

# Inspection of St Mark's Pre-School

162 North Road, St. Helens, Lancashire WA10 2TZ

---

Inspection date: 7 October 2021

<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	Not applicable

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

### **The provision is outstanding**

Children demonstrate an unmistakable sense of purpose when they arrive at the pre-school. They are greeted by managers and staff who are also looking forward to the day's events. This helps children to start the day ready for both new and familiar adventures. Children enter a world that is born out of staff's expert knowledge of how children learn. They know, for example, that the baby dolls will be in the role-play area, waiting to be looked after. They know that the day will follow a predictable pattern, interspersed with surprises and new learning. They know the staff's high expectations for their positive behaviour and strive hard to meet them, even when this is challenging. All children, including children who speak English as an additional language and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make excellent progress and feel extremely secure.

Parents and carers feel highly valued and supported by the pre-school team. This helps to motivate parents' active participation in pre-school events. As a result, children benefit from strong and effective partnerships between home and the setting. When COVID-19 (coronavirus) requirements prevented children from attending pre-school, staff kept in close touch with families. Their individually tailored support ranged from delivering toys, to helping families establish consistent routines for the long days at home. This helped everyone to work together really well to continue children's learning.

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

- Managers demonstrate a superb attention to detail that underpins the curriculum. For example, staff want children to learn to make their own play dough. They equip the 'dough station' with everything that children need. Children repeat the activity, with decreasing guidance from adults. They gain mastery and independence because staff expect and support them to achieve highly.
- Staff plan activities that target children's communication skills really precisely. Children learn that rockets and giraffes are tall. Staff seamlessly add concepts, such as 'taller' and 'tallest', into the engaging play and conversation. Children learn vocabulary in a way that deepens their understanding and enriches their experience.
- When children speak English as an additional language, managers invite parents to read stories in their home languages to the group. This fascinates the children and they learn more about the wider world. Staff learn to say words in children's home languages. Their determined quest for new knowledge makes staff excellent role models for the children.
- Staff expertly apply their knowledge of child development to sequencing

children's learning. Younger children develop dexterity and finger strength when they knead dough and operate litter pickers. They learn words to describe movement and direction. Older children bring this learning together when they begin to form written letters correctly and smoothly.

- Staff act swiftly and effectively to support children whose development gives cause for concern. Children who have SEND benefit from the pre-school's close partnership with external professionals. Staff carefully dovetail children's individual learning programmes into planned and spontaneous teaching.
- Staff explain their thinking and actions clearly to children. For example, staff go to wash their hands before handling children's toothbrushes. They tell children that this is because they do not want to pass germs on. This deliberate modelling of hygiene routines helps to embed healthy habits. Children also learn to confidently explain the reasons for their actions.
- Staff promote children's positive behaviour and attitudes exceptionally well. Children and adults add a conker to the conker jar when they do something really well. Examples include 'excellent teamwork at tidy-up time', 'trying really hard when something is difficult', or 'going to the pre-school garden plot with parents to do some extra weeding'. Staff praise both individual and communal effort. When the jar is full, everyone celebrates everyone's effort.
- Managers and staff watch each other teaching and make insightful suggestions for improvement. A recent observation prompted a review of how and when children learn about measurement. The team added a set of scales to the dough station. Children now empty their cups of flour onto the scales and watch the needle move. The intention is that children will learn to accurately measure the flour, using both weight and cups.
- Staff suggest practical and interesting ideas for family activities. Parents take home paper bags and help children to collect evidence of autumnal changes to bring to pre-school. They learn that enjoyable, everyday activities are also wonderful learning experiences. Parents say that 'pre-school activities create a lasting impression on not only the children but parents and carers too'.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers and staff demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of their responsibility to protect children and help them learn how to stay safe. They closely follow advice from local child protection agencies when signs of possible abuse are identified. New employees follow a detailed induction programme. They know what to do if they are concerned about a child's welfare. Children eagerly volunteer to help staff to check for hazards before outdoor play. They quickly spot that the gate needs closing to keep everyone safe. They know that they must tell an adult if anything is broken. This helps children learn to think ahead about health and safety matters.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY560059
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	10190681
<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 at time of inspection</b>	2 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	30
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	29
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Carla Disley And Sarah Smith Partnership
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP560058
<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 454 569
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this early years setting

St Mark's Pre-School registered in 2018. The pre-school employs three members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold qualifications at level 3 and one holds early years teacher status. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday during school terms. Sessions are from 9am until 4pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

**Inspector**  
Susan King

## 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 her evaluation of the provider.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk of the pre-school. They conducted a joint observation of practice.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children during the inspection.
- Four parents spoke with the inspector. The inspector read written feedback from parents and took account of parents' views.
- Examples of relevant documentation were sampled and reviewed by the inspector. She checked evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2021