

Inspection of St Mark's Preschool

c/o St. Mark's Church Office, The Old Vicarage, Vicarage Road, Gillingham, Kent
ME7 5JA

Inspection date: 9 December 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 are happy and confident. They leave their parents at the door and enter with a smile. Children settle quickly and become absorbed in their play, showing that they feel safe and secure. They enjoy exploring activities that are based around their interests and build on what they already know and can do. Children form strong bonds with the staff, who are kind and caring in their approach. They seek them out for comfort, help and support.

All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. The special educational needs coordinator monitors children's needs. She works closely with external agencies, children's key person and parents to ensure they receive the support they need to enable them to make progress in their learning and development and achieve their full potential.

Staff have high expectations for children, especially with regards to their behaviour. Children are respectful to both adults and each other. They share, take turns and say 'please' and thank you'. Children start to manage their self-care and become independent. For example, they wash their hands before eating, serve their own fruits and vegetables and help dress themselves. Children learn about healthy eating through having discussions at mealtimes.

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

- Children's language and development are supported well. Staff sing and read stories with the children, encouraging them to discuss and share their ideas of what happens next. They repeat children's answers back to them, using the correct pronunciation, while keeping eye contact. Staff ask children relevant, open-ended questions. They introduce new words during conversations, such as 'sticky' while making dough. This helps to support children to become confident and capable communicators.
- Children enjoy a variety of opportunities to develop their physical skills. They use scissors to cut around pictures to stick on their artwork. Staff offer support to children who struggle. They praise children for their effort and achievements. Children enjoy the outdoor environment. They run around chasing each other, pushing tyres down the slope and use the climbing frame under the watchful eyes of staff, who support them to take risks. This helps children to become resilient and confident in their abilities.
- In general, staff interactions with children are good. Staff are attentive and responsive. However, at times, specifically during adult-led activities, staff do not consistently challenge older children in their learning. For example, while discussing oral health, the older children discuss the times they brush their teeth. However, this could have been extended further to discuss the

importance and reasons for brushing their teeth.

- Partnerships with parents are good. Parents are happy with the progress their children make in their learning and development. They comment positively on the care their children receive. Parents receive regular updates about their children's learning and events at the pre-school. This is done through face-to-face meetings, emails and newsletters. Parents find the manager and staff approachable. They feel confident to approach the manager and staff about any concerns they might have.
- Children engage in routine mathematical activities independently. They count freely as they play. However, children's mathematical development could be enhanced further to build on their understanding of the relationship between measurements, numbers and quantity. For instance, while using the weighing scales, children count the bears as they add them to the scales. However, staff take over and add the numbers to the other side themselves, rather than explaining and allowing children to explore and investigate this themselves. This can impact on developing children's problem-solving skills and their further understanding of early mathematical concepts.
- The manager implements effective strategies. For example, she uses supervision sessions to evaluate workload and promote staff well-being. The manager offers effective one-to-one meetings that support staff to reflect on their practice and discuss any personal issues. The manager ensures that staff workload is appropriate and manageable. Staff comment that they feel confident approaching the manager and director with any issues or concerns, including about their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe from harm. They have a good knowledge and understanding of all aspects of safeguarding, including radicalisation and female genital mutilation. The staff and manager know what to do and who to approach if they have a concern about a child or an adult, including allegations against a member of the team. They attend regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. The manager completes the necessary checks and provides a thorough induction process to ensure that 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:

- extend staff's skills to enable them to build on their interactions with older children, to further extend their learning
- develop a curriculum for mathematics and maximise opportunities to teach

mathematical skills and concepts.

Setting details

Unique reference number	103847
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10263806
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 3
Total number of places	34
Number of children on roll	33
Name of registered person	Committee of St. Mark's Preschool
Registered person unique reference number	RP518192
Telephone number	07807577836
Date of previous inspection	12 May 2017

Information about this early years setting

St Mark's Preschool registered in 1983. It is located in a church hall in Gillingham, Kent. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday, from 9.15am until 12.15pm, during term time only. The provider receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The pre-school employs six members of staff, two of whom hold a relevant early years qualification at level 3, and one member of staff holds early years professional status.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Oshra Murphy

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 manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with one of the managers.
- The inspector talked to parents and staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- 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 inspector held discussions with the manager of the nursery to discuss how the setting is organised. The inspector looked at relevant documentation, including the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.

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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