

Squirrels Corner Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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

Squirrels Corner Pre-school opened in 1991 and operates from Moorlands Community Centre in the West End of Southampton. The pre-school operates from one room and there is a secure outdoor play area.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 26 children aged from two years at any one time. There are currently 43 children on roll. The pre-school receives funding for children aged two, three and four years. Children attend from the local community and surrounding areas. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language. The pre-school is open each weekday from 9:15am until 3.30pm.

The pre-school employs five members of staff, of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards early years professional status. The setting receives support from a mentor teacher from the local authority and they are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children flourish in the happy and relaxed atmosphere where they become well-motivated and independent learners who make good progress in their learning. They benefit from the dedication and commitment of the staff team who are keen to maintain good quality practice and secure continual improvement through rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems. Children's health, safety and welfare are generally very well-supported, although, there are some occasions when routines and procedures are not as effectively managed. Strong partnerships with parents and others contribute towards children feeling confident and secure in the well-resourced, safe and exciting environment offered.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- further develop the arrangements for identifying children's starting points and next steps in all areas of learning and incorporate them into the planning alongside tracking the activities children are involved to ensure progression is monitored in all aspects
- review the organisation and deployment of staff at lunch time and children's arrival to ensure all children are engaged and effectively supported.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The safety and security of the premises, as well as robust recruitment and employment procedures, ensures children are safe and protected from harm. Staff and management have a suitable understanding of child protection issues and know what to do if they have concerns about a child in their care. Written policies and procedures are in place and contain the required information; however, they are not tailored to individuality of the group and limited detail in some means they do not always provide clear steps for staff to follow. All the required records are in place to provide staff with the information they need to assist them in meeting children's individual health and welfare needs. Generally the pre-school is extremely well-organised and a high ratio of staff is consistently maintained, although routines at lunch time and sometimes when children arrive are not as effectively planned which results in children not being as well-supported.

The pre-school is committed towards continual improvement through rigorous evaluation processes which engage the views of parents, staff and children, as well as, feedback from local authority advisors. Areas for further development are highlighted and action taken to address. Recommendations raised at the last inspection have all been met and staff undertake further training to extend their skills. As a result, outcomes for children are continually improving. The premises are colourful and bright and there is an extensive range of easily accessible resources available. They are used imaginatively to provide children with an exciting variety of activities and experiences indoors and outdoors. Resources and activities are used well to raise children's awareness of diversity and promote respect and understanding of others. Staff know children well which enables them to effectively support their learning and development in all areas. Good systems are in place for liaising with parents and other professionals in order to ensure individual needs are comprehensively met and transitions to school are supported.

Partnerships with parents are very positive. They are well-informed about the pre-school and the care and learning their child receives through a varied range of verbal and written communications. Parents appreciate the friendliness and approachability of staff and value the opportunities to talk to their child's key person and view their progress records. They comment on how happy and settled their children are, although some are less clear about the next steps staff are focussing on to extend their learning. A range of additional information regarding children's health, activities at the local children's centre and information about local schools extend the support the pre-school offers.

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

Children enjoy an exciting range of activities at the pre-school. The layout of the indoor and outdoor environments is carefully planned to support learning in all areas. For example, books, writing tools, number activities and construction kits

are routinely set up outdoors alongside equipment to extend physical skills. Children benefit from being able to move freely between each area. They have excellent opportunities to develop independence and increasing skill in choosing and selecting resources for themselves, as well as, directing their own learning. Staff use their good knowledge of their key children and observations of their achievements to effectively plan their individual progression in key areas. However, they have not fully developed a consistent system for making a formal assessment of what children can do when they first attend, identifying next steps in each area of learning and tracking the activities they are involved in to ensure progression is monitored in all aspects. Staff notice what children enjoy and incorporate their ideas into the activities offered. For example, additional materials are set out in the creative area, alongside a wide range of art and craft resources to further extend children's interest in folding and making shapes with paper. Likewise, the climbing frame is set up indoors following a child's request earlier in the week. Children are eager to explore it and develop their physical skills for climbing, sliding and crawling. Most understand the rules they need to follow and remind others that they need to line up and take turns. Staff are vigilant in supervising its use and additional staff assist in order to ensure children's safety when it is busy. However, this does mean that when it is set up at the beginning of a session there are times when staff are less able to focus on helping children to settle when they first arrive. Most children arrive confidently, quickly choose what they want to do and become engrossed in their play.

Children enjoy plenty of fresh air and exercise whatever the weather. They wrap up warmly when it is cold and become absorbed in examining the ice which has formed in the sink of the play kitchen. They scrape the frost from the safety mat at the bottom of the slide and collect it in a cup. Staff make good use of these natural opportunities to extend children's knowledge and understanding through effective questioning as they talk about why the ice has formed and why it melts. Staff are fully involved in children's play and learning, while being mindful of giving them space to explore, investigate and practise their skills independently. A group of children arrange the chairs around the book corner to create their own area for dressing-up and dancing. They learn how to use different equipment so they can turn the music player on and off and adjust the volume. Pre-reading and writing skills are promoted as children are encouraged to find their name when they arrive and become familiar with words and numbers displayed around their room. They enjoy helping to turn the pages of the book at story time and joining in with songs and action rhymes. Children's home language is valued and examples of different words are displayed around the room. Children explore volume and capacity when playing with the sand and water and they are introduced to measuring when making playdoh, although sometimes opportunities are missed to fully extend. A variety of festivals and celebrations are covered throughout the year to broaden children's awareness of the diversity of the world around them.

Children demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating when choosing from the excellent variety of foods available at snack time. They serve themselves soup, butter their own toast and tidy away afterwards. There is a break between the morning and afternoon sessions and some children stay for lunch. However, this is not as efficiently organised as snack time because staff do not always sit with the children or prepare activities in readiness for when they

have finished. Children are generally encouraged to develop good hygiene habits including cleaning their teeth after their lunch. Safety is given a strong emphasis. Children learn about using tools and equipment safely and are given clear explanations so they begin to understand why they need to tidy toys away. They feel secure and develop a strong sense of belonging to the setting. Staff are particularly effective in supporting individual children to understand what is expected of them. Extremely positive relationships are developed with staff and children benefit from the frequent praise and encouragement they receive which boosts 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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	3
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

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	2
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	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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