

Inspection of Pre-School Centre

Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 4YW

Inspection date: 23 July 2025

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

Staff are kind and caring. They have secure relationships with children, who they know well. Staff have high expectations of children. Children know the routine and what is expected of them. Staff are good role models and support children's independence well. During lunchtime, even the youngest children clear their spaces once finished and manage their self-care needs independently. For example, when children have finished their snack, they wipe their faces and hands and put their rubbish in the bin. At tidy-up time, they enthusiastically put away toys and equipment. All children show strong attitudes to doing things for themselves. They develop their sense of responsibility and key life skills in preparation for their next stage of learning.

Leaders create an ambitious curriculum and plan a rich programme of experiences that ensure that children understand what makes them unique and to help them to feel involved in their local community. For example, older children enjoy attending events on the university campus, such as the women's football. Staff support children to recall their learning about other countries that take part in international football tournaments. This supports children to develop an understanding of their local community and the world around them.

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

- Leaders of this nursery are passionate about providing an inclusive setting for all. They create an ambitious curriculum that supports children's curiosity, independence and understanding of the world. For example, children learn about life cycles and show good levels of engagement as they thread pasta to create a caterpillar. However, staff are not always clear about what they want children to learn. This means that, on occasion, their teaching does not take account of what children need to learn next. Consequently, at times, children are not fully engaged, and activities do not consistently build on their learning.
- Children have access to playing indoors and outdoors. The pace is very much child led. Outdoors, staff plan activities for children to develop their large muscles. For instance, children negotiate obstacle courses they have built. However, at times, not all staff deploy themselves effectively to support all children's learning. This means that children sometimes lack the interactions they need from staff to engage them in meaningful learning and play.
- Staff ensure that children's language and communication development is a priority. They feel strongly that an environment rich in language encourages children's learning. Staff model language well. They tailor this to the individual needs of children. For example, staff introduce and repeat single words as they play with babies. In addition, older children demonstrate they are confident talkers as they engage in back-and-forth conversations with visitors.

- The nursery delivers a programme to support children's well-being. Staff use strategies, such as breathing exercises, to help children to regulate their emotions and recognise the feelings of others. Staff provide dedicated spaces, such as 'the nurture nest', to provide quiet and small-group activities, including yoga. Staff use these experiences to help children to experience calm and support their emotional development. Children demonstrate awareness of their own emotional well-being and that of adults, showing developing empathy and resilience. Consequently, children behave well.
- The procedures for supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are strong. Leaders implement targeted learning plans for children who have fallen behind in their development. They make timely referrals to outside agencies. Leaders use additional funding effectively to enhance the provision and narrow the gaps in children's learning. Children with SEND are very happy at the nursery. They make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Staff welcome families into the nursery. Parents and carers value the continuity of care, particularly the approach of keeping the same key person through their children's transitions between rooms. This consistency strengthens children's attachments and supports smooth transitions, reducing their anxiety and helping them to maintain emotional security. In addition, parents appreciate the regular updates on their children's progress, which help them to continue with this learning at home.
- Staff benefit from plenty of training and ongoing professional development. Leaders empower them to request and undertake training that is precisely targeted to improve knowledge and skills. Staff morale is high because they feel valued and integral to the team. Many of the staff have worked at the nursery for several years. Children benefit from a happy, stable and motivated team who work well together. Staff all strive to do their very best and offer the families they support a high-quality service.

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 implement the precise learning intentions of activities more effectively so that children remain fully engaged in their learning
- review the deployment of staff to consistently provide purposeful interactions for children to build on their existing skills and knowledge.

Setting details

Unique reference number	309552
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10410242
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 4
Total number of places	158
Number of children on roll	204
Name of registered person	Lancaster University
Registered person unique reference number	RP903371
Telephone number	01524 594 464
Date of previous inspection	26 July 2019

Information about this early years setting

Pre-School Centre registered in 1992. It is situated within purpose-built premises on the university campus in Lancaster and is managed by Lancaster University. The nursery serves the university staff and students and the local community. It employs 56 members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold qualified teacher status, and three hold early years professional status. In addition, 45 staff hold appropriate early years qualifications from level 2 to 6. The nursery opens all year round, from 8.15am until 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. It offers government-funded childcare.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Kelly Little
Lisa Oakley

Inspection activities

- The inspectors and senior leaders completed a learning walk together. They discussed how the curriculum is designed and what leaders intend for children to learn.
- The inspectors observed activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact teaching has on children's learning.
- The inspectors and senior leaders carried out joint observations of two activities.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspectors.
- Staff and children spoke to the inspectors, and their comments were considered.
- The inspector viewed key documentation, including suitability checks for all adults working with children.

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 2025