

Inspection of Southdown Methodist Pre-School

Southdown Methodist Church Halls, 130a Southdown Road, HARPENDEN,
Hertfordshire AL5 1PU

Inspection date: 5 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

The setting is like an Aladdin's cave full of exciting opportunities across all areas of learning. Young children flourish because they are happy, safe and secure. They find their enticing learning environment irresistible to explore. They choose confidently from a wide range of exciting and easily accessible activities. For example, they fill bottlenecked containers with rainbow-coloured rice to make shakers. They gleefully drip glue onto paper before applying different-textured materials to make unique pieces of artwork.

Children thoroughly enjoy the spacious hall, where staff enthusiastically join in play. Staff make an obstacle course to help children learn to use tricycles safely. Children compete to see who can make the most dots with felt-tip pens on a cardboard surface. They have fun sending balls down chutes and pipes. Children work out themselves how to retrieve balls that get stuck. Staff know when to stand back and let children find solutions, or when to offer support. Nothing happens by chance. Every step in children's learning is thought through.

Children get actively involved in stories. They explore emotions, reactions and consequences, for example in 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. Children gain word knowledge by repeating rhymes and putting actions to words. They soon learn key phrases such as 'Who's been eating my porridge?' off by heart. Children behave superbly. Staff are excellent role models. They help children to share and take turns using the climbing frame and slide. One staff member joins a child and models caring for a baby doll kindly and patiently.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The management team and committee work closely together in a highly effective partnership. Since the previous inspection, they have successfully managed the potentially challenging introduction of two-year-old children into the setting. Managers ensure that staff are given professional and emotional support in all aspects of their work.
- Staff are highly motivated and committed to giving children an exceptionally good experience. They meticulously plan a range of inspirational activities and are alert to adjust plans to meet children's individual needs and interests. They constantly evaluate activities and make improvements. Staff recently reduced group sizes for story sessions to help them respond more quickly to children's learning needs and evaluate children's progress more closely.
- Staff have a wide range of techniques to develop children's reading and language skills. Language development is excellent. Children confidently speak about items they bring from home in 'show and tell' sessions. Even the very youngest children are encouraged and helped to present their item. Staff

creatively link melodies, songs, rhymes or jingles to each item. All children listen attentively and join in with singing and actions.

- Staff skilfully prepare children for learning letters and sounds. For example, they suggest children rustle different paper at the 'creation station'. Children learn to listen carefully for the tiniest sounds. They later use the same skills to pick out the sounds that letters represent in words, for example in their own names.
- Following recent training, staff now integrate number, shape, space and measure into all areas of learning. They encourage children to test which vehicles can enter garages with various sizes of doors. Staff ask children to describe how high, wide or deep garages are and why vehicles can or cannot use them. Children count with staff during various activities and hold up the correct number of fingers without counting.
- Staff monitor children's development constantly and create precisely targeted plans to ensure all children make significant progress from their starting points. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. Children are very well prepared for nursery school.
- At the allotment, children plant, look after and harvest fresh produce to taste or cook. Small groups visit a zebra crossing and learn road safety. They are excited when police officers visit and let them sit in a police car. Children learn about life skills and the people who keep them safe in the community.
- Parents unanimously praise the excellent communication with their child's key person and all staff. They appreciate the informative website and the curriculum workshops at regular well-attended coffee mornings. They say they would not choose anywhere else for their children. Comments from parents and carers included 'a wonderfully supportive and nurturing environment instrumental to children's development'. This echoed all other comments. Parents and carers speak in the highest terms about this setting.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are extremely well trained and knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities relating to child protection issues and keeping children safe. They know and understand the signs of possible child abuse, neglect or being drawn into extreme behaviours or ideas. They have a clear understanding of how to report concerns about a child's safety. Robust vetting procedures and ongoing checks ensure staff are suitable to work with children. Staff receive a thorough induction on starting. The manager carries out detailed observations and supervisions to target training and ensure staff always know how well they are progressing towards well-defined goals. All activities and routines are risk assessed to ensure children are safe. For example, there are stringent assessments of the use of stairs.

Setting details

Unique reference number	123615
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10127312
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children	2 to 3
Total number of places	28
Number of children on roll	34
Name of registered person	Southdown Methodist Church
Registered person unique reference number	RP911361
Telephone number	07908121891
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2013

Information about this early years setting

Southdown Methodist Pre-School registered in 1992 and is located in a church hall in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. The pre-school opens on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, during school term times only. Sessions are from 9.10am to 12.10pm and a lunch club runs from 12.10pm to 1.10pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The pre-school employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and one holds an early years professional qualification.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Liz Kissane

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the main room and the hall, and conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- At appropriate times throughout the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the manager and spoke with staff and children.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation, including the setting's risk assessments and safety records.
- The inspector checked the evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working within the setting. She discussed the setting's self-evaluation.
- During the inspection, the inspector spoke to a selection of parents and looked at letters and reviews. She took account of their views.

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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