

Inspection of Castle Kindergarten

2 North Green, Staindrop, Darlington DL2 3JN

Inspection date: 6 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are welcomed into this warm nursery by the nurturing staff. They have strong bonds with all staff. For example, if babies become upset, staff are quick to soothe and distract them with sensory toys and stories. Older children greet staff with hugs and chat excitedly about what they are doing.

Staff provide an exciting and ambitious curriculum to give children the best start in their learning. They recognise the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on some children's development and are keen to address this. They use their knowledge of each child to identify what children need to learn next. Babies relish using real vegetables such as potatoes and sweetcorn as building blocks. Older children move around the outdoor space while on a bug hunt and excitedly dig for worms. They gently hold a worm in their hands, and staff help them to identify its size and shape. All children are making good progress in their development.

Staff are good role models and have high expectations of children's behaviour. They reinforce positive behaviour, and children behave well. Children use good manners and wait patiently for their turn. For example, even the youngest babies sit down patiently with staff during circle time as they wait their turn to choose a decorated wooden spoon that relates to a nursery rhyme.

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

- The dedicated managers plan and organise the curriculum well. They have a clear passion and dedication to providing excellent educational learning opportunities for the children in the nursery.
- Staff use children's interests to develop activities that promote each child's learning. For example, babies have great fun as they explore dry cocoa powder in the builder's tray 'farm'. They delight as they draw lines in the cocoa powder and pick it up with their hands. This helps to strengthen their muscles in preparation for early writing.
- Staff incorporate mathematics into their activities throughout the day. For example, babies use trowels and rakes to dig in the soil and find the hidden numbers as they plant 'flowers'. Staff support them well as they repeat the numbers up to three. Toddlers use different-sized containers to pour and measure, using words such as 'full' and 'empty' as they begin to learn about volume while they play in the sand.
- Generally, staff interact well with children to help them develop their communication skills. For example, staff support children's communication through good repetition of words. However, at times, they do not make use of opportunities to introduce new vocabulary. This means that children do not consistently have the chance to explore new words and become even more

confident communicators.

- The nursery provides children with home-cooked nutritious meals and snacks. Staff promote healthy eating as they sit and talk to children. For example, they talk about the different types of fruit that the children like and how good it is for us.
- Staff encourage children's independence. Younger children are taught to find their shoes and put them on, while older children serve themselves cooked lunches. This helps prepare children in readiness for school.
- The nursery is an integral part of the local community. For example, they take part in the annual village carnival. Children find out about a range of festivals. This helps them to learn about and respect the diverse community in which they live.
- All staff have access to regular training to build on their professional development. For example, some staff have had training to support staff's knowledge on child development, including heuristic play and schemas. There is scope to continue to embed this learning and strengthen the individual support needed to raise the quality of teaching to the highest possible level across the whole of the staff team.
- Parents speak highly about the 'brilliant' and 'welcoming' nursery. They see the staff as part of their 'extended family'. They receive regular updates about their child's development and particularly enjoy videos of how to support their children's learning at home.
- Managers support staff's mental health and well-being. They have worked hard to make an exceptionally strong team. Staff comment they are happy in their work and feel supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff have a good awareness of safeguarding. They understand how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns regarding a child's welfare. There are clear policies in place to report any concerns they have about another staff member. Staff carry out effective risk assessments to keep children safe. Managers ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. They use a thorough process for recruiting and checking staff's suitability. Risk assessments are in place and hazards are minimised to ensure that the children's environment is a safe and suitable place to play.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- develop interactions with children to support them to build a richer vocabulary and become even more confident communicators

- focus the already good support provided to staff on developing their individual practices to raise the quality of teaching and learning for children to the highest possible level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2629376
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10281138
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	0 to 5
Total number of places	52
Number of children on roll	72
Name of registered person	Castle Kindergarten Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP546315
Telephone number	01833 660004
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Castle Kindergarten was registered in 2021. The nursery employs 14 members of childcare staff, 10 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, including one member of staff with a level 5 qualification. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am to 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Claire Budge

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 their evaluation of the provider.
- The deputy manager, the manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector spoke to children to find out about their time at the nursery.
- Staff spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- 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 spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023