

The Squirrels, Canterbury

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Mary Van De Peer

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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*.

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Description of the setting

The Squirrels, Canterbury Pre-School opened in 2008 and operates from a classroom located in the grounds of St Stephens Infant School, Canterbury. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 47 children in the Early Years age group on roll. The pre-school is open each weekday from 9.00 am to 2:50 pm in term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs eight members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification. They receive support from the local authority. The provision is on the Early Years Register only.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The provision is very effective in ensuring the needs of the children attending in the Early Years age group are met. The systems in place enable each child to progress and achieve their potential in a welcoming, secure and stimulating environment. Children play happily within safe boundaries and enjoy the interaction with adults and each other. The practitioners work very well together. They have established excellent, strong partnerships with parents, carers and other organisations involved with the children they care for. The provision has a good capacity for maintaining continuous improvement, which is evident in some areas of exceptional practice. This results in positive, quality outcomes for all children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- continue to review the written policies and procedures, for example, medication administration, child protection and staff recruitment, to ensure they are kept up to date with the current processes being practised within the setting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's welfare and safety are safeguarded through effective procedures that are in place. For example, clear and well recorded risk assessments are carried out on the premises, toys, equipment and all planned outings, minimising risks to children. The staff have been a stable and successful element at this pre-school nursery. Several practitioners have attended recent Safeguarding Children training and are aware of what they need to do if they have concerns about any child in

their care. All record keeping systems are monitored regularly, although some of the written policies and procedures require updating to ensure they match the practices being observed within the setting.

Outstanding partnerships have been established with parents and carers. Information is shared in a variety of different ways, and parents are actively involved in all aspects of their children's learning and development. Every child has a 'Learning Journal' which is very well presented. It contains photographs of the children learning through their play at pre-school and of their families; some are even taken by the children themselves. Observations and descriptions of what the children are doing and saying are recorded and kept where children can freely look at them, as can their parents. The provision also works closely with outside agencies and local authority services, advisors and specialist teams to help support all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Strong links with the adjoining infant school are also maintained, which results in highly effective transitions for children into reception classes. Continuity and consistency in children's care is assured.

Good attention has been given to devise effective methods for self-evaluation. These also include the views and input of the management committee, practitioners, outside professionals and parents. Children are also involved in the process, for example, by saying what their favourite toys are and where they would like them to be kept. Overall, the self-evaluation process is able to continually identify the strengths of the provision and any areas for development, to promote the desired and expected outcomes for children.

Equality and diversity is evident throughout all areas of the provision. The needs of each child are assessed and the required support is given. Individual children's play plans are very clear and show the areas of development needing extra work and help. This means every child is continuously encouraged to reach their full potential. There is a wide range of toys and resources including many positive images of diversity, helping children to learn about the differences between people in today's society.

The practitioners work extremely well together and strategies in the use of reflective practice are part of the daily routine. All staff are either qualified or on current child-care training courses. Practitioners' personal development is a clear priority for management, which means children benefit from being cared for by suitably vetted, trained and experienced adults. Clear security measures are in place and all visitors' details are recorded. Children's well-being and safety is promoted at all times.

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

The setting provides a warm and caring environment for children. They are happy, settled and clearly feel safe with practitioners who support their needs well. The setting is well organised and there is a wide range of stimulating activities and toys available throughout the sessions. When children arrive they self-register by

finding their own names printed on cards and placing them in a box. Most of the resources are kept in labelled storage and these practices, amongst others, help develop children's early literacy skills. Free-flow play between indoors and outside provides plenty of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills.

The children's 'Learning Journals' contain a variety of photographs, which stimulate conversations between children and adults and about their home experiences. Practitioners spend time engaging children in meaningful interaction, extending their speech and language skills. Signing is also used, enabling children, whose first language is not English, to begin to communicate with others. This also helps to ensure their inclusion in the setting. A computer and other programmable toys help children develop essential problem-solving skills, to communicate. Children can explore numbers and shapes through various activities. For instance, memory games, construction and at snack time, when they discuss how many pieces of fruit there are and the different colours and textures. A comfortable, spacious book area is used continuously by the children. They enjoy selecting books and looking at them, discussing the pictures with each other or an adult. Practitioners read stories out loud, when children indicate they want them to. They involve them in the story and encourage discussions and learn about their level of understanding. Role play and small world resources enable children to re-create real life through their imaginative play. A couple of children wanted to know who was the tallest one out of them. A practitioner finds a roll of paper and lays it on the floor, the girls lay down one by one and a mark is made showing their comparison height. Other children join in and words such as 'taller' and 'shortest' are used in the right context.

The outdoor area is a wonderful place for children to run about and investigate. Children are really happy being outside in the fresh air. There are trees and small huts where children can create their choice of activity and develop their own play opportunities; either on their own or with others. Wheelbarrows and brooms allow children to undertake simple gardening tasks, such as sweeping the leaves and transporting them elsewhere in the garden. A covered area provides children with shade and shelter all year round. High string lines suspend old compact discs, which cast moving reflections of the sun and some of the children enjoy chasing these around. The practitioner asks them what makes the reflection and they answer quickly 'the sun', and point up to the sky. The children are beginning to learn about nature and what occurs at different times of year.

The good health and well-being of the children is promoted appropriately. They are actively involved in preparing their own snacks and help themselves to drinks. Parents are also encouraged to include healthy foods in their children's lunch boxes. Most children are able to wash their hands independently and know to use soap and rinse and dry their hands properly. Children are learning about keeping themselves and others safe, for instance, by practising the emergency evacuation procedure regularly. Projects such as road safety are also built into the planning.

The observations and assessments undertaken by practitioners are effective in monitoring children's progress from the time they start at the setting, to when they leave. These are clear in showing children's achievements and how they are moving forward in their learning. The planning involves all the different areas of

learning and is influenced by each child's next steps and learning priorities. Overall, the opportunities provided at the setting help children make good progress and develop the essential skills needed for their future learning and development.

The practitioners are good, effective role models. They praise children frequently for their individual achievements and good behaviour. Respect for others is encouraged and children are learning to share and take turns. Adults in the provision show respect for all the children, listening and talking with them and responding with enthusiasm. This means children feel valued and helps continue the promotion of their confidence and self-esteem.

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

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
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	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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