

The Early Bird Pre-School (Norton)

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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Type of setting

Childcare - Non-Domestic

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

The Early Bird Pre-school opened in 2007 and recently changed its status to a limited company and has re-opened under the name Early Bird Childcare Limited. The pre-school operates from a large hall within St. Georges Norton parish church in Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire. Children also have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The setting is accessed via large double doors and is all on one floor so is accessible to all children and their parents.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 28 children at any one time. There are currently 47 children on roll. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds. The group is open on a Monday and Wednesday from 9.30am to 2.30pm, a Tuesday and Thursday from 9.30am to 1.00pm and a Friday 9.30am to 1.30pm, term time only, with an additional holiday club offered at the other Early Bird setting (Westbury). The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine members of staff including the manager/leader. Eight of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards a further qualification including a Foundation Degree and a Bachelor of Arts(BA) in Early Years. The pre-school is also working towards the Hertfordshire Quality Standards accreditation.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is Outstanding.

Exceptionally well-developed knowledge of how children learn and develop enables the staff to plan relevant and motivating learning opportunities. Consequently, children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Rigorous and meticulous monitoring of policies and procedures ensures that children remain safe and very well protected. Partnerships with parents and other professionals are exemplary and a significant factor in ensuring children's needs are consistently met and each child is fully included. Successful steps are taken to self-evaluate its provision for children and the pre-school demonstrates an excellent capacity to make continuous improvement and sustain its existing high standards.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- enhancing work together with other practitioners and parents to support transition, both between settings and between setting and school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded by rigorous procedures. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and there are processes in place to monitor their ongoing suitability. Thorough induction and ongoing training means staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. In addition, safeguarding is a core agenda item at staff meetings; this ensures any concerns are dealt with promptly and safeguarding maintains high priority to all. Comprehensive risk assessments and daily safety checks of the entire premises mean that children's safety is consistently well managed. Policies and procedures underpin the excellent practice. Space and resources are used exceptionally well to maximise learning opportunities for children both indoors and outside. They are encouraged to make independent choices from the well-organised activities and extensive range of play equipment that is easily accessible to all.

Leadership and management of the setting is highly efficient and inspirational. The manager and her team work together exceptionally well, they are effective, enthusiastic, dedicated and committed to ensuring each individual child is highly valued. Staff are exceptionally well qualified and motivated to do a good job; the manager is an excellent role model and places great value on supporting their continuous professional development. As a result, they feel valued and are totally committed to creating the best possible outcomes for the children. Peer observations have been identified as an area for further development, to enhance the already excellent practice. Staff are very well deployed throughout the sessions to ensure children receive high quality support and supervision. Self-evaluation is extremely effective because reflective practice is securely embedded within the setting. A comprehensive self-evaluation form clearly identifies the settings strengths and weaknesses and a detailed action plan covers all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Self-evaluation actively promotes input from all and takes account of the views of staff, parents and children. Feedback is gathered in a variety of ways including questionnaires and staff meetings. Recently, when the outdoor area was being designed, children were asked to draw pictures and choose photographs of things they thought should be included, thus valuing their input and promoting a sense of belonging. The pre-school is currently undertaking the Hertfordshire Quality Standards, which monitors and supports good practice. In addition, the pre-school work closely with the local authority and early years advisors to share their superb practice with other providers.

Staff have established excellent partnerships with parents. There is an 'open door' policy and they are proactive in encouraging and involving parents in the pre-school. Parents receive a wealth of information about the setting through the web site, informative newsletters, the notice board and effective daily communication. Leaver's questionnaires seek their opinions, parent's information evenings are held on subjects such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and parents can contribute to children's learning journeys. Parents' evenings are also an opportunity to share information about children's progress. New starters receive an extremely

comprehensive 'Welcome Pack' which clearly sets out everything parents need to know, including the role and responsibilities of the key person. Termly events with staff, parents and children are held to celebrate the term including performances by the children. Home books kept in children's book bags can be used by parents to convey messages to and from the setting. Staff gather vital information through an 'All about me' format, prior to them starting at the pre-school. 'First days at pre-school' records important information about how the children are settling and invites input from both the children's key person and parents. These systems ensure staff are fully aware of children's individual needs and thereby supports continuity of care and promotes a smooth transition from home to pre-school. Strong partnership working with other agencies and early years providers, such as the Children's Centre and 'Home Start' ensures that all children's needs are met exceptionally well.

