

Inspection of Alston Pre-School

Samuel Kings School, Church Road, Alston CA9 3QU

Inspection date: 19 October 2021

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

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Leaders are aware of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on children's emotional well-being. Supportive stay-and-play sessions are helping children to feel settled and assured when they first start. Relationships between staff and children are positive and respectful. Children are clearly very happy and comfortable in this safe and appealing pre-school.

Staff promote children's learning and development well. They create inviting areas that inspire children's natural curiosity. Children enjoy mixing materials such as petals, leaves and coloured water to create their own 'potion'. They use their good knowledge of different occupations, such as farming, when gathering grass and leaves to create 'bales'. Children listen to stories with increasing attention. They follow instructions from staff during imaginative play. For instance, children gladly make staff a 'cup of tea' when asked. They remember the details and place a slice of lemon and cucumber in before handing this to staff. Children persevere when using scissors to attempt to cut paper. They are independent at mealtimes.

Staff value each and every child. The 'kind tree' helps to recognise and celebrate the acts of kindness that children display on a daily basis. Children understand the expectations for behaviour. They willingly take turns when adding ingredients to create dough and share out bun cases equally between all of their friends.

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

- The long-standing members of staff work together very closely as a team. A reduction in paperwork is enabling staff to spend more quality time with the children. This is helping staff to gain a greater knowledge of what children know and enjoy and contributes to the well-matched learning experiences that staff provide.
- Staff plan exciting experiences that help to enhance children's knowledge of the world. For example, children gladly help to plant fruits and vegetables in the garden, such as strawberries, beetroot and carrots, and take care of these as they grow. They quickly learn that this is where some of their healthy food comes from and enjoy eating the produce as part of their nutritious meals and snacks.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Staff keep parents informed about their children's learning and progress. They share ideas with parents, such as reading a book, observing nature and finding different-coloured objects, to build on children's skills at home. Parents report that staff are passionate about what they do and they express that the pre-school has a very family-friendly feel.
- Overall, leaders have a good programme of support, coaching and training in place for staff. Staff undergo regular supervision sessions. However, these are

often less formal and they do not focus intently on helping individual staff to extend their practice to the very highest levels.

- The proactive staff ensure that children receive the early help and support that they need. They work together with parents and other professionals and thread advice into targeted learning plans. This helps to close any gaps in children's learning. Additional funding is used well. Staff source new climbing equipment, such as an A-frame, to build on children's large-muscle skills. Children show increasing confidence when attempting to climb over this and do so safely.
- Children form positive links with their community. They work together with others, such as staff at local supermarkets, to raise funds to support worthwhile causes. Staff teach children about the people in the community who help them. They arrange timely visits from the fire service ahead of any upcoming public events, such as Bonfire Night. This helps to alert children to the dangers of fire and raises their awareness of the action they need to take to keep themselves safe.
- Generally, staff support children's communication and language skills well. They welcome children to show photos of their home-life experiences on the 'big screen' and support them to talk about these with their friends. Staff invite children to explore materials such as ice. They encourage children to make predictions and to talk about what is happening. However, occasionally, when children mispronounce words, staff do not consistently intervene to model these back precisely for children to hear and say. This does not fully support children to build on their good speech and language skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders recruit staff safely and ensure that all staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff complete a broad range of safeguarding training. They have access to helpful safeguarding information within the pre-school. This helps to ensure that staff have a good knowledge of the procedures to follow to protect children's welfare. Staff take steps to keep children safe. For example, when moving between the different garden areas, they encourage children to walk rather than run when surfaces are wet. This helps to prevent any accidents occurring. Children demonstrate their growing awareness of how to manage risks independently and hold on to the handrails when walking up steps.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen the arrangements for staff supervision and provide more formal and targeted support to each member of staff, to help to extend on their good knowledge, skills and practice

- support staff to intervene more consistently and model language most precisely, to help to enhance children's pronunciation of words and advance their speech and language skills further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY548573
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10174106
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 at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	20
Number of children on roll	28
Name of registered person	Alston Pre-School
Registered person unique reference number	RP907361
Telephone number	01434381236
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Alston Pre-School registered in 2017. The pre-school employs four members of childcare staff, all of whom hold appropriate qualifications at level 3. The pre-school is open from Monday to Friday during term time. Sessions are from 8.15am to 3.15pm on Monday, Thursday and Friday and from 8.15am to 5pm on Tuesday and Wednesday. Additionally, the pre-school offers care during some school holidays. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Charlotte Bowe

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the pre-school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the pre-school.
- The manager led the inspector on a learning walk to show how the pre-school is organised and to share information about the intent for the early years curriculum.
- A planned activity was jointly evaluated by the inspector and the manager.
- The inspector held discussions with the provider, the manager, the staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- A sample of documents was viewed by the inspector, including policies and procedures and evidence of staff's suitability, qualifications and training.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents and 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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