

Inspection of Ducklings Limited

Oldbrook Centre, Oldbrook Boulevard, Milton Keynes MK6 2QA

Inspection date: 28 February 2023

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

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Children have access to a broad range of resources that are chosen by staff to cover the different areas of learning. Many children show initial enthusiasm for these resources and are excited to play with them and with their friends. However, children do not receive the support they need to sustain this initial interest. As a result, they begin to move quickly between resources and activities, and their play begins to lack focus or engagement. This is especially the case for younger children. However, children continue to show they enjoy being at pre-school and are developing some skills that can be attributed to their time there. For example, children are learning to manage their own risks outside well, and to climb and balance. They show they are learning to manage tasks for themselves, such as putting on their coats and wiping their noses. Some children remember the repeated phrases from well-known stories. Children receive effective support as they learn to manage their emotions. They behave appropriately for their age.

Leaders do identify some broad curriculum aims. However, these are not ambitious or specific enough to support staff well to deliver consistently high-quality teaching. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the extra support they need to begin to join in and enjoy the experiences on offer at the pre-school.

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

- The manager is relatively new to her post and has quickly recognised there are improvements to be made. She has made a start on these. For example, she has improved the layout of the room and ensured staff feel more valued and listened to. The provider also recognises that improvements are needed and is able to offer support and guidance. So far, any changes that have been made have not fully addressed the weaknesses in the quality of education.
- Staff identify some clear aims for specific activities. For example they plan activities for children to learn about cause and effect and topics with a focus on children learning about different buildings and characters from books. However, staff do not then focus well on these learning intentions when they invite children to take part. At these times, staff's interactions lack specific purpose and children are not supported well to develop new knowledge or build further on what they already know.
- Children learn well when outside. This is because staff are confident to join in with their play and are effective at encouraging children to develop new skills. For example, staff work with children to build obstacle courses and then successfully help children to manoeuvre their own bodies. Staff encourage children to 'dig for treasure', and children show real delight in doing so. At these times, children engage well and show they are enjoying their play and learning a lot. These activities also help children develop a positive view of following an

active lifestyle.

- Staff have good intentions in their interactions with children. They recognise the importance to children's future learning of developing good language skills. They talk to children a lot. However, staff do not give enough consideration to what they say or ask. As a result, their questioning can interrupt children's conversations with other children. This restricts, rather than enhances, children's opportunities to practise their developing communication skills. That said, children are hearing new words that are adding to their vocabulary.
- Staff are extremely kind and thoughtful. They offer a warm welcome to all children and give plenty of cuddles and reassurance to children new to the setting. Staff find out lots of information about children's home lives and cultures. However, they do not make the best use of this information to promote children's self-identify. For example, children who speak English as an additional language do not have opportunities to hear the language that is spoken at home. This also has an impact on their ability to develop fully their language skills.
- Parents speak very warmly of the staff. They report that their children really enjoy their time at pre-school. The manager has made a good start at building on these warm partnerships to engage parents further in their children's learning. For example, she invites parents into the setting for refreshments and to enjoy story times with their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a clear understanding of their role in keeping children safe. They supervise children closely and ensure the premises are safe, secure and suitable. They understand the procedures they need to follow during their daily working lives. They know how to raise any concerns about a colleague's conduct, if the need to do so ever arose. Staff have an accurate understanding of the signs of potential abuse. They know how to share these within the organisation and externally, to keep children safe. The provider is able to describe the robust recruitment procedures she follows to ensure those she employs to work with children are suitable to do so.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
plan and deliver a consistently effective curriculum that successfully builds on what children already know and can do	29/03/2023

support the manager and staff to develop a thorough understanding of an effective programme of learning and to deliver consistently good quality teaching.	29/03/2023
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To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- improve staff's skills to use their interactions to develop children's vocabulary and conversational skills in meaningful ways
- improve the use of information gathered about children's home experiences, including languages spoken at home, to support children's sense of personal identity.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY490246
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10276462
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	40
Name of registered person	Ducklings Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP910109
Telephone number	07548 253540
Date of previous inspection	17 July 2017

Information about this early years setting

Ducklings Limited registered in 2015 and is situated in Oldbrook, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. It is open from 9.15am to 2.45pm on Monday to Friday, during term time only. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The provider employs six members of staff, of whom three hold appropriate qualifications at level 3 and one holds a suitable qualification at level 2.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sarah Holley

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 provider and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the provider.
- The inspector and the manager completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The manager and the inspector carried out two joint observations and evaluated the quality of teaching and learning.
- Parents shared their views and the inspector took these into account.
- The inspector held meetings with the manager and provider to find out about the leadership and management of the setting.

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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