

Inspection of St. Thomas More Montessori Pre School

St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School, South Road, SAFFRON WALDEN, Essex
CB11 3DW

Inspection date: 17 May 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	Outstanding
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive happy and eager to enter the nursery. They understand the daily routines. On arrival, they choose what they would like to have for lunch and find their name card. Children of all ages enjoy playing outdoors together. This helps younger children to make a smooth move into the pre-school room when the time comes. All children develop good physical skills. Younger children successfully negotiate space, and older children assess their own risks as they balance on raised lengths of wood. Children understand what is expected of them. They confidently select their chosen activity from the rich range of resources and know to return it when they have finished. Older children make visitors feel welcome as they draw pictures for them.

Younger children smile with delight as they explore the texture of dried cereal with their hands. They push toy vehicles through the cereal and are fascinated by the crunching sound. Older children have vivid imaginations. They pretend to cook lunch for their favourite superhero, using real vegetables, and work out how to defrost frozen peas by holding them in their warm hands. Staff's effective use of questioning motivates children to talk about previous experiences and use descriptive language. Younger children eagerly choose a song spoon. They join in with some words and actions to their favourite songs.

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

- Staff provide a broad curriculum which follows children's interests and builds on what they already know and can do. This enables them to make good progress. Staff conduct regular assessments and ensure that any gaps in children's learning are swiftly identified and addressed. They consider children's prior learning as they interact with them in positive ways during their play. Staff encourage children to compare the difference between the roots of a runner bean plant that they nurtured from seed several weeks ago, and young cucumber plants. Children learn what these plants need to thrive as they re-pot them into a larger container outdoors.
- The manager provides staff with a very good level of support to build on their knowledge and skills. Regular supervision meetings help to identify and support staff practice. Staff complete regular training. There is a strong focus on sharing new knowledge with the whole team. Key points are displayed on the knowledge wall for easy reference. Recent training has had a positive impact on children's engagement in storytelling outdoors.
- Staff support older children to be well prepared for the move on to school and their future learning. Children are highly independent. They confidently change into their outdoor footwear, apply sun protection cream, and know to wear their sun hat before playing outdoors on sunny days. Children prepare their own

snack and serve themselves nutritious meals. They clear away their china plate and glass when they have finished. Children talk about the importance of handling these items safely. They explain that if they accidentally smash a plate or glass, they step away and politely ask a member of staff to clear it up.

- Staff manage children's minor disagreements calmly. They talk to children about the importance of taking turns. Some older children are beginning to regulate their own behaviour.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. The special educational needs coordinator is knowledgeable in her role. She works in partnership with parents and outside agencies to agree specific strategies to support children's progress. Staff place a high priority on providing an inclusive environment to ensure all children can access the activities.
- Staff provide children with opportunities to learn about similarities and differences between themselves and others. These reflect the cultural backgrounds of children attending. However, they do not fully support children who speak English as an additional language to use their home language during their play, to enhance their speaking skills.
- Staff work in partnership with parents to gather information about their children's home life and experiences. They keep parents informed of their child's progress in a variety of ways and provide ideas to further support their learning at home. Parents comment that staff have a natural affinity with children. Staff work in partnership with most staff at other settings that children attend. However, they are not yet successful in developing working partnerships with all other settings to support all children's continuity in learning effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff understand their responsibilities to ensure that children are safe. Staff complete regular training to continue to strengthen their knowledge of child protection. They have a broad understanding of safeguarding issues. Staff know how to report any concerns they have about children's welfare, including to agencies outside of their organisation. Additionally, they know what to do if they have a concern about a colleague's conduct. The manager follows robust recruitment procedures to ensure that those they employ to work with children are suitable.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- enhance opportunities for children to hear and use their home language
- develop partnerships with all other settings that children attend, to promote continuity in children's learning and development.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY372721
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10127396
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	1 to 4
Total number of places	34
Number of children on roll	61
Name of registered person	Wisbey, Michelle Deanna
Registered person unique reference number	RP513790
Telephone number	07811 441615
Date of previous inspection	13 May 2016

Information about this early years setting

St. Thomas More Montessori Pre School registered in 2008 and is situated in Saffron Walden, Essex. It follows the Montessori approach. The pre-school is open from 8.30am until 3.30pm, Monday to Friday, during school term time. There are 11 staff members who work directly with the children. Of these, four hold qualified teacher status and four hold relevant childcare qualifications from level 2 to level 6. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Lorraine Pike

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 and the manager completed a learning walk across all the areas of the pre-school to understand how the curriculum is organised.
- A joint observation of an activity was carried out by the inspector and the manager. The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors. She assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector held a number of discussions with staff at appropriate times during the inspection and also spoke to children.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager. She looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day and their written feedback. She discussed with the manager how she reflects on the service she provides.

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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