

The Learning Zone

Symonds Green Community Centre, Filey Close, STEVENAGE, Hertfordshire, SG1 2JW



Inspection date

19 January 2016

Previous inspection date

14 July 2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding	1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Outstanding	1
Outcomes for children		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- The well-qualified staff have an astute understanding of how children learn and accurately assess their development. This helps them to provide a range of highly stimulating experiences that meet children's individual needs and offer levels of challenge that inspire them to learn.
- Leadership is exceptionally strong. The managers and staff team are committed to continuous improvement. They review and critically evaluate their practice each day. Their self-evaluation includes a wealth of highly effective methods used to obtain the views of parents and children which make a significant contribution to ongoing improvement.
- Staff develop remarkably strong partnerships with parents. They implement a wealth of ideas to support a shared approach towards children's care. Staff provide resource packs and ideas for parents which help to extend children's learning at home. All achievements made at home and current interests and events are included in the planned learning for each child.
- Children play a key role in their day. They eagerly take on roles and responsibilities, carrying them out happily. Staff invite children to vote on activities and respect their decisions when planning. Children develop excellent self-esteem, are very self-assured and eager to learn.
- Staff work in a commendable manner with all other professionals who support children or provide medical assistance. They share exceptionally detailed information and carefully follow any guidance provided. Their meticulous attention to working with supportive agencies ensures that disabled children and those with special educational needs make rapid progress in their learning.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- build further on the excellent opportunities provided for children to continue making rapid progress, challenging those children achieving the highest levels of progress even further.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector completed a joint observation with the co-manager and discussed their findings.
- The inspector held a meeting with the co-managers and the registered person. She looked at relevant documentation, such as the provision's self-evaluation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the provision. The inspector also reviewed the provision's policies, including safeguarding, and evidence of performance management for staff.
- The inspector spoke to a broad selection of parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector reviewed the provision's webpage.

Inspector

Lynne Talbot

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The managers and staff make sure that child protection is given high priority in all areas of practice. They work extremely well together and continuously review their policies and practice. Managers carry out an insightful programme of performance management which contributes significantly towards the exceptionally strong quality of staff practice and professionalism. Recruitment and induction are particularly strong. New staff are supported extremely effectively with detailed mentor arrangements. A meticulous probation programme for new staff ensures that the high quality of staff practice continues. Staff are committed to their own development and attend training frequently. They have broadened their knowledge considerably in several areas. For example, training for developing science in the early years has helped to enhance children's use of materials and the world around them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Staff demonstrate an exceptionally high quality of teaching. They complete astute reviews of children's progress that enable them to efficiently highlight any weaker areas in their learning. Staff then act extremely swiftly to introduce activities that successfully support children's learning and so close any gaps. Staff provide activities and materials for children to investigate which significantly enhances their eagerness to learn. Staff provide real flowers and plants which children draw, measure and take apart to explore more closely. There are stimulating ways for children to explore practical mathematics throughout the setting. Children make charts and use them to record each other's height. Children write confidently. They make maps and use graph paper to design buildings in the construction area outdoors. Staff share in children's imaginative ideas and share elaborate games, such as in the hospital tent. Staff offer excellent opportunities for children to make rapid progress. They have identified that there is further scope to continue challenging those children achieving the highest levels of progress even further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Staff make excellent use of the environment. Rich, varied and imaginative experiences are on offer for children both indoors and outdoors. Staff balance adult-led activities with free play and children have time to think and explore at their own pace. Staff are outstanding role models. Children behave exceptionally well, creating a vibrant and happy atmosphere for all. Staff provide daily opportunities for children to express how they are feeling and to review the simple rules that they all follow. Children love to show others the reward certificates they receive and embrace teamwork opportunities. Children rapidly extend their good understanding of personal hygiene. For example, all children, including the very youngest, independently wash and dry their hands.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

All children, including those who speak English as an additional language, disabled children and those with special educational needs, make rapid progress in their learning. They are exceptionally well prepared for school.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY403600
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	850519
Type of provision	Sessional provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	1 - 4
Total number of places	52
Number of children on roll	90
Name of provider	Sharon Wood
Date of previous inspection	14 July 2010
Telephone number	07747 411 137

The Learning Zone was registered in 2009. The provision employs 14 members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and seven hold early years qualifications at level 3. One member of staff holds an appropriate qualification at level 6. The provision opens Monday to Friday in term-time only. Sessions are from 9.20am until 2.20pm with an optional lunch club. The provision provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. They also provide care for disabled children and those with special educational needs. The provision cares for children who speak English as an additional language.

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