

Inspection of Darlington College Childcare Centre

Central Park, Haughton Road, Darlington, County Durham DL1 1DR

Inspection date: 12 December 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff warmly welcome children into the nursery. Children settle quickly with a variety of activities on offer. Staff invest time getting to know children when they start. The key-person system in place is strong. Staff give very high priority to supporting children's emotional development. Staff effectively role model the kind and positive behaviours they expect the children to demonstrate. In turn, children are polite, caring and considerate of one another. Staff support all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), extremely well. For example, when children struggle with their feelings, staff use calm voices in an age-appropriate manner to settle them down. This helps children to understand what is expected of them and learn to manage conflict. Children's behaviour is very good.

Leaders are reflective and have a clear vision of what they want children to learn. Recent changes to the curriculum are still being implemented and embedded. Nevertheless, children benefit from a broad curriculum that is enhanced with experiences, such as activities in the community. They visit the local care home and enjoy listening to resident's stories of their lives. They invite the residents to the nursery and complete craft activities. Other visitors, such as the police and library have come into the nursery to talk to the children about their jobs. They have also received visits from therapy dogs. This heightens children's awareness of different people in society and the local community.

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

- Support for children with SEND is a strength. The nursery works in partnership with other agencies, such as speech and language therapists and health visitors. Staff attend training to further their knowledge of ways to support children with SEND. Parents value the support they receive from the staff. They say that their children benefit from the strategies that staff share with them to use at home. Children with SEND thrive and make progress at this nursery.
- Partnerships with parents are very good. Staff ensure that parents are involved in the children's learning experiences at the nursery. They work with parents to create children's next steps. They ask parents for information from children's weekend experiences, such as day trips or family events, and incorporate this into activities to extend their interests and learning. Staff support parents to extend children's learning at home, such as through a lending library and activity boxes.
- Parents are extremely complimentary about every aspect of the nursery. They comment that the committed staff team create a fantastic learning environment for children. They comment that children thrive in their care and the staff team 'go above and beyond' for their children.

- Staff attend supervision sessions and team meetings. They access a variety of training programmes and share best practice with each other. Staff report that they enjoy working at the nursery and that their morale is high. They say their well-being is supported. Staff are supported to continually improve their practice.
- Staff seamlessly explain and explore number with the children through play. Babies and toddlers enjoy hearing well-known number songs. Older children match numbers to numerals and discuss differing sizes and colours as they access resources. This introduces mathematical language and concepts into children's everyday learning.
- Leaders proactively support staff to ensure that they can plan and deliver a meaningful curriculum that is ambitious for all children. Staff know what children have learned and what they want to teach them next and why, across all areas of learning. Consequently, all children receive a sequential and personalised learning approach that meets their individual care and learning needs.
- Children's communication and language skills are actively and positively promoted by staff. They narrate children's play and use single words and repetition to support the youngest children as they learn their first words. Older children have opportunities to join in purposeful back-and-forth conversations. However, at times, the staff do not always extend children's learning to enable them to think and share their ideas.
- Staff support children's health and physical skills. Older children build strength and stamina in the garden while rolling down tubes. They use large blocks inside to build houses and rockets. Staff support babies to develop their early mobility skills well. They develop their strength and balance as they learn to sit up unaided and manoeuvre around the furniture. However, staff do not always give the same attention to the planning of outdoors as inside. This means that children's large muscle skills are not always effectively planned for.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to extend children's learning during play, to help develop children's thinking and enable them to share their own ideas
- build on how staff plan the outdoor provision to ensure that it consistently meets the individual learning needs of all children.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY338310
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10364265
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 7
Total number of places	53
Number of children on roll	63
Name of registered person	Darlington College
Registered person unique reference number	RP519370
Telephone number	01325 503144
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2019

Information about this early years setting

Darlington College Childcare Centre registered in 2006. The nursery employs 14 members of childcare staff. All hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, or above. The nursery opens from Monday to Thursday, from 8am to 5.30pm and from 8am to 5pm on a Friday and during school holidays. The nursery offers the government-funded places for childcare.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Eileen Grimes

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk and discussed how the curriculum and nursery are organised.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.
- Children and staff spoke to the inspector at convenient times during the inspection, and their views were taken into account.
- The manager completed a joint observation with the inspector to evaluate the quality of teaching.
- The inspector observed the quality of education and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector reviewed a sample of relevant documents, including suitability checks and other records.

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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