

# Appletree Corner Daycare & Pre-School

Unique reference number (URN): EY486476

Address: Caraway Drive, Witham St. Hughs, LINCOLN, LN6 9XG

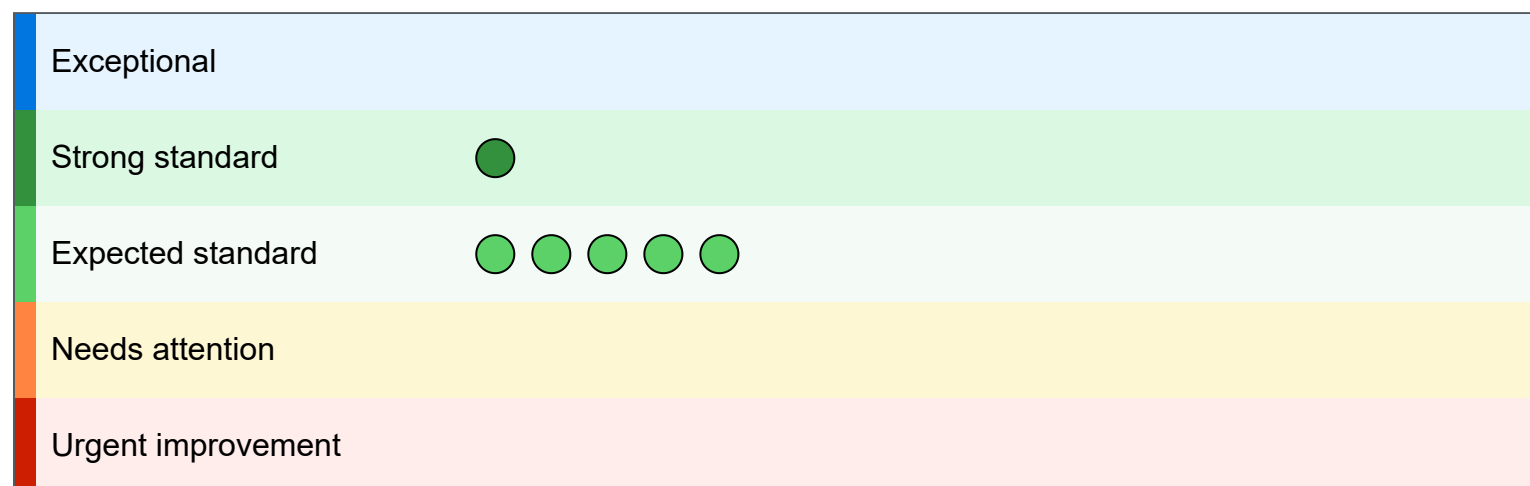
Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 31/03/2015

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Appletree Corner Daycare & Pre-School

## Inspection report: 10 February 2026



### **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, children are made safer and feel safe.

### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect settings for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The setting has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The setting has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Strong standard ●

### Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff have established a clear culture of inclusion, where every child's needs are recognised and acted upon. Staff are well trained to implement the graduated approach of assessing and reviewing children's development. They use the information gained from observations and tracking to identify children's progression and emerging developmental needs. When children need additional support, leaders make swift referrals to external health and education professionals to ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to meet the needs of individual children. This partnership working helps staff to provide high levels of support to children. This ensures that all children continue to make progress. Leaders and staff work closely with families to ensure that parents and carers have the support they need. This includes disadvantaged children and children known or previously known to children's social care. Staff signpost parents to professionals that can offer them practical advice and strategies to use at home, in addition to the advice and support offered by staff and leaders at the setting.

Early years pupil premium funding and inclusion funding is strategically used to support the individual children who receive it. Leaders and staff work with parents to identify resources and equipment that can be purchased to aid the child's specific development needs. Leaders monitor the impact of funding carefully, ensuring that the use of the purchased resources and equipment is having a positive effect on children's developmental progress.

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## Expected standard ●

### Achievement

Expected standard ●

All children are making progress in their development. This includes disadvantaged children and those known to or previously known to children's social care. They are developing the skills that they need in order to become appropriately independent in their self-care, communicate and develop relationships with their peers. Children hold conversations with adults and other children. They are learning to listen to others as they talk. Children enjoy looking at books independently and listen to stories being read. Older children are able to talk about the characters and events in the stories. They make choices about the nursery rhymes they want to sing as a group and actively join in singing sessions.

Younger children are learning to put on their own shoes and coats. Older children confidently count and can match objects to numbers. Staff use a range of strategies, such as visual timetables, objects of reference and Makaton signs, to support the communication of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps children with SEND to follow instructions, join in with activities and understand what is happening next. While children make secure progress, overall, transitions between activities for younger children are not yet consistently smooth, which means their experience throughout the day is not yet consistently positive.

## **Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines**

Expected standard 

Overall, children are well prepared for a change in routine. They are learning that when the bell rings they have 5 more minutes of play time. However, staff working with younger children do not consistently support children during changes in routines. For example, not all staff help or encourage children to tidy up. This leads to some children being confused about what is expected of them.

Staff promote children's friendships. They support children to play alongside each other and learn to share and take turns with toys. They praise children for being kind to each other. Staff are consistent with the boundaries for behaviour. They help children think about why there are rules in place, explaining that they should only ride wheeled toys around the track provided so that they do not accidentally knock over and hurt their friends. Staff use a range of strategies to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities to express their emotions, such as visual aids that represent different facial expressions and mirrors that children can see their own face in. This helps children to recognise the expression on their own face when they are sad or happy.

