

Inspection of River Meadow Pre-School

Thames Drive, Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire MK16 9DS

Inspection date: 11 September 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 happy learners. They develop close bonds with their key person and they begin to explore their learning environment with increasing confidence. This demonstrates that they feel safe and secure. Staff know each child very well and they encourage investigative play linked to their interests. For example, as children explore oranges with their senses, they are excited to smell their scent and squeeze them in their hands to remove their pips.

On the whole, children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They become absorbed in their self-chosen play, such as when they use flower petals to create their own potions. Younger children enjoy water play and explore cause and effect as they repeatedly fill and empty jugs, observing the effect of moving water. Children respond less positively to large-group learning, where expectations for these times are not clear.

Children make good progress and they benefit from learning opportunities that help them to develop an understanding of the world around them. For instance, they learn first hand where food comes from when they tend to vegetables in the pre-school garden. Children harvest their crop of potatoes and delight in cooking and tasting them.

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

- The new manager has started in her position very recently. In the extremely short time that she has been in role, she has evaluated the provision and is supporting and coaching staff to gradually implement plans to improve. This has an initial focus on making flexible use of spaces in the environment. This is having a positive impact on children already and staff report that they feel positive about the changes they are making.
- Staff at the pre-school share an equally clear vision of the aims for learning and how they will prepare children for their eventual move to school. Staff find out about children's starting points by talking to parents about their achievements at home. They develop the curriculum from this point.
- The pre-school is inclusive and staff support vulnerable children effectively. For instance, they recently welcomed many new families from other countries. Staff were deployed well to meet children's needs and help them to adjust to new routines as swiftly as possible. Staff also used this opportunity successfully to help children to learn about differences between themselves and others.
- Staff use additional funding well to meet children's individual needs. For example, they have purchased resources linked to children's interests at home. They place these in different areas of the pre-school. This is encouraging children to explore more areas, which is helping to develop their confidence.

- Staff interact with children effectively with plenty of to and fro interactions. However, on occasions, staff are not fully effective at recognising where they can use conversation and demonstration even more effectively to help develop children's knowledge and skills. For instance, staff do not capture opportunities where they can help demonstrate to children how to use tools correctly. At other times, they do not fully consider how to link children's comments to prior learning or new concepts to help extend their knowledge.
- Staff provide a range of opportunities for outdoor play, fresh air and exercise. This promotes children's physical development. For instance, staff help children learn to balance as they walk along the bridge to go down the slide. Children persevere as they build towers with bricks and they enjoy being creative outdoors, painting pictures alongside their friends.
- Overall, children demonstrate good levels of engagement in their play. However, at times in the day when children come together for large-group activities, they are unclear of expectations. Children quickly become distracted and staff spend time re-directing children, rather than supporting the intended learning.
- The pre-school committee are active leaders. For instance, they maintain close contact with the manager and each other and they contribute to improvement planning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a secure understanding of their role to protect children's welfare. They have robust procedures in place to support children who have health needs and require medication. Staff understand the importance of risk assessment and describe checks that they make to the building and equipment each day before children arrive. Staff share a good understanding of safeguarding and signs and symptoms of abuse, such as physical abuse, grooming and extreme views or behaviours. They are familiar with local safeguarding partnership procedures should they need to refer concerns about children's welfare or staff practice.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen the organisation of large-group activities, ensuring that staff are deployed more effectively and children know what is expected of them
- support staff and help them to recognise and use opportunities to teach children new knowledge and skills more effectively.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY314549
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10301590
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	2 to 10
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	88
Name of registered person	River Meadow Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP517361
Telephone number	01908 615 200
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018

Information about this early years setting

River Meadow Pre-School registered in 1986. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, during term time only. Breakfast club sessions run from 7.40am until 8.40am and pre-school sessions run from 8.50am to 2.50pm. The pre-school employs 10 staff. Of these, seven hold qualifications at level 3 and above. The pre-school receives funding to provide free early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Lisa Dailey

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.
- Parents talked to the inspector and shared their views of the pre-school.
- The inspector, pre-school chair and manager held a meeting to discuss the leadership and management of the pre-school.
- The inspector joined the deputy manager on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want their 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.

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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