

Skylarks Day Care

Holcroft Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5BQ



Inspection date

24 May 2016

Previous inspection date

27 March 2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding	1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Outstanding	1
Outcomes for children		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- The inspirational leaders work tirelessly to drive forward improvement and are at the forefront of new childcare initiatives. Extremely well established relationships with a multitude of other agencies help them work towards reaching the best possible outcomes for children and their families.
- Exceptional relationships between the on-site nursery school and children's centre provide tailored, flexible provision for local families. The high number of transitions is managed seamlessly and information for parents about each child's day shared concisely.
- The manager makes a significant contribution to the local and wider community. She provides parenting classes to share her expert practice and help adults adopt the skills to promote children's learning at home. She welcomes visits from other providers to observe the setting and help them work towards achieving high-quality practice.
- Very well-qualified staff demonstrate a passion to continually develop their skills and further enhance the innovative and highly engaging activities that they provide.
- Supervision involves an incisive evaluation of staff practice and recent training by the deputy manager has been swiftly cascaded to the team. Staff now demonstrate increased confidence in their ability to contribute to children's targeted plans.
- Specific programmes of support sharply focus on improving children's speech and language skills, helping to give them the foundations for future learning. Children explore home-made bags and use various props to interact with staff as they sing.
- Each key person has an exceptional knowledge of the children they work with and has been active in building a relationship with the other providers involved in their care. They consistently work together to assess children and provide highly challenging activities to help them make the best possible progress.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- continue to develop children's social skills in order to maintain the very high standard of practice.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning. She spoke to children at appropriate times throughout the inspection and accompanied them to the school hall for lunch.
- The inspector completed joint observations with the manager and held discussions with the manager, the local authority adviser and members of staff.
- The inspector held a meeting which included the manager, the deputy manager, the headteacher and the chair of governors. She looked at relevant documentation, such as the nursery's self-evaluation, audits of practice, children's learning journals and their individual development plans.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents and carers during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector saw evidence of the suitability of all persons working on the premises and other documentation in relation to the safeguarding and welfare requirements.

Inspector

Rachel Pepper

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

The management team sets a leadership example to others. The systems for reflective practice are meticulous. Staff actively seek and act upon the views of parents, children and other professionals to continually develop the excellent educational programmes. Current plans include the robust monitoring of lunchtime practice to ensure children's high level of social skills is maintained. In addition, the manager completes regular audits on her practice and has renewed her accreditation through the local authority. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Training days help to refresh staff's exceptional understanding of child protection. Children's health and well-being are significantly enhanced by designated staff roles and consistent implementation of robust policies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Children are enthused and highly motivated to learn. They choose from an abundance of rich, vibrant learning opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Children make predictions and monitor the growth of beans in light and dark environments. They mix their chosen ingredients of coffee and paprika to mud as they make pretend pies. Staff have high expectations of all children and teaching is highly responsive to their growing curiosity. For instance, a child shows excitement at locating a spider outside and is quickly provided with a container and magnifying glass to make closer observations. Staff engage the child in discussion to stimulate her thinking and suggest they use the computer to source further information. Meticulous plans and highly effective observations take into account the unique daily experience of each child. For example, staff provide quiet spaces for children to rest and relax as they arrive after a busy morning at the nursery school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Children's welfare is at the heart of this setting. Staff are highly skilled in helping all children, including those more vulnerable, to develop secure attachments. A range of strategies engages children to talk about the important people in their lives and help them to express the language of feelings. The manager has a comprehensive knowledge of each family. From the outset, she gathers a wealth of information from home visits before children start to help tailor the support that they need. Children complete daily checks of the environment and highlight hazards to others. They recite a rhyme on safe internet use and teach this to their parents. These are some of the ways that children gain a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and manage risk.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

Children consistently demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning. All children make substantial progress in relation to their starting points. Children who joined with limited social skills now participate in many daily routines and make choices in their play. Children as young as two demonstrate their independence as they help to prepare the morning snack, slicing bananas and scooping portions of houmous from the pot. Older children eagerly practise their writing skills as they label the sunflowers they have planted and write their own name. Vast gaps in children's learning are almost negligible by the time they start school, helping to prepare them very well for future learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY301868
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	848891
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	76
Name of registered person	Skylarks Day Care Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP525310
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2009
Telephone number	07974 112959 or 01582 714212

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 setting employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including both the manager and deputy manager with early years professional status, and a qualified early years teacher. The setting is open each weekday from 8am until 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. It operates a holiday play scheme during school holidays, with the exception of Christmas. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

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