

Inspection of Apricot Pre-School

Priory Park Infant School, Almond Road, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1DZ

Inspection date: 7 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are welcomed into the pre-school by staff who truly value and care for them. From the start of the day, well-planned learning opportunities are available for the children to access. The manager and staff team are highly effective at prioritising and meeting all children's individual needs. Children gain a wealth of skills from daily routines. For example, younger children are taught by staff how to use knives to cut apples. Older children independently demonstrate this skill safely when preparing their own snack.

Children have extensive opportunities to be active learners, both indoors and outdoors. Managers and staff have developed an outdoor environment that engages and excites children. Children learn about the natural world and are able to develop their physical skills by being able to run, climb and balance. They are confident to take risks and can independently manage their safety. For example, children remind their friends to sit down to go down the slide so they do not hurt themselves.

Children's behaviour is exceptional. Managers and staff consider children's well-being to be essential to progress. Children play together purposefully and show great consideration to their friends. They share and use manners effortlessly. For example, children offer to share their play dough with those that do not have any. They then respond with 'thank you'.

Stories are read to the children throughout the day. Older children sit attentively in group time. Staff engage younger children by bringing stories to life by making treasure maps and escaping the sharks when retelling a story about pirates.

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

- The manager implements an ambitious curriculum. This focuses on children's interests and what children already know to promote further learning. The manager and staff set high expectations for all children to learn and achieve. Staff know the children exceptionally well. This allows them to move children's learning on from the moment they start pre-school.
- The staff have a good understanding of how children learn. Activities are well planned and include learning opportunities across the areas of learning. In most of these activities, children engage well. Staff share rich vocabulary and use questions to extend children's learning. For example, when learning about the giant African snail, staff explain that it is nocturnal. Children are then asked what they think this might mean. However, this level of interaction is not consistent across the pre-school.
- The manager ensures that all staff are highly valued and respected. She

recognises the importance of staff well-being and ensures that everyone is offered support. The manager places a high priority on ensuring staff are listened to and their input valued. She ensures there is time built in for all staff to be able to reflect on their practice, in particular for those who are in childcare training.

- The support that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive is exceptional. Partnerships with professionals and local schools are excellent. They contribute to effective support for children's learning. Funding accessed for children is carefully used to implement specific and personalised support. This ensures that children make excellent progress. Staff have recently learned some sign language to support children with speech and language delays. This is having a positive impact on children's communication.
- Transitions for new children are well thought through. Staff who previously worked with the children at the feeder nursery are able to come and visit to support them. This has a positive impact on children settling quickly. Staff are given time to interact with the children before they are allocated their key person. This allows children, staff and parents to build positive relationships.
- Partnerships with parents are a strength. They share experiences and significant moments daily online. Parents report how well informed they are about their children's learning, skills and next steps. Detailed information is regularly shared with parents in monthly newsletters, verbally and online. Parents talk about how staff support them by giving advice when needed. Parents comment that the pre-school is like a home from home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff team know how to keep children safe. The manager helps the staff develop their safeguarding knowledge through regular training. The safeguarding policies and procedures are stringent and well understood. Staff are highly confident in identifying signs and symptoms of abuse. They understand what they must do should they have any concerns about children's well-being or the conduct of their colleagues. Staff use risk assessments effectively to keep the environment safe and secure.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- ensure high-quality interactions are securely embedded across the pre-school.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY352820
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10113164
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	44
Number of children on roll	75
Name of registered person	Sunhill Daycare (Europe) Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP519019
Telephone number	01480 473551
Date of previous inspection	26 May 2016

Information about this early years setting

Apricot Pre-School registered in 2007. The setting employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and four are in training for a level 2 or above qualification. The setting opens from Monday to Friday, all year round, except for bank holidays and between Christmas and New Year. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6.30pm. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Annette Franklin

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 provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspector spoke to staff at appropriate times throughout the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- The inspector talked to parents during the inspection, who shared their views about the setting.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.

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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