

Inspection of Sandcastles Pre-school

Barrington Street, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6QR

Inspection date: 24 May 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 very busy and engage in a wide variety of activities. Staff provide activities to help develop children's hand control and concentration. For example, young babies become more skilful as they sort shapes and excitedly paint pictures using brushes. Toddlers are very proud when, after much perseverance, they can pick up a single lentil with the tweezers. Outside, children use chalk to carefully draw large triangles and circles on the path.

Children play with model dinosaurs. They eagerly point out the difference between the number of horns on the 'Triceratops' and the 'Styracosaurus', supporting their mathematical development. Following a recent interest in insects, children are keenly observant. They spot a small beetle scurrying in the grass and relocate a solitary green fly to a 'happy home' among the pansies. Children ask: 'Are there predators in there?' This shows that children are extending their existing knowledge about dinosaurs to different contexts.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, managers have identified the need for a strong focus on children's personal, emotional and social development to create a secure foundation for other areas of learning. For instance, staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and establish routines that enable children to move about safely. They encourage children to listen and to follow instructions well, take turns and share fairly. Staff focus on developing close bonds with children to help them feel emotionally secure. This helps prepare children well for their future learning.

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

- Staff assess children's progress regularly. They make specific plans to help close gaps in learning and to help children keep up, for example by working in small groups. They work closely with parents and other agencies to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff provide excellent support to children with SEND and to those who speak English as an additional language. For example, they break down learning into achievable steps. Managers effectively use funding to create resource boxes, such as a collection of 'emotion' puppets, which staff use to encourage children to talk about their feelings.
- Staff support children's language development and early reading skills well. They snuggle up with babies and read engaging books and help them to learn how to turn the pages. Children enthusiastically join in action rhymes and singing at regular intervals during the day. They gain a good sense of rhythm and learn rhyming words. Staff introduce new words, such as 'reflection', when reading a storybook to toddlers. Older children learn the sounds of letters and how to recognise their written name.

- The children benefit from woodland walks with staff around the site. They participate in various forest school activities, such as collecting daisies and buttercups, which they use to make a sticky picture. They sing about bees making honey from nectar. However, staff do not use these opportunities to extend children's knowledge, for example by exploring the flowers in more detail so that children can investigate where the nectar is found. Children's thinking is not challenged consistently, and staff do not sufficiently build on what they already know.
- Staff promote good hygiene practices and independence, as children learn to wash their hands thoroughly. They talk to children about maintaining good oral health, and children excitedly use a brush to clean 'Snappy' the puppet crocodile's teeth. Staff provide children with healthy fruit snacks. They help keep children safe in hot weather by encouraging them to wear hats and sun cream and to have frequent drinks of water to keep themselves hydrated.
- Parents are very happy and reassured that their children are safe and well looked after. They appreciate the support from managers and staff. They say they know what their children are learning and the progress they make.
- Managers support the staff team very well by providing opportunities for professional development, staff meetings and individual supervision sessions. Staff know that managers are available to talk to at any time. This helps to create a culture of mutual trust and collaboration.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers and staff have good knowledge of safeguarding and can recognise and describe the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. They are aware of issues that can affect families, such as domestic violence, extremism, grooming and involvement in county lines, where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another. Staff know what to do in the event of a disclosure. They are aware of external agencies who can offer guidance and support if there is an allegation against a member of staff.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to consistently extend learning for older children to build on what they already know to develop their thinking skills further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	106024
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10289466
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	46
Number of children on roll	87
Name of registered person	Sandcastles Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP522856
Telephone number	01884 257546
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2017

Information about this early years setting

Sandcastles Pre-school registered in 1992. It is a committee-run setting, based in the grounds of Castle School, Tiverton. The setting receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The setting is open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, all year. The setting offers before- and after-school care from 8am to 8.45am and from 3.30pm to 6pm for children attending Castle School. The pre-school is open from 9am until 3.30pm. A holiday club operates during school holidays, from 8am until 6pm. There are 20 members of staff, including an administrator. Two members of staff hold level 4 qualifications, 15 are qualified at level 3 and two are qualified at level 2.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Margaret Dobbs

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children.
- The inspector spoke to staff and children.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation.

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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