

Inspection of Explorers at Herston

St Marks School, High Street, Swanage BH19 2PH

Inspection date: 26 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are joyful and quickly engage in fun, stimulating activities that promote their development. Staff have high expectations of children's ability to learn and encourage them to express their own ideas while fostering a positive attitude towards having a go. For example, children recall the ingredients they need to make play dough and work collaboratively to measure out the flour. The staff ask thoughtful questions to guide children to decide if adjustments to the texture are necessary and allow them to make their own decisions on how to improve the consistency of the dough. Children develop critical-thinking skills and gain confidence from their accomplishments.

Children enjoy reading many books and engaging in reading activities throughout the day. They listen to stories, retell them using pictures and act out scenes from traditional tales. They love pretending to be trolls, crouching under a bridge in the woods, growling, 'Who's that trip-trapping over my bridge?'

Children improve their physical skills as they navigate climbing equipment, balance on beams and hold their own weight as they swing on a rope. Staff always monitor children's play closely and interact with them as needed to ensure their safety and well-being. These enjoyable and engaging experiences help children progress in their development.

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

- Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum to help children develop a rich vocabulary, enabling them to access and participate in an exciting world of learning. They encourage staff to extend children's language, reassuring them not to be afraid of using 'big words' so that children can experience a broad range of communication.
- Leaders and staff provide children with a considered and sequenced curriculum. They build on children's interests to deepen their engagement in all areas of learning. Staff teach children who enjoy playing with dinosaurs to count them, solve puzzles and read books. In the forest school area, children learn about their senses and explore the natural resources in their woodland for different sounds they can make. However, staff do not always do enough to enable children to focus more during activities and gain a deeper engagement and understanding, for example on the differences between sounds they have invented.
- Leaders and staff care deeply about the children. They take the time to get to know each child individually and prioritise their emotional well-being and happiness. Children settle quickly. If they become upset, staff comfort them with gentle reassurance and value their responses to identify the root cause and find

a solution. Children begin to develop self-belief and resilience.

- Staff foster children's independence by encouraging them to take responsibility for various tasks. For instance, the children prepare themselves for forest visits by dressing in all-weather overalls and boots, and they even guide visitors on where to store their shoes. They spread butter on their crumpets during snack time and take turns washing up. They understand the importance of sharing washing equipment when waiting for their turn. Staff empower children to be self-sufficient in all aspects of the provision.
- Children behave well. They are polite and play well with one another. Children respond positively to staff in the setting. However, staff do not always teach younger children the instructions and routines they need to follow, so some children become distracted and find it difficult to concentrate in the outdoor environment.
- Leaders and staff effectively promote healthy lifestyle choices. Children experience lots of exercise through physical movement, particularly in the woodland area, climbing and running. Staff talk with children about foods which are healthy for our bodies. Leaders provide clear information to parents about the kinds of foods which are appropriate for lunches. Children clean their teeth and enjoy singing songs as they learn the importance of oral hygiene.
- Leaders and staff have developed effective and beneficial partnerships with parents. Parents are highly satisfied with the setting and have no hesitation in recommending them, saying, 'It really is brilliant.' They observe progress in their children's confidence, particularly in speech and language, which they attribute to the learning activities provided by the setting. Staff keep parents updated on their child's development and needs, sharing their successes and any concerns they have. The provision lends books and resources so that children can continue their learning at home with their families.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well informed about their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children. They have the essential knowledge to identify signs of potential abuse and take appropriate measures to protect children from harm. All staff members know the appropriate reporting procedures and have access to the necessary contact information. Staff include children in their assessment of risk in their play. They ask children questions that help identify possible hazards and help them consider solutions that will help them keep safe. Leaders follow safe recruitment processes to ensure suitable staff work with children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- ensure that the learning intentions for planned activities are consistently delivered to help children focus on what they need to learn so that they explore and engage with more purpose
- support young children to follow instructions and established routines, particularly in the outdoor environment, so they can concentrate and take part in the learning experiences that staff have prepared for them.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2653000
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10305314
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 7
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	22
Name of registered person	Explorers Childcare Group Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP543322
Telephone number	01929288290
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Explorers at Herston registered in 2021 and is part of Explorers Childcare Group Ltd. It operates from St Mark's CE Primary School, Swanage, Dorset. The owner holds a degree in childcare. She employs four members of staff. Three are qualified at level 3, and one is working towards level 6. The pre-school provides term-time care from 9am to 3pm. It also provides out-of-school care for 50 weeks of the year from 8am to 5pm. It receives early education funding for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Jonathan Payne

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 manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- The manager spoke to the inspector about children's learning and development, with a particular focus on communication and language.
- The inspector spoke with the nominated individual about the leadership and management of the setting.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector carried out joint observations of group activities with the manager.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in 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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