

Little Explorers

St. Anne's School Church Hall, Lynton Avenue Weeping Cross, Stafford, Staffs, ST17 0EA

Inspection date	11/11/2013
Previous inspection date	27/09/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	3
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Children settle quickly at this setting and develop secure relationships with all staff. This supports their emotional well-being.
- There are a suitable range of resources indoors and outdoors that enable children to make choices in their play and most aspects of their learning.
- Staff are friendly and supportive, which enables children and parents to build positive relationships with them. This joined-up approach helps promote continuity in children's care.

It is not yet good because

- Systems to monitor all staff practice are not fully in place, which leads to weaknesses and variability in the quality of teaching.
- Systems for observing children are not implemented frequently enough. This means that children's changing interests and next steps in their learning are not always planned for to ensure that all activities precisely match their needs.
- Not all staff provide children with appropriate levels of challenge during activities in order to help children make better than satisfactory progress. This means that activities do not always promote children's critical thinking and problem solving.
- Self-evaluation lacks rigour. It does not take into account the views of parents in order to clearly identify areas for further improvement which will benefit children the most.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities taking place within the main playroom.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents and written feedback from parents.
- The inspector looked at children's learning records and policies written for the setting.

Inspector

Vicky Orlando

Full report

Information about the setting

Little Explorers opened in 2002 and is on the Early Years Register. It operates from St Annes Church Hall in Weeping Cross, Stafford. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area. The setting serves children from the local and surrounding areas.

The setting opens each weekday from 9am to 3pm during the school term. Children are able to attend for sessions or on a full-time basis. There are currently 30 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age group. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early years education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. It supports children with English as an additional language.

Six members of staff work with the children. Of these, four hold appropriate qualifications at level 3, one holds level 2 and one is working towards level 3.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- complete regular and precise observations so that planning takes into account children's changing interests and gives clear, challenging next steps for learning
- ensure that good quality teaching is consistently delivered through activities with sufficient challenge so that children make good progress and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- develop a thorough approach to self-evaluation and include the views of parents to clearly identify areas for further improvement
- monitor all staff's practice, their ongoing training needs and how information received at training is shared with others, to ensure children benefit from consistently good quality teaching and therefore make good progress.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have an adequate knowledge of the learning and development requirements, and this is used to provide a variety of activities inside and outdoors. Children enjoy playing in the dark tent with twinkling coloured lights on the ceiling. They play with a rocket while a member of staff encourages words linked with space. This is a useful resource when it is used effectively. Children enjoy playing on the construction table which is resourced with a variety of shapes and animals for them to practise their skills at construction. There is large physical play equipment, such as a wooden slide and plastic stepping stones, for the children to develop climbing and balancing skills. The children enjoy cutting and sticking activities, and young children are guided in developing cutting skills. Activities are changed in the afternoon and they enjoy playing with the 'hairstylist' tools and resources. This encourages the older children to take part in role play and join in conversations, pretending to be customers. Children are developing their vocabulary and clarifying ideas and events. A school corner is provided, with a small desk and chair and an easel, although there are few tools provided that extend children's interests and learning.

Children make progress through a suitable range of activities and experiences across all areas of learning. Staff know the children well and play alongside them. Children enjoy their time at the setting and are engaged in activities. They approach all members of staff in the playroom and value their involvement in activities. Staff understand how to promote the development of children. However at times, some activities lack challenge. For example, not all staff skilfully question children to promote their critical thinking skills or allow them to problem solve. Routine assessments are made and these can be seen in children's learning files, but information gained does not lead to clear identification of children's next steps in their learning. This means that challenging activities are not always being planned and opportunities to re-shape tasks to improve learning are being missed. Progress checks at age two are implemented by the manager and clearly identify children's development. The setting benefits children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some children under referral by multi-agencies have made significant progress in a short space of time. Parental feedback is positive and suggests their children have developed well, for example, in acquiring language skills.

