

Inspection of Squirrel Nurseries (Watford Lanchester)

Lanchester Community Free School, Hempstead Road, Watford, Hertfordshire
WD17 3HD

Inspection date: 22 February 2022

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 settle well and enjoy coming to nursery. They play well alongside and with their friends and particularly enjoy the outdoor area. Children are able to develop a range of skills to help them for future learning. For example, they lift large planks and blocks as they construct a raised walkway, developing their upper body strength and solving problems when they notice a gap or a plank that is too long or short. Staff support them to solve these problems as they encourage them to stand back and observe their creations, to help decide what to adapt to refine them.

Children benefit from a curriculum that is ambitious and supports them to embed core skills, Staff focus on the development of language skills, and echo things that children say to help improve their pronunciation. Children link words that start with the same sound, such as 'cat' and 'carpet' and staff help them find the rhyming word 'mat' to help them to explore and play with words. Such activities support the development of all children, including those who speak English as an additional language. Staff use audible cues, such as 'ready, steady go' to help children to learn how to link words to actions, even when they change the resources. This helps children to follow simple instructions. Older children learn to link letters to the sounds they make, such as the initial letter of their name.

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

- Staff understand children's home lives and experiences well. This helps them to care for children who have varying needs. Leaders ensure that additional funding for any child who receives it, is spent specifically for their needs. Leaders have trained staff to understand the curriculum and this helps all adults who work with children to know what each child knows, and needs to learn next. This has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and children make good progress.
- The leaders of the setting have a clear vision for the future of the nursery. They monitor staff practice closely and provide considerable support to the manager. They identify areas for improvement and make swift plans to tackle them. Where issues with staffing have arisen, for example in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have taken action to minimise any significant impact on children. There is a strong programme of professional development in place. and the manager is able to step in swiftly to tackle any issues with staff practice.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for as staff find out their needs when they first start. Staff work closely with outside professionals and with parents to implement plans to support these children's learning. This helps to close any gaps in children's development.
- Overall, staff interactions with children are strong, especially when they work with them in small groups. However, at some busier times, staff who work with

younger children find it harder to follow their spontaneous interests, for example, to make sure each child who wants to access a toy is able to do so promptly. At times during large group activities in the pre-school room, some children find it harder to concentrate when noise levels rise, particularly in the run up to lunchtime.

- Parents report that they are very pleased with the care and education that their children receive. They appreciate how staff have kept in touch with them, including times where parents have not come into the setting because of COVID-19 restrictions. They enjoy taking home activities and resources that help them to build on things their children have done at nursery.
- Children's literacy development is strong. Children of all ages enjoy exploring stories with staff, who use lively tones of voice to encourage children to listen. Older children have access to plenty of writing materials. Staff focus on supporting children's upper body strength and hand skills in readiness for using pens and pencils. This helps those children who are ready, to write the letters of their name.
- Staff understand children's emotional needs and take time to help build resilience. They encourage children to join in at their own pace. Staff help children to solve problems. For example, children work out how to use different tools to free objects that have been frozen in ice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers thoroughly understand their responsibility to safeguard children. Staff have had broad training to help them to recognise signs and symptoms of potential concern. Staff are vigilant about children's safety, including around the premises and supervise children closely to maintain their safety. There are clear processes for staff to follow to raise concerns and to discuss any developing issues they may see that involve children's or staff members' safety. This helps leaders to monitor any ongoing concerns to take prompt action when required.

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 manage larger groups of younger children, to enable them to respond more successfully to these children's spontaneous interests
- review the organisation of large-group activities, particularly at times of transition, to help staff to support children to be more equally engaged at these times.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY484065
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10221341
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	42
Number of children on roll	64
Name of registered person	Squirrels Day Nurseries (Watford) Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP903404
Telephone number	01923 249 673
Date of previous inspection	18 August 2016

Information about this early years setting

Squirrel Nurseries (Watford Lanchester) was registered in 2014. It is one of six nurseries managed by Squirrels Day Nursery Limited. The nursery employs 12 members of childcare staff who hold appropriate childcare qualifications. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 6, including the manager. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday for 48 weeks of the year. It is closed for two weeks in August and during the Christmas period. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Naomi Brown

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider 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 provider.
- The inspector viewed all areas of the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager led the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about what they want children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation together.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection 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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