

Inspection of St Hilary's Nursery School

Senacre Skills Centre, Titchfield Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8FX

Inspection date: 9 January 2023

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 independent, confident and happy. For example, all children happily enter the nursery after being dropped off. They independently take their coats off, hang them on low-level labelled pegs and then go off into the large play area to engage with activities laid out by practitioners. Children are confident to express when they have finished playing in an area and would like to play somewhere else. They behave well.

Staff and leaders take the interests and needs of the children into account when planning. They involve the children with planning and, as a result, children happily engage in activities. This in turn promotes their positive behaviour and attitudes. Staff have good knowledge of the children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They know when to engage with children and when to observe them from a distance to allow better engagement with their chosen activities. This enhances children's independence, learning and development.

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

- Children have secure relationships with their key persons and are happy both on arrival and throughout the session. Staff support children to explore and learn safely. For example, when children put play dough in their mouth, staff allow this, knowing that it is a learning opportunity and poses no risk to the child.
- Staff support children to be active and healthy. For example, children access a wide variety of healthy snacks brought in from home, and staff allow children's preference when choosing milk or water at snack time.
- Children confidently access all areas indoors and outdoors. For example, they access the outdoor book area, pick up books that interest them and sit together to flip through. However, at times, staff deployment is not fully effective to ensure they recognise and make full use of opportunities to further enhance children's learning. For instance, on occasion, staff are engrossed with other tasks and activities, and do not notice opportunities to extend learning and help children make the best possible progress.
- Staff encourage children to remember previous learning. For example, when children mention a 'stickman' while involved in an igloo making activity, staff help them recall the story and promise they will read the book again before the end of the session.
- Leaders encourage continuous professional development of their team through regular supervisions and appraisals. This impacts positively on staff performance and enhances their enthusiasm to give children the best. The manager and deputy manager also support each other to ensure that they both access regular supervision.

- Staff partner with parents and other professionals to meet children's unique needs. For example, staff liaise with parents to provide support for their children, which enhances children's experiences both within and outside the nursery. Staff also liaise with a local special needs school for placements, further enhancing the well-being of children with SEND. This helps to ensure all children make good progress.
- Leaders plan a curriculum that stretches children's imagination and gives them the opportunity to experience the awe and wonder of the world around them. For example, children with additional needs explored glitter that others were using for an igloo making activity, an activity they had never previously engaged with. This learning was further extended with staff asking children to make some marks in the glitter.
- Leaders and staff have a good knowledge of the children. This helps them pair children up for activities to provide them with opportunities to learn from each other. Staff identify the need to allow children to explore and experience the world around them, even when it means they move away from the original aim of an activity. Spontaneity is embedded in learning. For example, when children looked through the fence and saw a woman walking a dog in the field behind the nursery's garden, staff stayed with them for a few minutes to talk about what they could see. The impact of this on children's learning was clear. For instance, children who have limited language repeated words such as 'dog'.
- Leaders work collaboratively to support each other. For example, the manager and her deputy have a working arrangement that enhances the transition due to occur within the management, while still ensuring that the needs of the children are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures and know who to contact in the event of allegation. They show an awareness of issues such as the 'Prevent' duty. Safeguarding is embedded in the setting's practice. Staff supervise children effectively and review risk assessments following any incidents. For example, the adult toilet is now kept locked with the key put beyond the reach of the children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- review and improve staff deployment to support staff to recognise and make the most of opportunities to extend children's learning even further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	127588
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10263260
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	32
Number of children on roll	41
Name of registered person	St Hilary's Nursery School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP908644
Telephone number	01622355965 / 07908390242
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2017

Information about this early years setting

St Hilary's Nursery School registered in 1982. It is in the Senacre area of Maidstone, Kent. The nursery school is open each weekday from 8.30am to 11.30am and from midday to 3pm for 39 weeks of the year. It receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The nursery school employs seven staff. Of these, five hold a relevant childcare qualification at level 3 and one holds level 4.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Toyin Aina

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 and her deputy 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 talked to 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 carried out joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- The inspector spoke with the manager and her deputy, the former being the nominated individual, about the leadership and management of the setting.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- The inspector spoke to some parents during the inspection and took account of their views.

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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