

Inspection of Ducklings Monkston @ St Barts

Monkston Community Centre, St. Bartholomews, Monkston, MILTON KEYNES MK10
9FJ

Inspection date:

8 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

The quality of education is variable. Weaknesses in staffing, organisation of resources and staff's delivery of the curriculum impact on the overall progress children make. Nevertheless, children show they are settled at the pre-school. They behave well and are familiar with the sequence of the day and the pre-school rules. Older children develop strong friendships and lead their own play well. Children have opportunities to sing along to songs and take part in action rhymes, pretending to pop the bubbles.

All children enjoy being physically active in the fresh air. Children expertly make attempts at rolling balls and colourful patterns with chalk. However, while children enjoy the activities on offer, staff do not place enough focus on supporting children to build on what they already know and can do. At times, children lose interest and wander around. While they remain content to play on their own, the lack of targeted staff support does not help children to gain new skills quickly enough.

Overall, children are independent, confident and happy to come into the friendly pre-school. They are welcomed by staff into a safe and secure environment. For example, children generally separate from their parents well and confidently approach staff and visitors for cuddles. However, staff do not deploy themselves well enough to ensure all children benefit from adult interaction.

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

- Staff do not plan a curriculum that focuses precisely enough on helping children work towards their next steps in learning. Additionally, staff do not always present information clearly in a sequence that helps children make links with what they already know, to build on their prior learning. For example, staff capture children's love for making and manipulating dough. However, despite staff's good intentions, the aim of the activity is not well thought out or resourced by staff.
- Although staff supervise children well, they do not always deploy themselves effectively to support children's learning. For example, when children show an interest in exploring resources to promote early writing skills, staff do not step in to help them stay focused. This means that children wander around from one activity to another and do not always receive good interactions to promote their learning.
- The pre-school has experienced challenges linked to recruitment of new staff. This is reflective of the national picture in the early years sector, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have completed some training to help update their knowledge and skills. However, the management team has not clearly identified the weaknesses in the quality of the curriculum and teaching.

Although staff have regular opportunities to discuss their performance, they do not receive enough clear guidance to help them develop their teaching skills further. However, staff enjoy working at the pre-school. They find the manager approachable and supportive.

- All children have a key person. Staff understand the importance of this role in helping children build attachments and feel safe and secure. However, staff deployment needs and changes to the staff team mean that opportunities for children to spend time with their key person are not always maximised. For example, not all children have their nappies changed by their key person.
- Children who English as an additional language are supported well. For example, parents share common key words in their home language, and staff use visual prompts to further support their language development.
- Parents are happy with the service the pre-school provides. Staff work with parents effectively and share regular information with them to support learning at home, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, staff delivered activity packs and shared stories online.
- Staff promote children's healthy lifestyles well. Children benefit from a well-balanced snack and know the routine of coming into pre-school and washing their hands on arrival. Staff successfully support children's independence and self-care skills in readiness for their move to school.
- Children behave well at pre-school. For example, they know the 'rules' and follow them well. They are learning to share and know they need 'walking feet' inside. Staff are good role models.
- Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They identify specific needs early on and work with other agencies, ensuring that children with SEND receive specialist support when needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a suitable understanding of their roles and responsibilities for child protection. They understand the signs and indicators that may mean a child is at risk of harm. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child or a colleague. Leaders provide staff with regular safeguarding training, including a broad range of safeguarding issues. This helps staff to keep their knowledge current. The premises are secure, and regular head counts are completed during the day to ensure all children are safe. Robust recruitment and vetting arrangements are in place to ensure that those working with children are suitable.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
provide a clearly planned curriculum to expand and consistently challenge children's learning and to help prepare them for their future learning	10/01/2023
ensure that staff are consistently deployed effectively to support and enhance children's experiences and learning, both indoors and outdoors	10/01/2023
improve arrangements for support and coaching of staff to help them develop their personal effectiveness and improve learning and development experiences for children	10/01/2023
improve the key-person approach so that children and key people can spend more time together to further children's attachments and feelings of belonging and security.	10/01/2023

Setting details

Unique reference number	2603041
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10251606
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	43
Number of children on roll	33
Name of registered person	Ducklings Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP910109
Telephone number	01616530124
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Ducklings Monkston @ St Barts registered in 2020. It is located in the Monkston Community Centre, Monkston, Milton Keynes. The pre-school opens each weekday, during term time only. Sessions run from 8.45am to 2.45pm, offering a range of morning, afternoon and all-day sessions. The pre-school is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are currently four members of staff who work directly with the children. Of these, three hold recognised childcare qualifications from level 2 to level 3.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Amanda Perkin

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID- 19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and the area manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the pre-school.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk across all areas of the pre-school to understand how the early years curriculum is organised.
- The inspector observed staff's interactions with the children, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on the children's progress and achievements.
- The manager, area manager, staff and children engaged in discussions with the inspector at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager and discussed the children's progress and achievements.
- A sample of the pre-school documents was reviewed by the inspector. This included evidence of staff suitability and training.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents by speaking to them and reading written testimonials.

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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