

# Inspection of Squirrels Pre-School

Highwoods Surgery, Highwoods Square, Highwoods, COLCHESTER CO4 9SR

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Inspection date: 21 January 2020

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

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is outstanding**

Children are highly settled and happy. They often sing to themselves as they play and work. Children talk animatedly with their friends. They laugh and actively share toys and divide up dough fairly. Children ask staff for help or extra resources, such as scissors, confidently. They demonstrate superb levels of engagement and concentration for their age. Children find creative solutions to bring their imaginative ideas to life. For instance, they use scissors to trim herb stalks to create trees which they plant in scented dough. Children are helpful. For instance, they spontaneously clear up spilt rice with a dustpan and brush.

Staff provide children with extensive opportunities to learn, practise skills and repeat learning experiences in a safe and caring environment. Children are highly motivated and demonstrate strong readiness for their next stage of education. They are eager to show off the things they know and can do. Children stage 'talent shows' for their friends where they sing nursery rhymes and television theme songs. They wait patiently for their turn and applaud their friends enthusiastically. Children are extremely independent. Staff encourage and promote their independence, as they have great expectations of what their children can achieve. Children find their named peg and put their coat on competently. They swap their shoes for boots and remember to check their bags for gloves and hats.

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

- The well-qualified and experienced staff have an excellent understanding of children and families. They work highly effectively with parents and other professionals to provide children, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with superb consistency and tailored support in their learning. This promotes children's rapid progress from their individual starting points.
- Children are eager to follow instructions from staff and proud to show their capabilities. For instance, when staff give children a 'maths mission' to match numerals and photographs, they excitedly participate with sustained focus.
- Staff lead inspirational 'change projects'. They use their own independent research to address particular areas by sharing and implementing new approaches and ideas with their colleagues. This has an extremely positive impact on children's experiences at the setting. Staff report that they feel valued and heard by the managers.
- Staff teach children about the importance of exercise and the impact it has on fitness and well-being. They lead children in boisterous games and encourage them to think about their own skills, such as 'running fast like a gecko'. Children talk about how being active makes their heart beat faster and how they feel 'warm' and 'strong'. They delight in working their muscles and practising their

balancing skills as they push wheelbarrows up and along plank bridges. Children work together to complete tasks. For example, they ask a friend to help them transport long planks across the garden safely.

- Parents praise the strong bonds their children have with staff, and the excitement they show on arrival at pre-school. They report that the 'absolutely amazing' staff strongly value their children as individuals and help their learning and social skills 'flourish'. Parents say that staff regularly share information about their children's development. Staff suggest ways for parents to support children's next steps in learning at home.
- The managers ensure they regularly and systematically monitor and review the progress of individual and groups of children. They use this detailed information alongside extensive reflection and discussion during staff briefings. Together, the managers and staff plan sharply focused support to ensure each child has learning tailored to their specific interests and needs. The managers also use this model to ensure additional funding is purposefully targeted to close gaps in learning and achieve the best possible outcomes for children.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary. They follow the rules of games exceptionally well for their age, such as a fast-moving, active game where they run and take 'just one' toy to quickly match to coloured mats. Children develop a superb understanding of colours and shapes. From a young age, children talk about the shapes they see in the environment, from dough cutters to blocks and the shapes in their own drawings.
- Staff use very specific praise to promote children's strong understanding of positive behaviours and to recognise their achievements. Staff are highly adaptable and responsive in their approach. They enable children to join in and engage at a level that is appropriate for them, taking into account their emotional state and readiness to try new activities. For instance, staff provide activities on a smaller scale for children who find large groups overwhelming.
- Children have excellent opportunities to learn about the wider world and community. For example, they are visited by the local fire service and by parents who read stories in their home language.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a thorough knowledge of the signs and symptoms that may indicate a child is at risk of harm. They have an excellent understanding of the procedures to report any concerns about the welfare of a child or the behaviour of an adult. Staff know the whistle-blowing policy and procedure for reporting allegations. The managers ensure that staff keep their knowledge up to date. Staff regularly attend training, access online refresher courses and have briefings during staff meetings. When appointing new staff, the centre manager follows robust recruitment processes to ensure that staff are suitable to take on their new role.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	203962
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10127318
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Full day care
<b>Age range of children</b>	2 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	26
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	48
<b>Name of registered person</b>	St John's & Highwoods Community Association
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP519143
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 853111
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 April 2015

## Information about this early years setting

Squirrels Pre-School registered in 2001. It employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions run from 9.15am to 3.15pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

**Inspector**  
Kate Oakley

## 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 curriculum manager took the inspector on a tour of the setting, community centre and grounds to explain how the early years provision and curriculum are organised.
- The inspector held a number of discussions with the managers and staff. She looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of all persons working on the premises.
- The curriculum manager completed a joint observation and evaluation of an activity with the inspector.
- The inspector spoke to staff, children and parents at appropriate times during the inspection. She also took account of the views of parents through written feedback provided.

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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