

# Harlequin Childcare

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique reference number** EY275444  
**Inspection date** 12/05/2011  
**Inspector** Anna Davies

**Setting address** The Old School House, 54 Downham Road, Ely,  
Cambridgeshire, CB6 2SH  
**Telephone number** 01353 661 172  
**Email** [info@harlequinchildcare.co.uk](mailto:info@harlequinchildcare.co.uk)  
**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

---

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, 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 copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011

## 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).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

## Description of the setting

Harlequin Childcare is run by a private company. It opened in 2004 and operates from The Old School House in Ely, Cambridgeshire. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6.30pm for 51 weeks of the year with the exception of public holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 78 children in the early years age range may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 114 children on roll in this age group. Children come from the local area. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 30 members of staff including two directors. One member of staff holds an Early Years Degree and another holds a Level 4 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). 16 staff hold NVQ Level 3 qualifications and six hold NVQ Level 2 qualifications. Four members of staff are working towards further qualifications.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are exceptionally well cared for and make excellent progress in their learning and development, given their age, ability and starting points. Children relish the time they spend in this friendly, dynamic and stimulating setting. Staff pay specific attention to children's individual needs, are highly skilled in promoting children's learning and provide children with a very stimulating and extremely well-resourced environment. Inclusion of all children and their families is given high priority and very effective partnership working with parents, other providers, outside agencies and professionals greatly contributes to this highly inclusive setting. The dedicated management and staff team demonstrate an utmost commitment to continually monitoring, evaluating and further improving the provision to always ensure the best possible outcomes for all children and have very effective systems in place to ensure this happens.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continuing to extend the opportunities to expand children's sensory experiences.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Staff have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues in order to protect children's welfare. They receive regular training and clearly understand the settings' procedures should they have concerns about a child in their care. Children are safeguarded by extensive recruitment and vetting procedures, including the comprehensive induction of new staff and the continuing professional development of existing members of staff. Comprehensive risk assessments are regularly undertaken in order to minimise potential hazards to children and ensure a safe working environment for all.

All furniture, equipment and resources are of excellent quality and organised effectively to best suit the different ages of the children in each room. The nursery has a very warm, calm and relaxed feel. Children are completely absorbed in a wealth of activities all of the time and so thoroughly enjoy learning through play. Indoor and outdoor environments are extremely stimulating and a huge amount of consideration has been given to enabling children free access to as many resources as possible, both indoors and outdoors. All children enjoy regular time in the outdoor area where they enjoy activities, such as, sharing books under the willow dome, bug hunting under the logs, watering the plants in the flowerbeds, mark making on whiteboards and role play in the undercover area.

The management and staff hold equality of opportunity at the heart of all they do. Staff are highly effective in ensuring that all children are well integrated and that steps are taken to close any identified gaps in their achievements. Staff demonstrate an exemplary understanding of the uniqueness of each child that they care for. There are highly effective systems in place to support children with special needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who speak English as an additional language. This includes working very closely with outside agencies and other professionals to ensure that all children's needs are effectively met and supported. Highly effective systems for working in partnership with other settings and the local schools have been implemented. This ensures a consistent learning and care experience for children and smooth transitions.

Partnerships with parents and carers are exemplary. Home visits and a wealth of information gathered before children start, ensure that staff are able to meet children's needs immediately. Parents and carers are very well informed about all aspects of their own children's achievement, well-being and development. Open evenings and play sessions are organised to encourage parents to understand the benefits of the activities that the nursery offers to their children. Topic information is sent home and parents are asked for their ideas about what can be incorporated. Staff provide guidance and information about the way parents and carers can support their children's learning and they fully encourage them to share the learning that happens at home. Parents speak extremely highly of the quality of the provision.

The nursery is led by a cohesive management team. They truly value each member of staff which ensures that staff feel able to confidently contribute their

thoughts and ideas about every aspect of the nursery. Both management and staff share the same ambition, drive and passion to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. The management and staff team all have high expectations and set high standards which are embedded across all areas of practice. Morale is very high and staff are rightly proud of the service they provide. Self-evaluation is continuous and rigorous. All possible avenues are explored so that the nursery continues to move forwards, this includes visiting other settings and enabling staff who are undertaking training, opportunities to further develop areas of the nursery, such as the sensory room. Recommendations raised at the nursery's last inspection have been fully addressed.

