

Inspection of St Matthews Nursery and Pre-school

St. Matthews Preparatory School, 100 Park Avenue North, NORTHAMPTON NN3 2JB

Inspection date: 25 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Inconsistencies in staff safeguarding knowledge and procedures mean that children's safety is, at times, not assured. Managers have not ensured that safer recruitment procedures are followed for all staff working on the premises where childcare is provided, resulting in a staff member's suitability having not been verified or checked. That said, children are happy at this calm nursery and progress well in their learning.

Staff have good relationships with children. Babies snuggle with staff for comfort when they are tired. Children behave well. They react positively to staff when asked to follow instructions. Children are friendly towards their friends, staff and visitors. For example, pre-school children engage visitors in conversation. They excitedly discuss with them about 'big carrots' and a 'small radish' they explore during an activity. Staff teach children how to keep safe. For example, pre-school children are encouraged to sweep up sand so they do not slip.

Children show a positive attitude towards their learning. Staff provide a wide range of activities for children to explore that follow their interests. Toddlers develop their physical skills as staff teach them how to use scissors to cut paper. Pre-school children use their imagination well. They chase staff around the garden shouting 'roar' as they pretend to be a dragon.

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

- Managers have not ensured all staff have relevant knowledge of how to keep children safe from harm. For example, some staff lack knowledge on safeguarding issues, such as how to recognise if a child is being drawn into extremism. Not all staff are aware of the local safeguarding partnership (LSP) procedures to follow when they have a concern regarding children's safety or staff suitability. This means that staff do not have up-to-date awareness of how to reduce the risk of harm to children, and who else they can report their concerns to.
- Recruitment procedures are not effective when it comes to checking staff suitability. For example, managers could not demonstrate that suitable employment references, nor an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check had been carried out on a staff member who works on the premises where childcare is provided. This could compromise children's safety.
- Managers carry out observations on staff practice. Staff are given feedback on their strengths and how they can enhance their practice. Staff take part in supervision meetings with managers. They discuss their well-being, as well as their role and responsibilities. Staff say they feel supported by managers.
- Staff work closely with their local authority early years team and reflect on

advice given about, for example, the importance of carrying out assessments on two-year-olds. This supports them to identify and act upon gaps in children's learning and development. The nursery special educational needs coordinator liaises with other professionals, such as speech and language therapists. Support plans are put in place for children who need it, helping them to make progress in their learning.

- Parents report they are happy with the nursery. They take part in consultation meetings with their child's key worker, where staff share information on their child's development. Staff give parents activity ideas, so they can continue children's learning at home. Parents say staff have good relationships with their children.
- Staff have a good understanding of child development. They are confident in delivering activities that meet the needs of the children. For example, pre-school children use their senses to investigate the smell and textures of vegetables. Staff encourage them to describe how they feel. Staff teach toddlers the importance of good hygiene practices. They discuss how to look after their teeth as they pretend to clean dolls' teeth with toothbrushes. However, staff do not always see opportunities where they can extend learning further during activities.
- Staff teach pre-school children how to be independent, ready for their next stage in learning. For example, staff praise children as they persevere in learning how to use zips on their coat. However, at times, staff do not give toddlers time to do things for themselves before they intervene.
- Pre-school children talk about their feelings as they discuss previous experiences. For example, children say they felt 'scared' on a ride at the local fair. Staff give them a cuddle as they reassure them it is ok to feel this way. Staff ask children how they feel today. Children smile as they say they are 'happy'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Managers have not provided all staff with appropriate training to ensure they have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of safeguarding practices and procedures. Some staff have poor knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues, such as how to recognise if a child is at risk of female genital mutilation. Not all staff are aware of the procedures to follow in reporting concerns about children and adults to their LSP. This could put children's safety at risk. Staff are aware, nevertheless, of internal procedures for reporting concerns regarding staff and children, and recognise the importance of recording concerns. Vetting procedures on staff are not always followed. Managers have not obtained DBS checks on all staff who work on the premises where childcare is provided, nor have evidence that suitable employment references have been obtained for all staff. The nursery is secure and staff supervise children at all times.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
ensure staff have up-to-date safeguarding training, so they have good knowledge and understanding of all safeguarding issues and procedures	30/06/2022
ensure staff have relevant Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks	30/06/2022
ensure robust recruitment and vetting procedures are followed, particularly with regard to checking staff suitability to work with children	30/06/2022
ensure all staff develop their knowledge of the 'Prevent' duty guidance to keep children safe from harm.	30/06/2022

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

- support staff to recognise and act on opportunities to further extend children's learning during activities
- support staff to give younger children enough time to do things for themselves to develop their independence skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY349315
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10073875
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	44
Number of children on roll	79
Name of registered person	Patterson, Rachel
Registered person unique reference number	RP909572
Telephone number	01604 712647
Date of previous inspection	18 January 2016

Information about this early years setting

St Matthews Nursery and Pre-school, based in Northamptonshire, registered in 2007. The nursery employs eight members of childcare staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The nursery opens Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children and supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Natalie Vaughan Prosser

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the nursery has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and deputy, and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- The manager, deputy and inspector completed a learning walk together. They observed activities in the indoor and outdoor learning environments used by children. The manager, deputy and staff team talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they were doing during activities.
- Parents and staff shared their views with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector carried out two joint observations on activities with the manager and deputy.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided in the nursery and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children.
- A sample of relevant documentation was viewed by the inspector, including staff files and safeguarding policies.

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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