

Skylarks Day Care

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Susan Parker

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Skylarks Day Care is a limited company which has been registered since 2005. It operates from the same premises as Batford Nursery and shares the site with Harpenden Children's Centre. The children have a dedicated playroom and also access the nursery during part of the daily sessions.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 96 children aged from three to under eight years on roll, some in part-time places. The setting is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 50 weeks of the year and offers flexible bookings. It operates a holiday play scheme during school holidays with the exception of Christmas. The setting is in receipt of funding for early years education and provides excellent provision to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

Skylarks Day Care employs eight members of staff of whom five work directly with the children. Four members of staff hold early years qualifications and one is working towards a Level 3 qualification. The manager holds an early years degree and is currently working towards the Early Years professional status.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding. Through excellent understanding of how children learn and by the provision of a wealth of inspirational activities, adults promote all aspects of children's welfare and learning. Every child is fully included, having their individual needs met at every step. Excellent partnerships with parents, the nursery, children's centre and other child carers ensure that key staff have a well-developed knowledge of children's starting points, capabilities and interests. Regular self-evaluation of the provision through questionnaires, discussions with staff and stakeholders, supports the settings ability to sustain continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continue to enhance the outside area as an integrated learning environment.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Skylarks Day Care is exceptionally well led and managed. The management structure is clear and each person is fully versed in their roles and responsibilities. Staff are well qualified and dedicated to providing outstanding care and education

for all the children. Children's learning journeys show how children are making excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Children's starting points, information about their individual needs, routines and abilities are confidentially recorded in partnership with parents and carers. Staff provide interesting and intriguing activities every day which stimulate the children's natural curiosity and motivate their learning. Regular observations of the children, together with photographic evidence and examples of the children's work, are recorded. These are successfully linked to each area of learning showing each child's progression and their planned next steps.

The setting has established exemplary links with Batford Nursery, Harpenden Children's centre and other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This ensures that every child has their individual needs met consistently across each of the differing provisions they attend. A very good partnership with parents and carers ensures that there is a regular flow of information sharing about the provision as a whole, their own children's achievements and progress and activities to extend their learning at home.

The management practise safe recruiting procedures to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. All staff have undergone safeguarding training and have robust procedures to follow should they have a concern. The outstanding practice is fully supported by a well-organised system of documentation and records. Staff manage the children's welfare in a calm and confident way. Any accidents, illness or administration of treatment or medication are fully documented and staff actively prioritise children's welfare. They teach the children how to care for their own needs such as putting on their own shoes, aprons and coats. An excellent range of resources support children's independence for example, they can choose to participate in an exciting range of activities, they can use the toilet unassisted, provide themselves with a drink when they are thirsty and choose to make mud pies in the garden if they wish. The staff supply the children with Wellington boots and waterproof coveralls, sun cream and shade, so no matter what the weather, children can explore the outside in safety. The vibrant main room used is full of interest. Bright craft activities hang down from the ceiling and everywhere you look there is something interesting that the children can choose to do. Emerging tadpoles in a tank displayed with books and models of the transition into a frog. A bright soft comfy area with a good range of books and soft chairs is provided where children can talk together, share books or rest if they are tired. There are low-level shelves where children can see words and pictures of the contents enabling them to help themselves to play resources.

Staff and managers meet regularly to discuss and plan activities tailor-made to the children's needs. They consistently evaluate their practice. An ongoing action plan ensures that further improvements are continuously taking place. Parents are encouraged to participate in the regular evaluation of the setting through annual questionnaires. The results are recorded, documented and action is taken if feasible.

The commitment and passion of all adults involved in this setting to fully support and encourage all children to develop to their full potential is the key strength. Every opportunity is used to develop the children's knowledge and understanding.

For example, at snack time staff talk with the children whilst cutting an apple into half, then quarters, and every child is fully engrossed in the activity. This type of creative approach to practical mathematics grabs the children's attention so they thoroughly enjoy their learning. Further ideas to enhance the outdoor area as an integrated learning environment are planned.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children's natural curiosity and individual interests are truly motivated by inspirational organisation of the educational programmes. The learning environment is bright and exciting with so much to explore and do. Children are making significant gains in their learning as they each have a key person who makes detailed observations on their play. This enables staff to have a detailed insight into every child's individual capabilities and personalities. The activities are provided to challenge each child to take the next steps in their learning and development, for example, a recent theme about robots is based on the interests of some of the children. Another is 'superheroes' where children's imagination and creativity are stimulated through their natural interest in comic books. Children make drawings of themselves and think through what their special power could be. Children embrace the idea of rescuing people and animals, showing their awareness of the needs of others and developing their role in society. Through these themes and the activities linked to them, children are making notable progress towards the early learning goals. Their levels of achievement are excellent in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

Children's welfare is a priority and is promoted extremely well. Every child is fully included and has their individual needs met. All policies and procedures put the needs of the child first. Any child who has an accident or is unwell receives the best treatment available for their individual circumstances, whether it is to go home, to receive medication or treatment, or to just have a cuddle and an encouraging word. Children are very competent in their personal care skills as they dress themselves, prepare their own snacks and pour their own drinks. They are developing a good awareness of keeping themselves and others safe whilst exploring their vibrant environment. They use tools such as scissors, knives and hammers safely. Children are learning to work collaboratively by sharing tools and ideas such as which materials are needed to construct a model or a den. Children learn about what behaviour is acceptable and what is not accepted. They are developing an understanding of the consequence of their actions on themselves and those around them; understanding why it is not safe to throw sand, or how to hold the hammer and pegs correctly so that 'you don't hurt your finger'. Children are active and understand the benefits of physical activity and healthy choices. They are aware of the composition of their bodies even down to their skeleton. They know why there is a need to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet, and they are aware of the routine to follow, with picture clues and reminders. Children are active learners, the many interactive displays and permanent accessible activities such as sand and water, digging and role play are easily accessible to all children promotes children's choice and decision making. Children join in with the activities and are forming good friendships. They are encouraged to share information about their favourite things and learning to

respect each other's similarities and differences. Children are learning about different people and their way of life, for example, the role play corner transforms into a Romany caravan and the children learn about traditional traveller customs and traditions. Supported by both fiction and non-fiction books and stories, the children learn through play.

Children are making excellent progress in their communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. These skills are developed through everyday activities such as charting the progress of the tadpole development, learning practical maths such as an apple is cut into two equal pieces, these are called halves, when cut into four equal pieces these are called quarters. Children are able to use the computer and internet to learn about what interests them and to find out answers to questions such as 'does an octopus have a skeleton?'. Due to excellent organisation and observations, all children's interests are catered for. Every child is fully involved at all times, their attention is grasped and they are evolving as active learners who can think critically, be creative and achieve their goals.

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	1
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	1

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	1
How well are children helped to stay safe?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met