

Inspection of Willows Farm Day Nursery and Preschool

Willows Activity Farm, Coursers Road, Colney Heath, St. Albans AL4 0PF

Inspection date: 23 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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

Staff provide children with frequent opportunities to experience the outdoors and fresh air. Regular outings to the farm help children to learn about their world. They observe different animals, learning their names and how they behave. Children develop control and coordination through a range of activities. They balance on planks in the garden and jump in puddles walking around the farm. Babies use the well-placed furniture to balance and develop their early walking. Staff successfully support children to follow the simple rules. Children manage their feelings and behaviour well. They share, take turns and play harmoniously together. Older children work together to create an obstacle course. They are beginning to remind their friends of the rules too.

Children and their families are warmly welcomed into the nursery. Staff are good role models and children benefit from meaningful teaching. Staff know how to build positive attachments with children. For example, they offer children cuddles, reassurance and praise as they play alongside them. This helps children to feel relaxed and safe and engage in new experiences. Children make links to their home lives. They role play cooking and pretend the food is hot. They use oven gloves to take the food out of the oven so as not to burn themselves.

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

- The management team work together closely and are committed to continuously developing the nursery. They have a clear action plan to implement improvements. Staff report that managers consider their well-being, and that they feel happy in their roles. This secures the stability of the team.
- The managers have a strong understanding of the elements of good-quality teaching. Managers are present in the rooms, observing staff interactions and role modelling strong practice themselves. They address any concerns as they arise. Furthermore, each member of staff has targets to achieve to progress their own practice. However, these are not precisely focused well enough on teaching skills to further develop the quality of teaching to a very high level.
- Due to a recent incident on an outing to the farm, the nursery team have reviewed risk assessments and strengthened safety procedures when taking children on this outing. A range of measures are in place to help keep children safe. All children wear day nursery vests, so they can be identified easily on site, as well as coloured wrist bands, so they are clearly grouped. Staff remind children to hold the walking rope and stay together as a group. Staff complete regular head counts to make sure they account for all children.
- Staff have good knowledge about how children learn. They know their key children well and plan interesting experiences for them to learn from. There is a clear focus on helping children embed their learning. For example, staff write

letters in chalk to help children become aware of the alphabet. Staff plan activities that complement children's current interests, such as identifying letters on signs correctly as they walk around the farm.

- Children are confident and articulate. They choose to look at books and ask staff to read to them. Staff narrate play and talk to children regularly. However, they do not always provide a wide range of rich and interesting language for children to hear and take in, to extend their vocabulary.
- Staff model good hand control for children to copy. For example, older children manipulate pipe cleaners, twisting them into different shapes, then swish them around to create bubbles. Younger children enjoy exploring textures and using different tools to scoop up cereal and pasta and put it into containers. Children handle cutlery at mealtimes to eat. This helps them strengthen their finger muscles.
- Staff teach children how to keep themselves safe. For example, while using a knife to cut up vegetables for the nursery pets, staff remind children to point the knife downwards.
- Parents report their children enjoy attending the nursery, especially the outings to the farm. They receive a good amount of information from staff about day-to-day activities children have been taking part in. Parents of babies know when they have had their bottles and a sleep. However, parents do not always receive details about how they can help their children's learning and development at home. This means that there is not always continuity of learning for children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The management team ensure staff have current safeguarding training regularly. This means staff have good safeguarding knowledge. They understand the signs and symptoms of wide-ranging concerns, including the 'Prevent' duty. They know the local procedures to follow should they have a concern about a child, so children receive the swiftest help. Staff are familiar with the whistle-blowing procedure and are confident to report any concerns they have about staff. The managers vet staff to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Additionally, they check ongoing suitability to check staff remain suitable for their roles.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- extend professional development opportunities to focus more precisely on building staff teaching skills
- help staff develop the range of language and words to further support children's developing vocabulary
- strengthen communication between staff and parents to support children's

learning at home effectively.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2707966
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10313359
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 10
Total number of places	245
Number of children on roll	240
Name of registered person	Willows Farm Day Nursery Limited
Registered person unique reference number	2707969
Telephone number	01727 829535
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Willows Farm Day Nursery and Preschool re-registered in 2022 and operates from Willows Farm, London Colney. The nursery employs 66 members of childcare staff. Of these, 43 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above, including six who hold a level 6 qualification. The nursery opens all year round from 7.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday, except for bank holidays. It also operates a holiday club from 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday during all school holiday periods. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Elke Rockey
Lisa Topham

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting 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 inspection.
- The managers joined the inspectors on a learning walk and talked to the inspectors about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspectors talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspectors observed the quality of care and education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and on outings to the farm. They assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The managers and the inspectors carried out three joint observations of a range of activities.
- The inspectors spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspectors looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- Children confidently talked with the inspectors during the inspection.

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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