Positive steps are taken to ensure all children are well integrated, value others and understand the society in which they live. Equality and diversity runs through the thread of what the pre-school do and is reflected in the accessible resources, food and activities. Similarities and differences are discussed and celebrated. Children with additional needs are supported exceptionally well, as staff work effectively in partnership with others and use various learning styles to meet the needs of each child. Therefore, the setting is fully inclusive to all.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

The quality of the provision is excellent as children's welfare is thoroughly promoted. Staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn and develop, which is rooted in expert knowledge. Exceptional organisation of the educational programme reflects the rich, varied and imaginative experiences that meet the needs of the children extremely well. Observations and assessments are rigorous; staff know the children exceptionally well and know where they are in their development. They make purposeful observations which help them plan successfully for their next steps in learning. Children have access to a wealth of experiences and opportunities which are exceptional and highly stimulating. They are busy and engaged throughout the session, whilst still having plenty of time to become absorbed in activities. Children establish excellent and trusting relationships with the staff team. Interaction is highly effective; staff are enthusiastic, sensitive and supportive. In turn, children approach staff confidently to make a request, tell a story or share some information. Activities are challenging and enjoyable, both indoors and outside. Staff take every opportunity to help children progress and develop their thinking, for example, as they play with plasticine, they are asked if they can cut it into half and introduced to new vocabulary as a member of staff plays the guitar and shows the children how to use the plectro.

Children play a significant role in their learning; they offer ideas and respond to challenges with great enthusiasm, for example, in the builder's yard outside, children are keen to use the tape measures to measure the walls and begin to

create a house using appropriate tools. There is a good balance of child-led activities and those adult-initiated, based on the children's interests and individual needs. Children display high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration. They develop strong relationships with their peers, play cooperatively and show respect for each other such as when playing outside, using blocks and bricks to make a pathway, taking turns and working well together.

Children develop an exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of the world through an extensive range of activities and experiences. They learn about life cycles through caring for frogs and watching caterpillars develop into butterflies. Stories are read and the journeys are recorded through video, photos and drawing, to reinforce and extend their learning. Children learn about the wider community with visits from various people such as the fire brigade and the local police officer. They develop a good understanding of information and communication technology through exploration and investigation, for example, when using a light box and making a keyboard. They also have opportunities to use cameras and experiment with colour using a laptop.

Children's communication, language and literacy skills are promoted extremely well. A 'World Book Day' event invites children to bring in favourite books and dress up as their favourite book character. Regular visits to the library, taking books home and engaging story times at the pre-school, fosters children's love of books and develops their understanding that print carries meaning. Children have a many opportunities to promote their creative development through a wide variety of medium and materials. An active music and movement session involves everyone, develops children's large muscle skills and is physically challenging. A music corner with songs displayed and equipped with headphones, a portable media device and instruments, supports further development in this area.

Children have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They learn through practical activities such as taking part in fire drills and inviting the road safety officer in, whilst sensible rules within the setting enable them to play safely. Children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle is reinforced as they talk about germs when washing hands and visual aids support good hygiene practices. The Early Bird Cafe offers varied snacks and promotes healthy eating. Children participate in preparing snacks and activities which support their understanding, such as growing their own vegetables, apple pressing and making soups and bread. Visits from various people such as the dental nurse develop children's knowledge and understanding of looking after themselves. Children discuss the benefits of exercise and benefit from a wide range of physical play opportunities including regular walks.

Children's behaviour is exceptionally positive. Innovative strategies are used to promote good behaviour. Parents are encouraged to share 'Wow' moments about their child's achievements which are then displayed and fed into individual learning journeys. Egg timers are used to help children monitor their own behaviour, take turns and wait patiently. An illustrated behaviour board clearly displays the very positive pre-school rules. Adults are positive role models and children show respect for each other. They develop confidence and self-esteem as they receive much praise and encouragement.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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