

Inspection of Apricot Day Nursery

Longsands College, Longsands Road, ST. NEOTS, Cambridgeshire PE19 1LQ

Inspection date: 30 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 Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children settle quickly in this welcoming setting. They form warm bonds with staff and arrive eager to explore the day's activities. Staff have high expectations for every child and use their observations and assessments to plan targeted learning opportunities. Children make good progress from their starting points. They are eager to join in with activities and show curiosity in novel objects. Children are keen to learn about the natural world and explore different gardening tools as they help staff to plant and water the flowers. Children are helpful and learn how to take care of the resources and toys on offer. For instance, they help staff to pick up spilled pencils. Children say 'please' and 'thank you' and are supported by staff who are good role models.

Children play cooperatively and develop their social skills. They play a bat and ball game with their friends and take turns to put toy food into a miniature trolley while playing shops. Children enjoy a range of creative resources and practise their small motor skills. They squeeze and squash clay and help themselves to paper and pens. Children develop their small hand muscles and experiment with using different tools and making marks. This helps to support their future writing skills.

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

- The setting is led by an energetic and passionate management team. Managers place a high value on staff well-being, and staff report feeling valued and encouraged. Managers support staff to plan and deliver an ambitious curriculum based around children's interests. The team knows exactly what it wants children to learn at each stage. Staff support a positive transition for children moving on to the next step in their learning, such as the linked pre-school. However, self-evaluation and plans for improvement do not always focus incisively on areas that will generate the most impact.
- Parents praise the 'kind and wonderful staff'. They note how much children enjoy attending and that, at times, children reluctant to leave at the end of their session. Parents talk about the things that children have learned since attending, including new skills, as well as developing confidence. They report feeling well informed about their children's experiences and progress. Parents particularly appreciate how children can spend long periods playing in the garden and outdoor spaces.
- Staff provide a range of opportunities for children to practise self-care skills and be independent. For instance, they encourage babies to use spoons to feed themselves. Toddlers and older children practise using knives to cut up fruit for snack and to spread toppings on to crackers. Children of all ages freely access their water bottles throughout the day.
- Staff are active participants in children's play. They demonstrate a genuine

warmth and sense of fun as they join in with chasing, role play and peekaboo games.

- Children have plenty of opportunities throughout the day to spend time outside and be physically active. They practise a range of physical skills, such as climbing ramps, navigating stairs safely and balancing on obstacle courses made of tyres and planks. Children delight in running fast and racing their friends. They play energetically and demonstrate resilience. For example, if they trip when running, they get back up and continue play.
- Children demonstrate a keen interest in books and reading. They bring books to adults and ask for them to be read. Staff read books with enthusiasm. They talk about the illustrations and encourage children to give their ideas about what might happen next or how certain characters feel. This helps children to understand key events in the story and develop their literacy skills.
- Children benefit from a varied, healthy diet at the setting, enjoying home-cooked food made by the on-site chef. Allergies and dietary needs are carefully catered for. Children enjoy opportunities to serve themselves from large dishes, and staff encourage them to try new foods.
- Staff provide children with lots of singing and speaking opportunities. However, at times, these are rushed or lack additional cues, such as actions or visual prompts, to help children hear words clearly and understand new vocabulary.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the signs that may indicate a child is at risk of harm. They understand how to identify, record and report concerns, including those regarding the behaviour of an adult who works with children. The manager ensures staff keep their knowledge up to date with regular training as well as informal 'refresher' briefings. The management team has a robust understanding of relevant notification processes and works proactively with other agencies when appropriate. When appointing new staff, the manager follows thorough recruitment processes to assure herself that staff are suitable.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen arrangements for self-evaluation to generate sharply targeted plans for further improvements that make the most difference to children, families and staff
- support staff to refine how they use language when singing songs and holding conversations to build on children's listening, understanding and speaking skills.

Setting details

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| Unique reference number | EY352812 |
| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 10285936 |
| 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 3 |
| Total number of places | 47 |
| Number of children on roll | 60 |
| Name of registered person | Sunhill Daycare (Europe) Limited |
| Registered person unique reference number | RP519019 |
| Telephone number | 01480 471 857 |
| Date of previous inspection | 25 October 2017 |

Information about this early years setting

Apricot Day Nursery registered in 1991 and is one of a group of settings privately owned and operated by Sunhill Daycare Europe Limited. The nursery employs 18 childcare staff. Of these, 13 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round, except for bank holidays and a week at Christmas. Sessions run from 7.30am until 6.30pm.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Kate Oakley

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 managers and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the setting.
- The managers took the inspector on a learning walk across all areas of the premises to explain how the early years provision and curriculum are organised.
- The inspector observed the quality of interactions between staff and children during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The manager completed a joint observation and evaluation of an activity with the inspector.
- The inspector spoke to children, staff and parents at appropriate times during the inspection. She also took account of the views of parents through written feedback provided.
- The inspector held a number of discussions with the managers. She looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of all persons working on the premises.

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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