

Inspection of Apple Tree Montessori Forest School

Clayton Pavilion, Underhill Lane, Clayton, West Sussex BN6 9PJ

Inspection date: 15 December 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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

Friendly staff greet children as they enter the nursery. Staff support children to settle quickly and engage in activities. They gather information before children start at the nursery. This helps staff get to know children and plan around their interests. Parents praise the effective settling-in process that supports children's individual needs. As a result, children are happy and settled when they arrive.

The manager plans a curriculum that encourages children to become confident and independent learners. Children freely choose from a wide selection of resources. Staff extend their learning further by introducing new skills. For instance, children develop their smaller hand muscles by using scissors to cut paper. Staff supervise children well and encourage them to keep trying. Children persevere when learning how to hold the scissors correctly and show great delight as they make snips in the paper. They decide to cut shapes and find some resources to copy. Staff support this idea by naming the shapes and cutting alongside the children.

Staff use a calm voice and create a relaxing atmosphere for children to learn in. Children remain focused and engaged in the activity. They show staff that they have learned how to hold the scissors safely and are proud of the shapes they have cut. This helps children develop a sense of achievement and boosts their self-esteem.

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

- Staff provide children with opportunities to be independent to develop skills for life. For example, during snack time, children use crockery and jugs carefully and pour their own drinks competently. This helps them to develop good hand-to-eye coordination, fine-motor skills and confidence.
- Children delight at playing outside in the snowy weather. Staff encourage them to experience the natural world as they watch the snow melt and feel the water drip through their fingers.
- Children eagerly explore the outdoor environment. They illustrate this as they find sticks to draw circles in the snow, creating snowman pictures. Staff discuss the differences between snow and ice with the children. They introduce vocabulary such as 'hard' and 'soft'. These sensory experiences help children to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of new vocabulary.
- Staff support children to be physically active and to take risks in their environment. For example, during an imaginative role play game, children confidently climb on a wooden drum and slide down a pole. Staff supervise at a safe distance and encourage children to line up and take turns. Children show that they can follow instructions and have respect for their friends.
- Children who speak English as an additional language receive good levels of

support. For instance, staff use a 'talk board' to link words in children's first language to routines in the nursery. This enables staff to communicate effectively with children, to ensure that all children make good progress.

- Staff encourage children to be curious and learn about the natural world. For example, children are very excited to observe the stick insects they have in the nursery. Staff encourage children to be gentle and hold the insects carefully. Children demonstrate their secure counting skills as they confidently count the stick insects' legs. They happily share their knowledge of stick insects. For example, they discuss how they use the sticky pads on their feet to hang upside down. Children relish this experience and eagerly discuss how the insects will grow during the Christmas break. This helps to promote their thinking skills and develops their understanding.
- Children thoroughly enjoy reading books and listening to stories. Staff read stories with enthusiasm, which keeps children focused and engaged. They listen intently and answer questions to develop an understanding of the text.
- During play and activities, staff support children's language skills by narrating their play. They ask questions and introduce new vocabulary. However, this is not always consistent. Some staff do not pause and give children sufficient time to think of a reply to a question. This does not fully support their language and communication skills.
- The manager evaluates her practice. She has a clear vision of how to develop the forest school ethos in the setting. The manager is currently completing training to become a level 3 forest school leader. This will extend outdoor activities and learning experiences for children. There are also plans in place for staff to complete Makaton signing training to aid communication with children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities to protect children and have completed safeguarding training. They have a secure knowledge of how to recognise the signs that a child could be at risk of harm or abuse. Staff know how to record and report their concerns accurately if they need to. They have completed paediatric first-aid training and record accidents appropriately. Procedures are in place to ensure children with allergies and intolerances are catered for. The management team has robust recruitment procedures in place. It performs ongoing checks to ensure staff remain suitable to work with children. Staff complete risk assessments before visits. This keeps children safe on trips outside of the nursery.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen staff practice to provide children with more time to process language and respond to questions, to support developing speech and language skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2607547
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10263185
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	25
Number of children on roll	30
Name of registered person	Childcare 360 Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP547517
Telephone number	01273 271969
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Apple Tree Montessori Forest School registered in 2020 and is based in Clayton, West Sussex. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, all year round. There are five members of staff who work in the nursery with relevant early years qualifications between level 2 and level 6. The nursery provides funded early years education for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Lisa Smith

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 children to learn.
- The inspector spoke to children, to find out about their time at the setting.
- The inspector spoke with the registered individual about the leadership and management of the setting.
- 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 of an activity.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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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