

Inspection of Play Aloud St Andrews

St Andrews C of E Primary School, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9RD

Inspection date: 2 February 2023

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

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children arrive at the setting extremely confident and eager to start their day. They are excited to learn from the moment they step through the door. Staff ensure that the routines in the pre-school and the out-of-school club are consistent. As a result, children feel extremely safe and are confident to approach visitors, eager to discuss what they are doing.

Staff and leaders have high expectations for all children. They provide exceptional levels of challenge and support, which are tailored to meet children's individual learning needs. As a result, children make exceptional progress across all areas of their learning. Staff skilfully build on language, introducing new words as children play. For example, children sit and care for giant African land snails. Staff ask the children why snails feed on cuttlefish bone. Children delight in sharing their answers, talking about where calcium comes from and receiving lots of praise by staff.

Children's behaviour is exceptional. Younger children look up to older children, who are kind and considerate to them, sharing their toys and offering support. Staff provide opportunities for children to take risks and as a result they have an excellent understanding of their own safety.

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

- Staff's teaching is inspirational. Children benefit from a clear, ambitious curriculum and develop strong foundations for the future. They demonstrate high levels of focus and concentration, beyond the typical expectations for their age. For example, children independently follow visual aids and mix ingredients together to make cakes. They hand each other eggs, crack them with care and talk to visitors about how to weigh ingredients.
- Staff and leaders quickly identify children who have potential delay in their learning. Staff use highly effective, targeted interventions to help close gaps swiftly. Staff work closely with families to ensure that they are well supported through the referral process. As a result, all children make the best possible progress and thrive in the setting.
- Children are highly independent. They put on their own aprons before they participate in craft activities and wash up their baking equipment after they have used it. Children are encouraged to problem-solve. They jump on a balancing beam to see how high they can toss a beanbag. Staff carefully support them as they figure out whether making a jumping platform higher will send the beanbag further.
- Staff teach children the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. They encourage children to stop and feel their heartbeats after fast-paced physical activity.

Children have opportunities to decide when they are hungry, as staff provide a rolling lunchtime for them. As a result, children are aware of when they feel hungry and there are no interruptions to their learning.

- Children use an extensive vocabulary and are eager to share their knowledge during discussions. They explain the functions of the brain and are eager to listen to the thoughts of their peers. Staff use open-ended questions so that children have opportunities to explore their own thoughts and feelings.
- Staff include children's opinions in the planning and evaluation of the provision. Older children at the after-school club fill out regular questionnaires so that staff can adapt provision where needed. Younger children in the pre-school have free choices and staff are considerate to the needs and wishes of all children. As a result, children are confident and empowered.
- Children have exceptional opportunities to learn about their community and the world around them. Staff take them on buses and trains to local places to build on the experiences that children have already had. In the setting, children learn about recycling, and they share this with the local community. This has had a significant impact on children's social skills and improved awareness of their impact on the environment.
- Parents are extremely happy with the setting and commend staff on the progress their children make. They talk about how 'happy' their children are. Staff talk enthusiastically about the importance of building effective partnerships with parents.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The nursery is exceptionally safe and secure. Safeguarding children is a high priority for all the staff team. Any safeguarding concerns are discussed by staff daily. The pre-school and out-of-school club work in partnership together to ensure that relevant information is passed on. They know how to record and report their concerns to keep children safe. This ensures that the safeguarding leads can respond quickly and get the right support for children and families. Children manage their own risks. For example, they carry scissors safely across the room and put them away so that no one is harmed.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY468316
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10265281
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 11
Total number of places	78
Number of children on roll	233
Name of registered person	Play Aloud Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP545792
Telephone number	07903336113
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2017

Information about this early years setting

Play Aloud at St Andrews registered in 2013. It operates from a building in the grounds of St Andrew's C of E Primary School in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The setting employs 10 members of childcare staff, of whom nine hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above. The owner holds early years professional status. The provision opens on Monday to Friday, during term times. Out-of-school sessions are from 7.30am to 8.45am and 3.10pm to 6.30pm, during term time, and from 7.30am to 6.30pm during school holidays. The setting also provides wraparound care for children who attend the school's nursery during the day, between the hours of 8:50am to 12:20pm.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Amy Clarkson

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 pre-school 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 observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager carried out a joint observation with the inspector.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The pre-school manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.
- The inspector spoke with the pre-school manager and the nominated individual about the leadership and management of the setting.

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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