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

Staff demonstrate a deep rooted knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They embrace the ethos that children learn best as they explore, investigate and discover through play. Children receive lots of individual attention and enjoy warm relationships with staff who make every effort to get to know their individual personalities, backgrounds and family experiences. Staff are skilled at supporting and extending learning. They encourage children to solve problems, such as, how to put sand in a funnel and catch it as it comes out of the other end or ask children how they think they could help ice to melt in order to get a hidden toy out. Open-ended questions challenge children's thinking and help them to make connections in their learning. For example, staff ask 'What do you think we need to do?' when the bicarbonate of soda, food colouring and vinegar mixture no longer makes the toy volcano erupt.

Observation, assessment and planning are a significant strength and as a result each child is properly monitored and supported exceedingly well to make extremely good progress towards the early learning goals. There is an excellent balance of child-initiated and adult-led learning opportunities which build on the children's imagination and participation.

All children are very happy, settled and eager to engage in the activities on offer. They clearly demonstrate that they are successfully developing skills that will give them the foundations for successful life-long learning. Children show high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration. For example, older children spend time persevering at complex puzzles and babies fit snugly fitting rings onto a pole using their developing hand and eye coordination. Older children eagerly share their news during a 'Mr.Bee' circle time. They understand the need to listen to others at this time and enjoy hearing about their friends' new experiences and holidays. Children of all ages have excellent opportunities to mark-make using a wide variety of media, such as combs, nail brushes and chopsticks to make different marks in the sand. They understand that print carries meaning, enjoy sharing books and can recognise the letters in their name. Children's language is developing extremely well as staff spend much time interacting with children. New sounds, such as 'pop, pop, pop' are introduced to babies, for example, when enjoying bubble play.

Older children begin to learn new vocabulary, such as, 'married', 'wedding' and 'Prince' during activities about the recent Royal wedding. Children are adept problem solvers and ably recall which item of fruit or vegetable has been removed under a towel. They confidently use number language in their play, for example, when they build towers and start counting all over again when the tower falls down. Numeracy is successfully filtered through into everyday activities, such as, mealtimes, dressing and learning the concept of time with regards to routines of the day. Children enjoy a wealth of activities that encourage them to make sense of the world around them. Many sensory activities are offered to all ages of children. For example, babies explore the coloured sand, watching staff as they show them how it runs through their fingers or feel and smell the real fruit and vegetable baskets containing items such as leeks. Children grow their own flowers, plants and vegetables. All aged children have opportunities to begin to understand technology. For example, toddlers watch footage of farm animals on a lap top and older children show excellent skills in the use of a mouse and keyboard.

Children's physical health and development benefits from regular fresh air and exercise. They engage in a diverse range of activities that help develop their physical skills. Children are encouraged to make healthy choices and benefit from lots of resources that promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage exercise in a fun way. Children are wholeheartedly encouraged to express their creativity and freely access a wide range of resources in order to develop their ideas. Staff engross themselves in children's imaginative play, for example, wrapping 'presents' for children's pretend birthdays. A wealth of activities help children to feel confident to talk and share information. They are taught how to manage risks safely, such as, using scissors, cutting fruit and negotiating large play equipment. Impromptu opportunities are well used by staff to discuss safety issues, such as, the consequences of not sitting on a chair correctly and not touching kettles because they may be hot, during role play. Children's behaviour is extremely good. This is due to the highly stimulating and child-led environment and constant praise from staff. Staff are excellent role models, showing utmost respect for each other and every child. Children confidently regulate their own behaviour, for example, putting their hands up to give answers and spontaneously handing out stickers to those friends who have helped to tidy up.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health, welfare and safety of all children. Changing and bathroom areas are kept very clean and procedures for changing nappies are carefully adhered to by all staff. Outdoor shoes are removed on entry into the nursery which ensures that areas that children play in, remain clean and the risk of cross-contamination is minimised. Children spontaneously follow good routines for handwashing with staff gently reminding them of the importance of 'washing germs away'. Meals and snacks are extremely healthy, balanced and nutritious and presented in a very attractive, appealing way. Mealtimes are enjoyable, social occasions where children learn to eat independently alongside staff who offer them support if necessary.

## 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

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

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

