

Inspection of The Learning Zone

The Symonds Green Community Centre, Filey Close, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 2JW

Inspection date: 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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 are excited to arrive at this friendly pre-school. They separate from carers with ease and rush in to explore the numerous activities which are available. Staff consider children's past experiences and interests when setting up an interesting and exciting learning environment each day. For example, children enjoy exploring a bakery role-play area. This builds upon their recent experiences of preparing Mother's Day breakfasts for carers at the pre-school.

Children benefit from close relationships with the wider community. For example, the pre-school has established close links with the local hospice. Children enjoy visits and learn about the experiences of their elderly friends. Children also have a strong understanding of working as part of a community. They share a garden area with other community groups. Together, they work hard to create an area to grow plants and observe the creatures who live there.

Children demonstrate high levels of confidence in the pre-school. They are eager to participate in all activities. Staff encourage this with plenty of praise for children's efforts and accomplishments. They further support children's confidence by encouraging them to share their knowledge and talents with friends. For example, in a planting activity, children talk about vegetables they grow at home. They explain why they need to water the seeds and keep them warm.

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

- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported within the pre-school. Managers and staff work closely with other professionals. They react positively to advice and teaching ideas. This supports all children in making good progress in the pre-school.
- Children's interests and preferences are central to teaching at the pre-school. In planned group sessions, staff skilfully adapt their teaching. They develop children's knowledge by incorporating resources which children are currently playing with.
- Staff monitor children's progress well. They are aware of children's next steps and incorporate these into their daily planning of activities. Staff communicate children's progress well to parents. They conduct regular consultation sessions, where they offer ideas to support children's learning at home.
- Children behave well. They are kind to one another and assist their friends if they need help. Children are aware of the rules in the setting. In a bubble-blowing activity, children automatically line up to take their turn. They understand that if they all rush to have a go they may fall over and get hurt.
- Children are learning about healthy lifestyles. Staff use mealtimes to discuss healthy eating and the importance of good oral hygiene. Children enjoy playing

outdoors. They navigate age-appropriate climbing apparatus and run around in the large play area.

- Children are encouraged to be independent. Staff support them in completing age-appropriate tasks, such as pouring drinks and tidying up. Children of all ages are learning to manage essential hygiene procedures with minimal support. This prepares them for their transition to school.
- Managers and staff establish strong relationships with families from the start. They conduct home visits and encourage children to spend time at the pre-school prior to starting. This supports staff to develop a good understanding of children's early experiences and interests. From this, staff plan learning opportunities to meet the needs of all children.
- Managers demonstrate integrity when allocating additional funding. They involve parents and key staff in the decision-making process. This ensures children have access to resources and support to meet their individual needs.
- Parents are complimentary about the managers and staff. They value the individual care given to all children. Parents of children with SEND deeply value the support the managers and staff offer to children and the entire family.
- Children show high levels of curiosity in their play. Younger children explore the fragrance and texture of foam. Staff ask age-appropriate questions to support their understanding of why it melts in their hands. However, older children do not consistently receive the same high-quality interactions to extend their knowledge.
- Managers conduct regular appraisals and supervisions with all staff. This supports staff well-being and highlights additional training opportunities. However, staff supervision is not always robust in identifying gaps in practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers and staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms that may indicate a child is at risk of harm. They know how to report these to the appropriate agency without delay. Managers have a robust recruitment and induction process, ensuring that all staff are suitable to work with children. Staff supervise children well in all areas of the setting. They complete regular risk assessments to ensure all resources and activities are safe and appropriate for children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- enhance current supervision methods to support staff in raising the quality of teaching to a consistently high level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2525164
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10215052
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	36
Number of children on roll	80
Name of registered person	The Learning Zone Partnership
Registered person unique reference number	2525163
Telephone number	07747411137
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

The Learning Zone re-registered in 2019. The pre-school employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, during term time only, from 9.20am to 2.20pm. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Antonia Campbell

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 observed the quality of education to assess the impact on children's learning.
- The inspector considered the views of parents by speaking to several during the inspection.
- The inspector and manager completed a joint observation of an activity to assess the quality of teaching.
- The inspector looked at relevant documents, including evidence of the suitability of all staff.
- The inspector and manager discussed how the early years setting is organised.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager and staff about the monitoring of learning and development in the setting and tracked the progress of children.

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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