

Inspection of St Mary's Pre-School

St. Marys Church, George Street, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 0EG

Inspection date: 18 April 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 thoroughly enjoy the time they spend in the pre-school. They arrive happily and are excited to see their friends. The manager and staff welcome families warmly. They chat enthusiastically with them about how they spent the recent holiday, and share information about children's time away from the pre-school. Children form close bonds with one another and the nurturing staff. They cuddle up to staff during frequent story sessions and seek them out for emotional support when tired.

Children are learning to become increasingly independent. Staff encourage them to put on their own coats before playing in the garden, and manage hygiene routines with minimal support. Children help themselves to a choice of healthy fruit for their snack. They tidy away cups and plates once they have finished. This prepares children well for the routines of school.

Children demonstrate high levels of confidence in the pre-school. Staff support this by encouraging children to complete age-appropriate tasks throughout the session. For example, children delight in working as a team to help staff set up the snack area. Staff promote children's self-esteem well. They consistently praise children's efforts and achievements in activities. Children proudly show off their artwork, which is displayed throughout the pre-school.

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

- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in the pre-school. They develop close bonds with their key staff, who demonstrate deep knowledge of children and their specific needs. Staff work closely with other professionals to ensure the environment and activities support children to make good progress.
- Staff sequence children's learning well. They plan activities aimed at supporting children's long-term progress. For example, children develop fine motor skills completing regular 'finger-gym' sessions using modelling dough. This supports their emerging writing skills in preparation for school.
- The newly established management team reflect well on all areas of their practice. They seek feedback from parents, staff, and other professionals. They use their findings to make well-informed changes to support children's ongoing development. For example, the pre-school has recently acquired additional funding to adapt cloakroom facilities. This supports children's growing independence in preparation for starting school.
- Staff establish strong relationships with families from the start. They gather detailed information about children's early experiences. This enables staff to support the development and well-being of all children. Parents are highly

complimentary about staff and the care they provide. They value the regular communication they receive about children's progress. Parents appreciate the ideas staff offer to further support children's learning at home.

- Children develop a good understanding of cultures and ways of life beyond their own. Staff use age-appropriate methods to support children in developing a deep sense of pride in what makes them unique. For example, children are excited to discuss their different traditions and celebrations during group sessions.
- Children behave well in the pre-school and are learning to resolve conflict. When there are disputes over resources, staff intervene at appropriate times. They consistently use age-appropriate language to support children's understanding of the importance of taking turns.
- Management and staff have a good understanding of how children learn. They plan a variety of activities based on children's interests and learning needs. For example, staff support children's mathematical development in a water activity. Children delight at collecting ducks using fishing rods and identifying the numbers on them. However, staff do not consistently adapt activities to fully support the development of all children.
- Staff interact well with children during activities to support their development. For example, children are exploring what patterns and sequences are. Staff demonstrate this concept using tangible objects. They then encourage children to create their own patterns on paper. However, staff do not always allow children to explore learning opportunities beyond what they have planned.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff demonstrate good knowledge of the signs and symptoms that could indicate a child is at risk of harm. They explain the correct process to follow when reporting concerns to the appropriate authority. The manager has robust recruitment processes in place to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. All staff complete regular paediatric first-aid training. They have access to an online training portal to keep their knowledge up to date with changes in safeguarding legislation.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- enhance methods of coaching and mentoring to enable staff to identify ways to improve their practice and deliver consistently high-quality teaching
- consistently allow children to develop and use their own ideas in adult-led activities.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY217236
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10279982
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	23
Name of registered person	Committee of St. Mary's Pre-School
Registered person unique reference number	RP520221
Telephone number	01923 240368
Date of previous inspection	15 September 2017

Information about this early years setting

St Mary's Pre-School registered in 2002. The pre-school employs five members of childcare staff, three of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 9.15am until 12.15pm. The pre-school receives funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Antonia Campbell

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 inspector considered the views of parents by speaking to several during the inspection and reviewing feedback letters.
- The inspector looked at relevant documents, including evidence of the suitability of all staff and committee members.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children during activities.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching to assess the impact on children's learning.
- The inspector and manager completed a joint observation of an activity to assess the quality of teaching.
- The inspector held discussions with staff about the monitoring of learning and development in the setting and tracked the progress of several children.

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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