

Inspection of Mill Hill Childcare

Mill Hill Nursery School, Torphin Hill Drive, Sunderland, Durham SR3 2PJ

Inspection date: 23 August 2021

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Babies and young children have enormous fun as they play and learn. They enjoy a wide range of highly stimulating activities. For example, children use their senses as they sniff lemons, taste their sharpness and feel the 'bumpy' skin of the fruit. Staff model squeezing lemon halves until the juice drips onto their hands. They talk to children so that they understand what to do. Staff encourage children to keep trying. Toddlers copy staff's actions and do not give up until they succeed. This practice helps children to develop strong hand movements in preparation for making marks and early writing. Children are proud of their achievements and beam with happiness.

Children's speech and language development are a high priority. Staff introduce new words such as 'yellow', 'juice' and 'squeeze'. Children repeat these and staff add one new word to children's contributions to help extend vocabulary. Babies babble enthusiastically as staff listen carefully. Staff allow children plenty of time to speak and they respond thoughtfully to children's ideas.

Children are happy to see their key person and leave their parents and carers at the gate with ease. All children benefit from frequent cuddles and warm praise. Staff greet children with great kindness. They say every child is 'loved' at the setting. This deeply nurturing approach extends to the whole family. Staff have taken extraordinary measures to support families throughout the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. One example is when they set up a 'Bee Kind' project to link families to each other and their community through social media.

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

- The headteacher of the maintained nursery, of which the setting is an integral part, expertly leads a knowledgeable, committed and passionate team. Managers set aspirational targets for themselves and staff. All staff are reflective and dedicated to securing the best possible outcomes for each child. They work hard together as a team to ensure that the setting welcomes and values all families.
- Staff provide tailored settling-in arrangements to help children feel secure from the start. They involve all children effectively and know them very well. For example, staff use story time under the apple tree, rather than indoors, to read much-loved books to very young children who prefer to learn outside. Children excitedly recognise familiar pictures, point to animals and copy the sounds they make. Staff joyfully use singing to help children join activities, such as at snack time. They support children's emotional well-being to help them move smoothly onto the next stage of their learning in the nursery.
- Staff use children's interests to plan their specific learning and development

needs. They expertly help toddlers to build on what they already know and can do. For instance, when staff remind children about their recent planting activity at the allotment, toddlers decide to fill watering cans to tend herbs in the garden. Children carefully pour water into the cans and carry these without spilling the water. This demonstrates that they remember new skills, think creatively and solve problems. Staff know when not to intervene so that children can freely investigate the rich, safe and motivating environment.

- Staff develop children's independence well. For example, babies feed themselves using their fingers and spoons confidently. Children choose favourite books, turning pages carefully. Babies cruise around furniture and hold out their hands to staff to practise their early walking skills. Staff are wonderful role models. They are respectful to each other, parents and children, and use excellent manners at all times. Children's behaviour is exemplary for their age.
- Very well-qualified, experienced staff accurately identify when children need support and guidance. They plan meaningful activities to help close any learning gaps swiftly. Managers work closely with other professionals to secure support. As a result, all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make rapid progress in their learning and development.
- Staff work closely in partnership with parents who are kept well informed through a range of media. Daily information is shared between parents and the setting. Parents say that they understand how to support children's next stages in learning. They have frequent access to planning and learning records. Staff share leaflets that illustrate ideas for children's activities at home. Parents comment that they are fully involved in their children's development. Parents value the time that children spend outdoors in the fresh air and visiting the community, such as the park and their local 'secret garden'.
- The management team prioritises staff's well-being. Staff benefit from regular supervision meetings. All new staff have mentors to provide guidance and advice. The comprehensive training plan is continuously updated and evaluated. For instance, managers identified communication and language, and attachment needs as priorities for all children. Staff use refreshed knowledge in these areas to support children's excellent progress.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers implement a robust recruitment procedure to help ensure staff's initial and ongoing suitability to work with children. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. This includes having knowledge of local and wider issues. Most staff hold a current paediatric first-aid certificate and some have outdoor activity qualifications. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff kept in regular contact with families and agencies. This offered effective protection for children. Young children learn how to stay safe. For example, staff guide their use of knives when they chop vegetables.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY560998
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10190518
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 2
Total number of places	6
Number of children on roll	15
Name of registered person	Mill Hill Nursery School Governing Body
Registered person unique reference number	RP560997
Telephone number	01915220505
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Mill Hill Childcare registered in 2018 for children aged between birth and two years. It operates within Mill Hill Nursery School for children between the ages of two and four years of age. There are five staff members, including the headteacher of the nursery and two qualified teachers. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, two at level 7 and one at level 8. Mill Hill Childcare opens Monday to Friday from 8am until 5pm for 50 weeks of the year.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Cathryn Clarricoates

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The headteacher of Mill Hill Nursery, managers and the inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed what children learn and why.
- The inspector carried out two joint observations of teaching and learning with the headteacher and discussed staff development.
- A number of parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector during telephone calls. The inspector also took account of written feedback from parents.
- The inspector held discussions with managers and staff at various times throughout the inspection and reviewed documentation. She observed young children's play and spoke to them during activities.

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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