is having a significant impact on the learning and development opportunities provided for the children. Roles and responsibilities are confused and this, coupled with a lack of vision from those in charge based upon best current practice, means that weaknesses in children's learning and development are beginning to emerge.

The quality of staff interaction with children is good. Children play and enjoy themselves at pre-school as they take part in an appropriate range of activities set out for them. These activities cover the seven areas of learning and the staff follow the children's lead and provide sensitive support as required. A delightful reading den encourages their interest in books and stories. The computer fosters children's interest in technology and paint and freely available craft resources allow children to express their creativity. Children count out coloured cubes and match them to cards with printed number rods. They talk about what they are doing and engage in fun and laughter as they play together developing their language, communication and social skills. They choose what they want to play with and this develops their independence as they choose from the wide range of resources within the playroom. Children are allowed to move resources from one area of activity to another without reproach. For example, one child collects sand and pasta from the tray to fill the kettle in the home corner. The caring staff sit with children and talk about what is taking place, describing what is happening and listening to children as they comment on their small world activity. This helps children to develop skills in listening and to take their part in the conversation. Staff ask open-ended questions to make children think, giving them time to formulate their answers and this effectively extends their thinking to progress learning. Children go out to play at a designated time and, although this session is not always planned, the skills of some staff ensure that children are kept busy with fun activities. For example, they help to make kites from plastic bags and string to explore the effects of the wind and the children squeal with excitement as the gusts of wind blow them across the garden and over the fence.

Staff plan activities for children to take part in, that cover all areas of learning. They make observations of children in play and plan appropriate next steps in learning. However, thorough planning of activities with clear learning objectives does not always translate into effective practice. Consequently, the quality of teaching is inconsistent, because of inappropriate organisation, particularly in relation to some adult-led planned activities. For example, regular cooking activities are arranged in groups of approximately six children to enable every child to see the cooking process through from beginning to end, once every three weeks. All the children approach the cooking table, buzzing with enthusiasm and interest. Only the two children sitting either side of the member of staff are actively involved in the counting, weighing and measuring of ingredients, while the other four children are directed to watch. Despite the best efforts of the staff to engage all the children in talking about the activity, two children lose interest and begin to play with the sieves. One runs off with a sieve on his head and another pummels her sieve into an unrecognisable shape, before experimenting with the sounds it makes when banged on the table. As a result, not all of the children benefit from the delightful teaching and introduction of mathematical language used by staff including words, such as 'half', and phrases, such as 'cut it into small cubes - that's called dicing'. Children are invited to smell the ginger and to work out how to get the powder out of the jar when the spoon is found

to be too large to fit inside. Due to the length of time taken to make the 'Teddy Bear Biscuit' dough, some children are passively watching the process for nearly 45 minutes and their learning experience lacks challenge and is quite poor. Subsequent discussion demonstrates that staff recognise the weaknesses in the organisation and delivery of the activity but feel unable to influence necessary change in working practice.

Parents complete basic initial information regarding children's learning and development when children join the nursery. Staff complete a timed sampled observation on the child's first day at pre-school and combined with the information gained from parents, they use this as a guide for starting points for learning. Staff share reports of children's development with parents and have implemented the required progress check at age two. Children's progress is tracked and staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively by writing individual educational plans which are shared with parents. Although there are weaknesses in the provision and the quality of teaching, children are generally being prepared for school and are happy and enjoy their time at pre-school.

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

Children are happy and enjoy their time at the pre-school as they make choices about what they want to do suitably promoting their independence. They have access to a wide range of toys and resources within the main playroom and make decisions about what they want to do. Children have regular opportunities to play outdoors in a secure garden in the fresh air which enhances their health and well-being. However, they do not make choices about whether they wish to play indoors or outdoors. This is because those in charge are not facilitating free-flow play between the indoors and outdoors as the environment does not pose any restrictions on this happening. Children have regular opportunities to enjoy fresh air and exercise outdoors. However, this does not always happen on a daily basis when the weather is inclement. This is a breach of legal requirements.

Children quickly form positive relationships with the staff as they are warm and caring with them. They quickly pick them up if they are upset and reassure and support them, in the presence of the visiting inspector, settling them before they return to their play. All staff know all the children very well and this ensures that even if the key person is not present, then other staff are able to step in and provide security and continuity of care and learning for each child. Gradual admission procedures help young children to settle and become familiar with the pre-school. Staff gather information about individual learning and care needs for children and welcome parents to 'stay and play' as long as needed to settle their child happily into the provision.

