

Inspection of Cold Ash Pre School

The Acland Memorial Hall, Hermitage Road, Thatcham RG18 9JH

Inspection date: 24 March 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

This exciting outdoor setting gives children an abundance of hands-on opportunities to freely explore and investigate by themselves, with staff or friends. Children play with curiosity and excitement. For example, they roll, flatten and squash playdough with sand and coffee mixed in. These types of sensory experiences intrigue children and help them develop sustained concentration and great imaginations. This is illustrated when children make a pretend cake for a friend's birthday, using twigs as candles. Staff facilitate and create situations that deepen children's interests. For instance, they enthusiastically join in with children, running around wearing superhero costumes and pretending to 'save the world'.

Leaders and staff value children's unique personalities and connect warmly with them. They build trusted relationships from the start, which positively impacts children's ongoing development. There is a strong emphasis placed on developing and promoting children's personal, social and emotional needs. Children generally behave well and make strong friendships. If minor disputes do occur, staff address this unwanted behaviour in a calm and sensitive manner. They consider each child's viewpoints and collectively agree on a more favourable outcome. This helps to create a respectful, safe and productive environment for all.

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

- All staff show a good knowledge of child development and in particular, build on children's communication and language skills well. They avidly tell stories and share children's favourite books with them. This helps children to apply and embed key words and phrases. Their attention and thinking skills are immediately captured in games, such as guessing unusual items hidden in a box. This creates high levels of anticipation and wonder, as staff reveal the object, such as an old fashioned horn. Children with speech delay, swiftly learn signs and gestures to express their wants and needs, which are skilfully incorporated by staff into their play. All children sing with immense confidence. This shows that children become competent communicators.
- Children's confidence, resilience and perseverance shine through as they engage in activities of their choice. For example, children of all ages use parallel ropes to help strengthen their core and arm muscles. If they lose balance, they try again and beam with pride when they manage to stay on the ropes. Children challenge themselves, take safe risks and even try to move along the ropes. In this way, they become aware of their own capabilities and push themselves to succeed.
- A key-person system is in place, where staff form close attachments with their key children. They keep up to date with children's care needs, through ongoing discussions with parents. However, key persons do not always make other staff aware of children's next steps in learning. Consequently, when other staff

interact with children in their spontaneous play, the learning is not always fully maximised. Despite this, key persons for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) work more collaboratively with others to help bridge any development gaps.

- Leaders actively make decisions with children in mind. Any additional funding children receive, is spent effectively to bridge any gaps in their learning, as well as provide experiences that they may not have had yet. Leaders purchase resources to enhance these children's interests, such as belts with play tool equipment. Children love to fix things. They know the relevance of wearing hard hats and high visibility jackets in building work. This role-play world of make-believe helps children learn about different job roles in society.
- Staff's well-being is a key strength. They feel well supported and highly valued by leaders, who continually strive for improvement. For instance, all staff are excited by the imminent arrival of a new cabin in the garden. They plan to use this indoor space to work with small groups, and assist those children in need of further support to self-regulate their emotions and build closer friendships.
- Children, through their play and discussions, show an awareness of some online games that are not used at the setting. Although leaders know the importance of promoting children's knowledge of internet safety, this not fully embedded. They have not carefully considered ways to implement an effective and age appropriate programme to raise children's understanding of safety when using online devices at home.
- Parents are delighted with the education and care children receive. They welcome opportunities to participate in community events, such as attending a mother's day tea, where they decorate plant pots together. These types of events raise parent's awareness of what children learn at pre-school and how they can support them at home. Parents receive detailed information about their children's development. They praise staff's commitment to work collaboratively with them, for instance, to enhance children's self-care skills.

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:

- strengthen the sharing of information between key person and the staff team to further promote and extend individual children's learning
- support staff to embed internet safety into the curriculum to enable children and parents to learn how to keep themselves safe online.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY560354
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10388486
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	29
Number of children on roll	42
Name of registered person	Cold Ash Pre-School CIO
Registered person unique reference number	RP560353
Telephone number	07780664454
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2019

Information about this early years setting

Cold Ash Pre School has been in operation since 1970. It re-registered in 2019 and is located in Cold Ash, near Thatcham, Berkshire. The pre-school operates during term time only. On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, it opens from 9.15am to 2.45pm, and on Wednesday and Friday from 9.15am to 1.30pm. The pre-school is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are seven staff working with the children, six of whom hold relevant childcare qualifications at level 3 and level 4.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sonia Panchal

Inspection activities

- The pre-school leader and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The pre-school leader and the inspector carried out joint observations together.
- Parents shared their verbal and written views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.

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.

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