

Inspection of YMCA Childcare Water Lane

Sure Start, The Ark Childrens Centre, Water Lane, LOWESTOFT, Suffolk NR32 2NH

Inspection date: 19 September 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	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive with smiles and settle quickly into their day. They are welcomed by caring staff, who know them well. This helps children feel safe, secure and ready to explore. The nursery has a warm, family feel. Its values of high ambition, respect and empathy shine through in everyday routines. Staff build trusting relationships with children and their families. This gives children the confidence to try new things.

Staff deliver an ambitious, values-led curriculum that builds on what children already know and can do. For example, during the 'what's in the box' routine, staff use songs, signing and anticipation to capture children's attention and develop their language skills. Children join in with excitement, grow in confidence and learn to take turns. Children are curious and eager to learn. They clap and sing together during favourite games, and they talk with pride about what they discover in the garden. Staff make learning exciting by linking it to children's interests. Trips to the library, visits to the allotment and special visitors, such as dentists, give children rich experiences beyond the nursery walls.

Staff have clear expectations for children's behaviour. They set clear boundaries and give gentle reminders. Children respond by showing kindness to each other and a willingness to take turns. They take pride in becoming more independent, whether chopping fruit, pouring drinks or helping to check the outdoor space.

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

- Mathematics is threaded through daily play in meaningful ways. Children compare heavy and light objects, explore floating and sinking, and proudly count the minibeasts they find in the garden. Through these playful experiences they begin to use mathematical language naturally and with confidence.
- The nursery environments are adapted with care. Staff have created calmer room layouts and expanded the garden space. As a result, children focus for longer and engage more deeply in their learning.
- Assessment and planning are purposeful. Staff know their children well and check progress regularly. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive tailored support through strong partnerships between staff, parents and professionals. By working closely with families and external agencies, staff promptly and effectively identify and address each child's individual needs. Transitions are managed sensitively and, as a result, children with SEND make good progress from their starting points.
- Children behave well. Staff members support new children to learn the routine and boundaries sensitively. Staff model calm, respectful communication. They are consistent in their responses and expectations and, as a result, children

respond positively, showing kindness to one another and taking pride in waiting their turn.

- Independence is promoted throughout the day. Children chop fruit, pour drinks and take part in simple safety checks in the garden. These opportunities give them confidence and help them develop a positive sense of responsibility.
- Nutrition and healthy lifestyles are a clear priority. Staff talk with parents about healthy lunch boxes, share helpful suggestions and gently encourage the use of open cups. Children are learning about healthier food choices and have ample opportunity to be physically active. For example, children enjoy climbing, sliding and balancing on equipment in the garden.
- Partnerships with parents are a strength. Parents feel involved in their child's learning and value the support offered. They speak highly of staff and the care their children receive. Parents comment on how their children settled into nursery quickly and the calm way staff communicate with children. The nursery offers home-learning bags, guidance on healthy eating and help with forms or referrals. This extra support makes a real difference to families and helps ensure children thrive, both at home and in the nursery.
- Leaders evaluate the nursery with honesty and care. They have ambitious plans to continue developing the setting. Supervision systems, however, are not yet consistent, this means staff do not all have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice and receive targeted support to build on their already good practice.

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:

- enhance the programme of supervision and coaching for all staff to build on their knowledge and further develop the quality of teaching to a consistently high level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY560835
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10407721
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 3
Total number of places	51
Number of children on roll	68
Name of registered person	YMCA Trinity Group
Registered person unique reference number	RP560833
Telephone number	01502 561701
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2020

Information about this early years setting

YMCA Childcare Water Lane registered in 2018. The nursery employs 22 members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above. One member of staff holds early years professional status. The nursery opens Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm, during term time only. Funded early education is provided for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Suzie Squirrell-Hughes

Inspection activities

- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The deputy manager, manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- Staff spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- 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 inspector, deputy manager and the manager carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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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