Children behave well because their behaviour is managed consistently and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs. Staff are good role models, being fair, attentive and respectful and they promote sharing and thought for others. Children are encouraged to understand each other and staff explain the consequences of their inappropriate actions. For example, staff skilfully talk with a child about the possible outcomes of throwing a spoon and what might happen if it hits a friend

on the head. Excellent practice reinforces children's understanding of safety issues. For example, children take turns to be the 'helper of the day'. They help with the daily risk assessment of the outdoor area and assess the weather conditions, completing information on their own clipboards and reporting back to the person in charge. This also promotes their self-esteem and sense of belonging. Children learn to manage their own safety as they experience using knives to cut butter during the cooking activity. Snack time is used very well to promote good levels of independence and lots of learning across the educational programmes. Children learn to recognise their names through a self-registration system. The member of staff welcomes them and chats, inviting them to choose the colour of their plates and to count out pieces of apple, discussing the health benefits of eating fruit. Children spread their own butter on their toast and pour their own drinks, developing their hand-eye coordination and small muscle movements. Staff remind children of the hygiene routines, such as washing hands after visiting the toilet and before snack, developing their understanding of healthy practices and being clean.

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

The management committee does not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have failed to ensure that the manager holds a qualification at level 3 in accordance with the legal requirements. This means that the pre-school is led by a manager who does not demonstrate a robust and confident knowledge of current best practice. Furthermore, the staff team are constantly extending their skills through ongoing professional development training and the resultant conflict between teaching styles is limiting the drive to improve. Consequently, those in charge have too little understanding of the learning and development requirements and the safeguarding and welfare requirements in order to monitor and influence practice effectively. Management and accountability arrangements are not clear and this situation is having a significant impact upon the quality of provision for children. This is beginning to affect staff's ability to meet children's individual needs.

Children are suitably safeguarded. Recently, Disclosure and Barring Service checks have been carried out to confirm staff's continued suitability to work with children. High priority is given to safeguarding and all staff have attended safeguarding training. This means that staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of how to report concerns and how to follow the pre-school safeguarding policy and procedures. Comprehensive risk assessments and daily checks ensure that hazards are minimised. Good practice reinforces children's understanding of safety issues. For example, children take turns to help with the daily risk assessment of the outdoor area. Visitors to the pre-school have their identities checked, staff are very vigilant and the premises are kept secure at all times. Most staff hold current first aid qualifications and accident and incident reporting procedures meet legal requirements. Staff turnover is very low and suitable employment procedures are in place for when new staff are required. The Chair of the Management Committee conducts annual appraisals for all staff and these effectively highlight areas of concern about the management of the pre-school. However, those in charge have not taken prompt, decisive and effective action to address these issues, resulting in the deterioration of the quality of the provision for children.

Although, there are weaknesses in the learning and development requirements, the staff team have suitable skills and knowledge to ensure children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals. They provide children with a broad range of experiences which they enjoy and readily take part in. However, activities are not always organised appropriately for them to make the best possible progress. The pre-school has made improvements following the last inspection. For example, the deputy has gained her qualification at level 4 and other staff have also upgraded their training and skills through continuous professional development. However, there is little evidence the difference this has made to the children, given the current management arrangements. The garden has been developed to encourage the children to have a greater understanding of the world around them and to learn about the process of growing fruit and vegetables. A hard standing wet weather play area has been created but this is not currently being used as intended and is simply storing bikes. This means that current self-evaluation is not effective in driving the identified areas for improvement in a timely manner.

Good ongoing communication with parents means that staff are able to work in partnership with them. Parents receive thorough information about the setting and their child's progress and activities, for example, through newsletters, open days and daily discussions with staff. Partnership working with parents is encouraged through the sharing of relevant information and daily discussions with them regarding their child's day. The welcoming display of information keeps parents informed of daily pre-school practice. At the time of inspection, comments from parents acknowledge their positive and friendly relationships with the staff, the small size and personal nature of the pre-school and the ease of access to information about current activities on the social networking site. Additionally, they comment positively on how well their children have settled and how well the staff meet their children's individual needs. The pre-school staff work well with other professionals, such as speech therapists. Prompt intervention is actively sought by the special educational needs coordinator when gaps in children's learning are identified. Individual educational plans are drawn up and reviewed regularly to secure support and close the achievement gap so that no child gets left behind. There are appropriate relationships with others providing care for the children in order to promote children's learning and development and consistent care.

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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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	219072
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	864200
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	17
Name of provider	Vicarage Hill Playgroup Committee
Date of previous inspection	16/09/2009
Telephone number	07870 773867

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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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