Leaders share their expectations for children's attendance with parents and carers. They put strategies in place quickly when they identify that there are issues with attendance. This helps ensure that all children can access the early education that they are entitled to.

## **Children's welfare and wellbeing**

Expected standard 

Staff have warm and affectionate bonds with the children that they care for. Children are happy and settled at the nursery. Staff working with babies are responsive to their needs and recognise when babies are hungry, tired or need support and comfort. They talk softly to them as they cuddle and rock them to give them the reassurance that they need. Older children are beginning to understand and express their emotions. Staff help them name how they are feeling in a kind and sensitive way.

Children are provided with freshly prepared healthy meals and snacks. Good attention is paid by staff to ensure that children's individual dietary requirements are met. They complete handover checks with catering staff before meals are served.

Overall, staff support all children to be independent in their self-care. This includes disadvantaged children and those known to or previously known to children's social care. Staff encourage babies to use flannels to wash their hands before eating and to use spoons to feed themselves. They remind toddlers to wash their hands at the sink and support them to use a spoon and fork to eat. Pre-school children are encouraged to fill jugs with water and pour their own drinks. Staff supervise children closely as they eat. They ensure that children are using their knife and fork correctly to chop up their own food before putting it in their mouths. When offering children food, staff encourage them to use good manners, they remind children to say or use the Makaton signs for please and thank you. However, leaders recognise that on some occasions, routines do not run smoothly for younger children and they are working to further develop staff practice in this area.

## Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders design a curriculum that focuses on children learning the skills that they need for later life. The curriculum builds progressively on what children know and can do. As children move through the nursery, the books, stories and nursery rhymes they access become more complex. Babies enjoy sharing picture books with staff. Toddlers enjoy listening to stories that have repetitive lines and phrases. Pre-school children listen to stories that have detailed story lines, and staff encourage them to recall the event in the story. This helps extend children's language and vocabulary. While the curriculum is well designed and progressively sequenced, the inconsistency in transitions for younger children and the need to further develop staff practice means that the quality of teaching is not yet consistently high enough.

Staff use information gained from assessments of children well. They understand how individual children learn and the next steps of all of the children in their care. There is an inclusive approach to supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged children and children known or previously known to children's social care. Staff actively engage with children during play and adapt and tailor the support given to children to meet their individual needs. At welcome time, staff encourage pre-school children to vote for the language they want to sing the welcome song in. They support children to count and keep a tally of the votes and work out which language has the least and most votes. Children are learning to respect the choices of their peers. When singing, staff use Makaton signs so that all children can join in and be included.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of staff. Staff report that they are happy in their work and feel well supported. They have annual appraisals and regular feedback on their practice. They are encouraged to take part in professional development opportunities. However, targets set for staff development are not always precise enough to strengthen and develop the practice of individual staff further.

Overall, leaders are passionate about ensuring that the setting provides the best possible opportunities for all of the children that attend. They regularly reflect on the service provided and use self-evaluation accurately to identify strengths and opportunities to develop the service offered. Since the last inspection, leaders have worked with local authority advisors to address the actions raised. They have ensured that all staff understand how to work within the setting's medication procedure and that staff can accurately assess children's development and set appropriate next steps for them.

Leaders have developed highly effective partnerships with parents and other professionals that help to ensure that decisions about children's development and care needs are made in the best interest of the child. This helps to support all children's consistent progress and development, including disadvantaged children, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to or previously known to children's social care.

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## What it's like to be a child at this setting

Staff establish warm and trusting relationships with the children that they care for. They work closely with parents and carers to gather information about children's health and care needs. This helps staff understand how to support children while at the setting and promotes children's security and wellbeing. Parents and carers say that their children really enjoy attending the nursery.

Staff teach children how to keep themselves safe and the importance of healthy lifestyles. They supervise children closely as they take part in physical activities and play outside in the fresh air. Children are developing their physical skills as they run, balance, dig using spades and ride wheeled toys. Staff carefully explain to children why they need to be careful not to throw the soil they are digging around as it could get into someone's eyes. They help children understand how to safely empty the soil from their spade. Children demonstrate pride in their own achievements. For example, older children spend time solving problems, such as how to join 2 tricycles together so that they can offer a 'lift' to a friend. Toddlers are eager to show staff that they have successfully put on their own wellington boots without help. Staff provide children with praise for their efforts and achievements. Children develop their confidence to try new things.

Inclusion is a key strength of the nursery. Any barriers to children's learning are quickly identified by staff and discussed with parents. Leaders swiftly refer concerns to other relevant professionals so that the support that children need can be put into place quickly. This includes providing support for children who speak English as an additional language. Staff work in partnership with parents to understand the words children use at home. Older children welcome their friends and say 'hello' using their friend's home language. This supports all children to learn about the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should guide and support staff working with the younger children to ensure that transitions between activities are smooth and consistently implemented.
  - Leaders should enhance the support for staff to continually refine and develop their practice, skills and knowledge.
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## About this inspection

The inspector spoke with the leaders, staff and children during the inspection.

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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### Inspector:

Teresa Lester

## About this setting

**Unique reference number (URN):** EY486476

### Address:

Caraway Drive  
Witham St. Hughs  
LINCOLN  
LN6 9XG

**Type:** Childcare on non-domestic premises

**Registration date:** 31/03/2015

**Registered person:** Appletree Corner Daycare & Pre-School

**Register(s):** EYR

**Operating hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 07:30 - 18:00

**Local authority:** Lincolnshire

## Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 10 February 2026

## Children numbers

## Age range of children at the time of inspection

0 to 4

## Total number of places

109

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## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other settings can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The setting reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The setting is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The setting needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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