

Inspection of Strong Roots Forest School

All Saints Pastoral Centre, Shenley Lane, London Colney, St. Albans AL2 1AF

Inspection date:

23 May 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

Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children flourish in this wonderful, totally outdoors forest school setting. Children separate easily from their parents or carers. They rush in to explore the vast range of experiences on offer in the wondrous environment. Children have a deep sense of ownership of the setting. They are proud to show visitors around and talk about why 'Strong Roots' is important to them. Children know this is a place where they belong and gleefully talk about what activities they like best. Children clearly feel safe and happy and build secure attachments to all staff members. The behaviour of all children is excellent.

Children are considerably kind and courteous to their friends, staff members and visitors. They understand the need for rules, especially around activities involving fire. Staff help children to understand risk and to learn how to work out for themselves what is safe. For example, when children are walking over fallen branches, staff suggest they look at the thickness of them. Children quickly work out that some branches are too thin and will break under their weight. Children are extremely resilient. Trips and mishaps occur as children challenge themselves. Undeterred, they get up, dust themselves off and keep trying until they succeed.

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

- The provider and staff design and implement a simple, high-quality curriculum, which continually builds on what children already know and can do. They focus on small, measurable targets for children to achieve. Staff tailor their teaching style to support the unique learning preferences for every child. The curriculum promotes the development of character, independence and resilience through activities and experiences. All children make excellent progress in their learning and development.
- Staff give the highest priority to developing children's communication and language skills. They provide a constant commentary and use every opportunity to build on children's language. When children play hiding games they learn new words, such as 'camouflage'. Children are inquisitive and ask lots of questions. Groups times, such as snack and lunch, are highly sociable occasions. Warm, friendly, fun conversations flow freely between all children and the attentive staff team.
- Early literacy skills are fully embedded and weave seamlessly throughout the setting. Children relish listening to stories with staff in the cosy, dedicated reading space. They concentrate on the story and listen intently. Children choose books and enthusiastically share them with visitors. They make up their own stories from looking at the pictures. Children use expression and feeling as they read. Children remember what they have learned from books. For example, when they find a worm, they take great delight in linking it to a familiar story.

- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive excellent support. Staff work closely with other professionals and parents to ensure that all children fully access the curriculum and make the very best progress. Effective strategies are put in place to close gaps in children's learning and development. Staff learn about children's cultures and home languages to support children who speak English as an additional language. These children quickly learn to understand spoken English and begin to use words and sentences for themselves.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents have the utmost praise for the setting and staff. They say they are very well informed about their children's progress and next steps in learning. Parents say that children are thriving as they are nurtured by dedicated staff. They say they can think of no other place they would want their children to spend their earliest years in education.
- The provider strives to deliver the highest quality care and education. She and her staff consistently reflect and evaluate their practice. Staff receive regular communication and supervision meetings. They have access to regular, high-quality training to further strengthen and extend their already impressive teaching skills. Staff report that they feel highly valued and supported in their role by the provider and other colleagues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have secure safeguarding knowledge and are highly committed to keeping children safe. They confidently know how to identify children who might be at risk of harm or abuse and the procedures to follow to record and report their concerns. The setting is a safe environment for children. The provider and staff regularly carry out risk assessments to keep children safe as they play and learn. In-depth recruitment procedures ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. The provider supports new staff to work through her comprehensive induction procedure; this includes safeguarding and child supervision responsibilities.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2636656
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10285690
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	36
Number of children on roll	24
Name of registered person	Strong Roots Childcare Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP536901
Telephone number	07834989916
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Strong Roots Forest School registered in 2021. The setting provides care for children aged between two and four years during school term times, from 8.30 am to 3pm, Monday to Friday. The setting provides out-of-school care to children aged four to 12 years from 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday during some school holidays. The setting employs four members of staff, one holds qualified teacher status and two hold a relevant qualification at level 3. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Jill Hardaker

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 manager and has taken that into account in her evaluations.
- The inspector and provider looked around the setting and talked about how the curriculum is planned and implemented.
- The inspector observed the quality of education and assessed the impact this has on children's learning. She completed a joint observation with the provider.
- The provider and the inspector met to discuss the leadership and management of the setting. The inspector looked at relevant documents, including evidence of the suitability checks carried out on staff and safeguarding and complaints procedures.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents, staff and children 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023