

Inspection of St Mark's Preschool

St. Marks Church & Community Centre, Calder Rise, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 7UY

Inspection date: 4 November 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

Children form strong bonds with their key persons and other members of staff. They squeal with delight as staff join in their running games outside and when staff use exaggerated expressions in their voices while reading stories to them. The youngest children enjoy moving toys and equipment around their large playroom, negotiating obstacles as they confidently carry objects. This helps promote their physical development. Children remind each other, and visitors, where they need to walk when they go to feed goldfish in a pond within the grounds. They take time to smell and feel herbs, such as rosemary, and talk about the changes they notice in leaves, berries and tree bark. Staff ask children questions to help them find out what children remember and already know about the natural world around them. This enables staff to help children to consolidate existing knowledge and extend their learning at their own pace.

Children confidently count and sort coloured bears into different pots. They listen to the words and phrases staff use to describe what they are doing. This helps children grasp concepts in mathematics, such as quantity and weight.

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

- Staff find out what children can already do and what they enjoy playing with when they first join the pre-school. This helps staff set out familiar toys and activities to help children settle easily when they arrive.
- The manager and staff hold regular meetings to plan and develop the curriculum to help support children's learning. They share information and ideas gained through training courses, which helps to make continual improvements to the pre-school.
- Staff use a flexible approach to help new children settle in to the pre-school. In partnership with parents, key persons offer shorter sessions when children first arrive. This helps children build their confidence and readiness to leave their parents and carers for a longer length of time in a positive way. As a result, children quickly look forward to their time at pre-school.
- Children behave well. They respond positively to staff requests and instructions. For example, when staff gently remind children to share and to be kind. Children quickly learn to recognise when the daily routines are about to happen. For example, they confidently choose their chairs, stools or beanbags, ready to comfortably settle for story time.
- Staff help children celebrate the differences and similarities in their own lives compared to others. Children talk about the different festivals and celebrations, and find out why traditions are important to some people. This helps children begin to respect the views and experiences of others.
- Staff work very closely with health professionals, who have links to the pre-

school. Members of the health visitor team meet with parents and key persons to discuss children's development and any issues that may have an impact on children's progress. This helps staff and parents work together to build on what children already know and can do in the most effective way.

- Children are keen to learn. They confidently select activities that they enjoy and interest them. However, at times, children can not easily see or find the resources they need to complete a task. Staff do not always consider the accessibility of equipment that children can spontaneously use to help them reach their full potential. This is particularly evident in the garden.
- The caring and friendly staff happily join in with children's games and activities. However, their enthusiasm can sometimes mean that they are too quick to give instructions before children have had enough time to find solutions or different ways to do things themselves. As a result, children's ability to strengthen their thinking skills and tenacity is, sometimes, hindered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to recognise and report signs of abuse. Staff and managers follow the robust procedures they have in place to help keep children safe. This includes procedures to report concerns around extreme beliefs. The highly experienced members of the board of trustees help to ensure that any members of staff or volunteers recruited to work in the pre-school are suitable to work with children. Trustees also have a deep insight into local issues that could possibly have a negative impact on children and their families. As a result, information is effectively shared with managers and staff, who remain vigilant to threats within the community.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- review and develop further the organisation of resources, indoors and outdoors, so they can be easily and spontaneously accessed by children to support their independent play and learning
- encourage staff to give children more time to work out how to do things for themselves, solve problems and to think about what might happen next.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2538214
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10208629
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	2 to 4
Total number of places	56
Number of children on roll	36
Name of registered person	The Parochial Church Council Of The Ecclesiastical Parish Of St Mark, Bedford
Registered person unique reference number	2538213
Telephone number	01234 342613
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

St Mark's Preschool re-registered in 2019. The pre-school is based in Calder Rise, Bedford. It operates for 47 weeks of the year and is open Monday to Friday, between 7.30am and 6pm. The pre-school employs 14 members of staff, of whom 12 have a recognised qualification at level 3 and above, including two members who hold qualified teacher status. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Katrina Rodden

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the nursery received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with managers and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the nursery.
- The manager and inspector conducted a learning walk. The manager explained how and why activities and topics are used in the pre-school to support children's learning.
- The inspector observed activities in all the group rooms and in the garden. She spoke to staff and children at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- Members of the board of trustees met with the inspector.
- The manager and inspector observed an activity together and discussed the impact teaching has on children's learning.
- The inspector viewed a range of documents, including evidence of the suitability of staff, first-aid qualifications and activity plans.
- The inspector spoke to a small number of parents and took their views into consideration.

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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