

# Inspection of University of Cumbria Pre-School Centre

Bowerham Road, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 3JD

---

Inspection date:

7 November 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 are excited to come to this setting. They are greeted warmly by nurturing staff, who know them well. Children demonstrate that they feel happy and safe. Staff provide a range of exciting learning experiences indoors, outdoors and in the forest-school area. These fuel children's imagination. For example, children dance with delight as they make images of fireworks outdoors by squirting paint and water onto the black tarmac. Staff tune in to children's interests and build their knowledge and understanding from these. They know children well and understand what they need to learn next. As a result, children make good progress in all areas of learning.

Children use good manners and understand the setting's rules. They play well together and generally take turns effectively. If children have disagreements, staff sensitively talk with them about ways to resolve their differences. Children are becoming independent learners who access activities and resources for themselves. Staff support children to develop skills for learning. For example, children get to know helpful characters, including 'Lola the Listening Leopard'. The characters' stories develop as the children move through the nursery. This helps to sequence children's learning, building on what they know and can do. Staff have accurately assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's language and social skills. They have put appropriate plans in place to minimise this.

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

- Staff creatively support children to become immersed in their learning. For example, babies are enthralled by a squirrel who comes to eat at the bird feeder that is placed on a low-level windowsill. Staff share in children's joy and talk about what the squirrel is doing. This helps to develop children's attention skills.
- The curriculum for communication and language is well planned. Staff take every opportunity to chat with children. They comment on their play and ask relevant questions. Staff also use Makaton signing to engage children who speak English as an additional language. This supports all children to communicate effectively.
- Staff promote children's literacy skills well. They have created a cosy book area where children invite adults to share books with them. Children can recall their favourite stories and delight in joining staff in acting out 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' in the outdoor space. They enthusiastically chant lines from the story together. Children are expanding their vocabulary and use of language.
- Staff provide experiences that effectively develop children's physical skills. For example, children squeeze the triggers on water spray bottles and press paper cutters. This develops strength and coordination in their small muscles. Children balance on beams, sweep up with large brooms and wriggle through tunnels outdoors. These activities develop children's stamina and control.

- Staff support children to draw on their prior knowledge and skills. Children use these to solve problems and succeed when things are challenging. For example, staff sensitively remind toddlers how to blow bubbles through a bubble wand. Both adults and children celebrate their success. These achievements help children to become motivated learners.
- Leaders and staff listen to the views of parents and find creative ways to strengthen communication. As a result, partnerships with parents are strong. Parents value the nurturing way that staff create relationships with children and the whole family.
- Staff talk with children about healthy food choices. For example, children know that the calcium in milk is good for their bones. Children are beginning to understand the importance of looking after their bodies.
- Leaders have a sound understanding of how children learn. They are passionate about their vision for curriculum development and constantly strive for improvement. However, recent plans to further develop some areas of the curriculum are not fully implemented across the setting. As a result, some minor gaps in the curriculum remain.
- Staff feel well supported by the leadership team. Leaders effectively promote staff well-being. They show commitment to the professional development of the staff and provide a range of opportunities to celebrate and share good practice.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff are skilled in identifying additional needs early. They work with a range of partner agencies and understand how to accurately adapt their teaching to meet individual needs. This means that all children make good progress from their starting points.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff fully understand their role in safeguarding children. Staff know what signs may indicate that a child is at risk of harm. They vigilantly take appropriate action to keep children safe. Leaders effectively monitor accidents and appropriately risk assess activities and experiences offered to children. There are robust procedures in place for recruitment, induction and the ongoing training of staff. This means that leaders ensure that a high level of knowledge and skills is maintained. Children are learning to keep themselves safe when they play in the forest-school area.

## What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- focus more precisely on the implementation of plans for curriculum development that help to raise the quality of education.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	310284
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10289385
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Full day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	0 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	80
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	115
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Smartstart (Catterall) Limited
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP906305
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 63124
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 November 2017

## Information about this early years setting

University of Cumbria Pre-School Centre registered in 1990 and is situated within the university campus in Lancaster. The setting employs 22 members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2, 11 at level 3, and one at level 6. The manager and one other member of staff hold early years professional status. The owner holds a master's degree in leadership and management and a Montessori nursery teaching qualification. The setting opens from Monday to Friday for 48 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Dawn France

## 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 manager and early years professional joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing while at the setting.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The special educational needs coordinators spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.

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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023