Children's starting points at the setting are clearly defined, but children's next steps in their learning are not always thorough or tailored to their interests. Children are gaining a satisfactory range of skills required for when they start school. Parents are welcomed at all times into the setting. They are encouraged to provide information to add to the 'magic moments' display in the main playroom and they contribute to children's initial assessment. Some opportunities are missed to regularly gain the views of parents regarding children's changing interests. This means that planning is not always taking this into account and next steps are not always carefully planned. The key person system in place supports children new to the setting. The strength of this setting is that children feel secure and safe with all members of staff. For example, two new starters approach staff with ease and enjoy their first day. They both take part in making a poppy for Remembrance Day and delight in showing this to parents on collection. Children are engaged and interested in the outdoor area, with a variety of interesting activities available that the children enjoy experimenting with. For example, the 'bug hotel' provides opportunity for discovery and is equipped with a variety of objects and parts to explore.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

A key person system is in place at this setting, which is a strength and enables children to feel happy and secure with all staff. Staff offer settling-in sessions to new children if parents feel this is necessary. Staff complete 'all about me' documentation with parents to ensure that information is in place to support the child's care. This means that staff can plan for children's individual needs from the outset. The setting operates mainly from one large room and the children happily approach all staff. Staff are deployed well within the room and the manager monitors staff when it is time to change activities or break for snack time. The setting offers a calm atmosphere for children and, as a result, behaviour of children is positive. Occasionally, some children become noisy, for example, when playing in the dark tent, but some staff are vigilant in monitoring children's safety and give reminders to children about keeping safe. The playroom is safe and adequately resourced. Main entrances are kept locked at all times and children are supervised when they need to attend to their own personal care needs. As a result, children are beginning to gain a sense of personal safety, but when needed, guidance is given. Toddlers are learning how to keep themselves safe through activities, such as cutting, where they learn how to use scissors correctly.

There is a balance of healthy snacks that the children eat together with the staff, and some opportunities are used to discuss why these are healthy. Young children are gaining awareness of their personal needs and approach staff to ask for a clean nappy. Older children are managing their own personal needs. Children here are learning to play cooperatively from an early age as staff encourage them to share and take turns. Children are confident, friendly, well mannered and motivated for most of the time.

The environment is welcoming and the large room is resourced with a suitable variety of activities. Staff move equipment around the room and use a rota each week to ensure the children have an ongoing variety of opportunities to explore. This makes sure children are playing with, and have access to, all resources and stimulate their interest. The setting has established positive links with local schools and offers visits to and from the school. Themed activities are planned in the term before children leave to introduce aspects of school life so as to help emotionally prepare children for the move. The setting supports children in learning to dress themselves in uniform and respond to bells at lunchtimes. The setting is sensitive towards those who are anxious about the transition to school and they address children's emotional needs to ensure readiness.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager has a reasonably sound understanding of her responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are well safeguarded as all staff are aware of procedures and dealing with child protection concerns. The management ensures that the premises are secure and that all staff and visitors sign in and out of the building. A range of policies and procedures are in place, and documentation and records are completed to ensure children's health and safety needs are met. Staff take responsibility for equipment by completing a risk assessment

each day. Staff are required to store all resources daily as the premises are also used as an after school club. The monitoring of equipment is ongoing, to ensure that it remains safe and fit for purpose.

Children are provided with an inclusive environment as they enjoy learning about celebrations and cultures, which at times involves the help of parents. Staff are supported in their roles through yearly staff appraisals and they can request training to enhance their professional development. However, training needs are not always met for financial reasons. Furthermore, when staff do attend training, the information they receive is not always fully disseminated to all staff. This is because meetings with all members of staff are not frequent enough to enable the consistent sharing of information and good practice. This leads to a variability in the quality of teaching, which impacts on children being able to make best progress. The management ensures that staff are appropriately qualified and has carried out the relevant checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Recruitment and vetting procedures comply with statutory requirements. The manager has some awareness of the setting's strengths and weaknesses and areas in need of further development. The self-evaluation process is in place, but it is not yet robust to ensure clear improvement is planned. Parents' views, for example, about their children's changing interests, are not gained, in order to tailor planning for individual children. Despite previous recommendations at the last inspection, there has been only some development in improving planning for children's learning and making better use of information gained from the observations made of children's learning. The manager oversees the educational programmes set by staff. However, monitoring of assessments of children's development is not yet providing a broad overview of each child's progress. This means that not all staff are well equipped to develop the service and improve the quality of care and learning for all children. Arrangements and monitoring are in place to identify individual children's needs, and the setting has worked successfully with other agencies to meet needs and ensure the progress of these children.

Partnerships with parents are generally positive. The key person system means that parents know who to approach and information is shared at pick-up times. Parents speak favourably about the setting and are happy with the progress their children are making.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY232713
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	877427
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	48
Number of children on roll	30
Name of provider	St. Anne's Club Committee
Date of previous inspection	27/09/2011
Telephone number	07810847672

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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