

Inspection of St Michaels Preschool

St. Michaels Hall, Routh Lane, Tilehurst, READING RG30 4JY

Inspection date: 4 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

The provider, who is the manager, has a poor understanding of how to fulfil her role. Oversight of the provision is weak. Actions raised at the last inspection have not been addressed. Furthermore, additional weaknesses have not been promptly identified. Safeguarding is ineffective. Systems for recruitment and vetting of staff, volunteers and committee members are not robust. Staff do not receive the induction, training and support that they need to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. As a consequence, weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching practice do not improve.

Despite weaknesses, children happily come into pre-school and are excited to start their day. Staff have formed caring relationships with the children, which helps them to settle quickly. Children benefit from some opportunities to develop friendships with their peers. They learn how to share and take turns with favourite toys and resources. However, weaknesses in the curriculum continue to hinder children making the progress they are capable of. The provider recognises that some children do not make good progress in their speaking skills. However, she does not support staff to target weaknesses in children's communication skills. Too often learning is incidental. Staff do not use what they know about children to plan next steps in learning effectively. Children wander from one activity to another with little teaching offered that is tailored to their needs. This means that gaps in children's learning continue to widen and they do not make good progress.

Children do benefit from some opportunities to be physically active. For instance, toddlers learn how to navigate steps up to the slide and safely sit as they excitedly whizz down. Staff teach children how to blow bubbles with the wand, as they chase and pop them. Staff help younger children to pour their own drinks at snack time, developing their hand-eye coordination skills.

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

- The provider has a weak understanding of the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. They have not met the actions raised at the last inspection. The provider has not enabled Ofsted to complete required suitability checks for all members of the committee. Furthermore, they have not informed Ofsted about recent changes to those persons who make up the committee. There continues to be a weakness in the provider's understanding of their role in ensuring the suitability of those who oversee the pre-school. These omissions breach legal requirements.
- Staff recruitment procedures are poor. The provider understands how to recruit staff safely, but does not follow her own procedures. She has employed staff and volunteers without checking their employment history, references, or

suitability. There are inconsistencies relating to Disclosure and Barring Service checks. It is not apparent when checks were obtained and by whom. This gives an incomplete picture of staff recruitment and of whether the process is thorough enough to ensure children are protected. Staff who are new to the pre-school do not receive induction that helps them understand the setting policies, including those relating to safeguarding. Oversight is weak.

- Despite the provider being notified of the inspection taking place, all necessary records were not easily accessible as required. For example, important records such as first-aid certificates, the progress check at age two for children and public liability insurance were not available.
- Staff do not receive effective supervision, coaching or training that they need to improve their professional skills and knowledge. Although some staff recognise they need additional training and support to develop their teaching, particularly around supporting children's speech and language, this is not offered by the provider. The provider recognises that staff supervisions have not been completed. Consequently, staff do not know what they must do to improve their planning, teaching or interactions with children.
- The provider has some understanding of the curriculum for older and younger children. However, this is not effectively used to support children's learning. Weakness in the supervision of staff mean that the provider does not check staff understanding of the curriculum. Staff do not plan or tailor learning for children well enough. Although staff provide interesting activities for children, these are focused more on play and less on learning. This means children do not benefit from tailored support, targeted at what they need to know or to be able to do next. Children make too little progress, particularly in their speech and language skills. This leads to some older children being frustrated and upset as they cannot explain what they want to play with, or understand what is happening next.
- The provider also has a poor understanding of some of their other legal duties. For example, they do not have up-to-date knowledge of the principles of data protection, including their responsibilities relating to the use of video recording equipment in the pre-school. This does not promote children's welfare.
- Staff work closely with parents to help younger children settle into the pre-school. Parents say that staff tell them about activities children take part in and follow care routines from home. Staff help children who are quieter and new to the pre-school to develop their confidence in learning new routines. For instance, they help children to develop relationships with their peers as they begin to form some new friendships, to support their social development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Weakness in the provider's oversight of the pre-school continues to mean children's welfare is not promoted. The suitability of staff and committee members is not assured. The provider lacks knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to the use of internal video recording on the premises. This does not ensure personal data is

managed in a way that promotes children's safety. Staff safeguarding knowledge is not effective. The provider does not check staff's understanding of their responsibilities to keep children safe. Consequently, she has failed to identify gaps in staff safeguarding knowledge, including how to identify potential welfare concerns about children and how to report and escalate these. That said, staff supervise children as they play indoors and outside, and at times when they eat.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take enforcement action.

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

	Due date
ensure that all persons with governance and oversight understand their roles and responsibilities	27/10/2023
ensure all staff receive training about the safeguarding policy and procedure, so that they gain a confident understanding of how to recognise and respond to any concerns about and report these in a timely manner	27/10/2023
implement effective oversight and monitoring of the provision to continually review and swiftly address any areas for improvement	27/10/2023
ensure that systems for recruitment and establishing the suitability of staff and volunteers to have contact with children are robust and effective, including obtaining references for all staff and volunteers	27/10/2023
implement regular appraisals, coaching and supervision to review and raise the quality of teaching, identify training needs, and to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge to fulfil the requirements of the role	27/10/2023
ensure that records are easily accessible and available	27/10/2023

ensure that all leaders understand and comply with their legal duties, particularly in relation to the General Data Protection Regulation and the use of video recording equipment	27/10/2023
ensure that Ofsted is provided with the necessary information to carry out suitability checks on all members of the registered body.	27/10/2023

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
improve the curriculum for children's communication and language to ensure every child makes appropriate progress in their speaking skills	27/10/2023
improve staff understanding of how to plan and tailor learning, to precisely target children's next steps in learning.	27/10/2023

Setting details

Unique reference number	509277
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10269524
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	35
Number of children on roll	14
Name of registered person	St Michael's Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP909610
Telephone number	07594627139
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2022

Information about this early years setting

St Michaels Preschool opened in 1965 and registered in 1992. It is located in the church hall of St Michael's Church in Tilehurst, near Reading. The pre-school is open Monday to Thursday, from 9.15am until 2.15pm, during term time. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. A total of six staff are employed to work with the children. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Tara Naylor

Inspection activities

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- Staff spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The provider joined the inspector 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.
- The inspector carried out joint observations of a group activity with the provider.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.

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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