

Inspection of Playschool Nursery St Albans

Playschool House, Alma Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 3AR

Inspection date: 16 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive happily at this welcoming and vibrant nursery. Babies have good opportunities to develop their physical skills. They crawl over soft furniture and stretch to reach toys as they learn to roll over. This helps to build their core strength and coordination effectively. Young children concentrate as they explore resources. They put together and pull apart stacking cups. They learn with their senses as they listen to the noise the cups make when they tap them together. Outside, children learn about the natural environment. They dig in dirt with spades and know to look out for insects.

Toddlers enjoy singing and dance along to the rhymes they hear. Staff provide a range of nursery rhyme pictures on wooden spoons, which helps children to choose what they would like to sing. When staff pause their own singing to check children's knowledge, children confidently continue to sing the nursery rhymes by themselves. Toddlers begin to explore books independently. They point to the pictures and use simple words to share what they see with staff. The oldest children talk about what is happening in the stories they look at. Staff ask them relevant questions to check their understanding. Children look after the books they read, taking turns with their friends to hold the book and turn the pages carefully. Children show that they understand numbers and counting. They respond positively to more challenging experiences. For instance, older toddlers accurately count backwards from five as they sing.

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

- The leadership team is ambitious and highly reflective. Leaders instil the vision that they want children to flourish and become lifelong learners in all staff and across all areas of the provision. The manager has a very good understanding of child development. She spends time in the rooms leading staff and role modelling good practice. The leadership team researches various aspects of practice and checks its findings with local agencies before adopting new procedures. This means that children benefit from current thinking and opportunities.
- Leaders and managers focus on how to continuously improve the service for children. For example, through effective supervision and training they help staff to further support children's mathematical development. They took swift action to implement this support. As a result, children have a strong understanding of mathematical language. For example, staff talk to pre-school children about the different sizes of bowls and chairs in the story they read. Children use their hands to demonstrate the different sizes, big, medium and small. Outside, staff talk to children about the bucket they have filled with sand being 'full' and 'heavy'.

- Babies build positive relationships with their key person. They snuggle with staff and smile with delight during play. However, staff do not consistently interact with babies to develop their communication and language skills. For example, staff pick up babies and young children from behind or put on their coats with no explanation.
- Staff know children well. They genuinely enjoy being with the children and use their play to continually assess children's learning. With frequent guidance from senior staff, they plan activities that help meet children's next steps in learning effectively.
- Children develop their independence at the nursery. Toddlers use cutlery appropriately to feed themselves. Children persevere and put their coats on by themselves. Staff remind them how to do their zips, praising them for their efforts. At snack time, children help the staff to hand out cups. Children wait patiently for their turn to pour their own water. They carry it carefully back to their seats at the table, concentrating as they walk.
- The oldest children are helpful and learn about keeping others safe. For example, they help staff to line up the slippers against the wall before going outside. Staff explain that this will help to prevent others from tripping over in the hallway.
- Parents say that their children are happy at the nursery. They receive a lot of information about their children's day and attend regular meetings about children's learning. The leadership team considers how it can keep in contact with parents due to the changing routines during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the team holds meetings with parents over video calls.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and the designated officers understand their responsibility to safeguard children. They know how to identify concerns about children, families and staff, including unusual bruising. Staff are aware of how to report a concern to the designated officers and the relevant agency. The designated officers know the importance of liaising with other agencies to support children and families and implement these procedures accordingly. There are robust recruitment procedures in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- help staff to develop their interactions with very young children so that their communication skills are developed even more.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY438929
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10217084
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	90
Number of children on roll	72
Name of registered person	Playschool Nursery (St Albans) LLP
Registered person unique reference number	RP531207
Telephone number	01727844477
Date of previous inspection	7 December 2016

Information about this early years setting

Playschool Nursery St Albans is one of a group of three nurseries that are privately owned. It registered in 2011. The nursery employs 21 members of childcare staff, including the providers. Of these, 16 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The two providers both hold early years professional status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round, from 7.30am until 6.30pm. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Elke Rockey
Jennifer Hardy

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager joined one of the inspectors on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspectors talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspectors observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager carried out a joint observation of a planned activity with each of the inspectors.
- Parents shared their views on the setting with inspectors.
- The inspectors looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- Children communicated with the inspectors during the inspection.

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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