

# Inspection of The Outdoor Pre-School

On The Site Of Abbey County Infant School, Cleveland Terrace, Darlington,  
Durham DL3 8JA

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Inspection date: 24 January 2022

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## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous  
inspection

Not applicable

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is outstanding**

Children thrive and flourish in the outdoor pre-school. They show high levels of independence, self-esteem and have excellent social skills. For instance, young children verbally communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings to others. They work together in small groups and pairs with minimal support. Staff have very high expectations of every child. They help them to make the best possible progress and prepare for their future learning. Children consistently show happiness, engagement and excitement through their play and experiences. They are enthusiastic learners and are keen to join in with everything, putting their hands up to take part. For example, they demonstrate excellent early writing skills as they use tally charts for bird spotting activities. Other children easily count beyond 10 as they collect things from the wooded area and staff extend this to ask about 'one more, most, and less than'.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, children show they feel safe and are confident to come to the pre-school. Staff have worked hard to rebuild children's personal, social and emotional skills. They have carefully considered ways to help children settle in and created individual strategies to help and support families. This is now an area of strength in children's development.

## **What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?**

- The curriculum is exciting, challenging and consistently stimulating for children. Staff have a clear vision of what they want individual children to learn and why this is important for their development. All children make exceptional progress, including any children whose starting points are lower than typical. Staff quickly assess children's development and use information from parents to help them make plans for learning. Gaps close swiftly and children begin to excel in all areas.
- Staff provide an excellent outdoor learning environment for children. Children access experiences with confidence, excitement and determination. For instance, older children show interest in reading and writing. Staff extend this and challenge them to write small words and learn phonics. Other children sit together and accurately count out 16 acorns without support from staff. They know how to hold their pen and clearly write the numeral to represent their findings.
- Children are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their learning. The manager has developed highly effective partnerships with schools to find out what children need to know before they start. Staff begin to prepare children from an early age and build secure foundations throughout their development. For example, young children show the highest levels of concentration and focus on activities for extended lengths of time. They use clear, extensive vocabulary

in sentences and have excellent listening skills.

- A significant strength of the pre-school is children's behaviour and their personal, social and emotional development. Young children know and understand a wide range of emotions as they choose the corresponding wooden spoons and make their clay 'mud monster' face. Other children who have previously struggled with emotions benefit from equine therapy sessions held at pre-school. They talk confidently to adults and show pride as they lead their pony around the field.
- Staff have excellent relationships with children and their families. They gather ongoing detailed information, which enables them to meet children's individual care needs effectively. Parents are highly complimentary about the pre-school. They say children make 'rapid social development, exploring nature in a safe and educative way' and that 'management is of the highest standard'.
- Children have an exceptional understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Toddlers talk clearly about the importance of watering their planted vegetables and know they can make food once it grows. Older children tell staff about safety around the campfire and talk to their parents about safety when using fires in their home.
- The manager is highly organised, focused and dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of care and learning for children. She inspires staff and encourages them to continually develop their skills. For example, staff have become Mathematics Champions and children excel in this area of their learning. Staff complete detailed peer observations to reflect on the impact of their practice for children. This helps them to consistently drive improvements forward. Morale is very high and staff say they feel respected, valued and supported.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The pre-school owner and manager work together closely to ensure children and staff's safety are prioritised. Staff say they feel their 'mental health and safety is a top priority'. Staff are highly vigilant and alert to any differences in children and their families. They have an excellent understanding of the local safeguarding partnership procedures and monitor absences, accidents and behaviours. This helps them to swiftly identify any issues and provide the right support to families. The manager has robust procedures to help her recruit new staff safely. For instance, they contact referees and have a lengthy interview and induction process. Children's understanding of their own safety is outstanding. Young children know how to use tools and equipment safely and talk to others in the group about why this is important. Regular safety information is also shared with parents to help them identify potential risks and access support. For example, for those who may be worried about domestic violence or online safety.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2544137
<b>Local authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10209919
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Sessional day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	2 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	32
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	43
<b>Name of registered person</b>	The Outdoor Pre-School Ltd
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	2544136
<b>Telephone number</b>	07368548653
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this early years setting

The Outdoor Pre-School registered in 2019. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and above, including one with early years professional status and one with qualified teacher status. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday term time only. Sessions are from 9am until 3pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Michelle Lorains

## Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the setting and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the setting.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during experiences outdoors and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- A joint observation was completed by the manager and inspector, outdoors during a planned activity.
- The inspector held a discussion with the manager and pre-school owner, in relation to the leadership and management of the nursery. She looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of recruitment, staff's qualifications and their suitability to work with children. She discussed children's learning and development with the staff team and nursery manager.
- The inspector spoke to parents and obtained feedback for the inspection.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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