

Inspection of Thurton & Ashby St. Mary Pre-School

Thurton Village Hall, Ashby Road, Thurton, Norwich NR14 6AX

Inspection date:

24 November 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

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff provide a warm welcome to all of the children as they arrive. Those who are new, or find it harder to settle, are given individual attention by their key person. Staff plan and provide a rich and well-resourced learning environment, with a key focus on outdoor learning. All staff know the children really well. Children's interests are consistently considered so that they are motivated to explore and experiment. The staff are well qualified and have a wealth of experience and skills. They show a real enthusiasm for their work with the children. Children benefit from the staff's strong teaching, which captures their interest and curiosity.

All staff get down at children's level, using good eye contact. Staff make full use of the natural environment to encourage a strong awareness of nature and living things. Children plant vegetables, such as spinach and garlic, which can be harvested in the colder months. They learn about weight and measurement in the mud kitchen and have a variety of opportunities to calculate and count in sequence. Children practise independence skills as they handle cutlery and pour themselves water or milk. Children know how to behave because the staff are consistent role models, supporting children to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff regularly praise children for the smallest of achievements. They help children to consider the feelings of others and solve their own disagreements by 'using their words'.

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

- Since the last inspection, the manager and staff have significantly improved the learning environment to ensure outdoor learning can take place in all weathers. Staff have undertaken a range of training, some of which has a particular focus on supporting children's speech and language and helping children to regulate their own behaviours. Staff have used the knowledge gained to provide a richer curriculum for the children attending.
- Staff place a real focus on supporting children's speech and language development. They create clear plans and have agreed strategies to support those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are slower to speak. All staff provide a language-rich environment with lots of commentary and clear articulation. They listen to the children and carefully repeat words that children mispronounce. Staff use songs, rhymes, actions and signing to embed learning. They introduce additional words, such as 'little' and 'small' to describe the similar concepts.
- Children are provided with a wealth of opportunities to explore literacy. They know how to handle books and turn the pages. Children listen with interest as staff read a variety of stories with skill, animation and humour. Staff capture children's interest and attention as they ask questions to encourage thinking.

They pause regularly to allow children time to join in and practise speaking. Staff help children to find out about similarities and differences as they compare and contrast the different characteristics of a duck and blackbird.

- Staff provide older children with additional outdoor learning experiences in a nearby woodland area. Here, children hunt for woodland bugs, using magnifying glasses, before using factual picture books to check their identity. Children learn about hibernation from staff, who skilfully use puppets and soft toys to capture and maintain the children's interest. When children begin to feel cold, staff initiate physical games, such as 'What's the time Mr Hedgehog?', before they move on to building their own hibernation boxes.
- Children grow and harvest vegetables throughout the year, using some of their fresh produce when baking and cooking. They choose from a range of nutritious snacks which the pre-school provides. Staff have provided some guidance to parents on healthy lunch boxes, but this has not been wholly successful. As a result, children do not receive consistent messages about making healthy choices while at pre-school. In addition, some children become disengaged when transitioning between indoors and outdoors or when joining small-group activities. This is because these times are not as well planned as other activities.
- Parents speak highly of the pre-school. They comment favourably on the care and education their children receive and the wealth of learning they experience. Parents receive regular updates and are invited to meet with their child's key person to discuss their child's progress and gain ideas on how best to support their ongoing development at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff complete regular child protection training. They are aware of the signs that may mean a child is at risk of harm or abuse. Staff know how to report concerns they have about a child in their care. Recruitment processes are robust. Staff are trained to deliver first aid and accidents are appropriately dealt with. Staff carry out appropriate risk assessments. They teach children how to use equipment and keep safe, particularly when in the outdoor environment. Enhanced adult-to-child ratios are used in play areas away from the pre-school.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- engage more closely with parents, to ensure children receive consistent messages, particularly with regard to making healthy choices while in pre-school
- review and improve times when children are transitioning between outdoors and indoors and when joining small-group activities so that children remain engaged and interested at these times.

Setting details

Unique reference number	257946
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10269828
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 4
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	26
Name of registered person	Thurton & Ashby St. Mary Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP517378
Telephone number	
Date of previous inspection	2 December 2022

Information about this early years setting

Thurton & Ashby St. Mary Pre-School registered in 1992. The pre-school offers a primarily outdoor learning environment. The pre-school employs six members of childcare staff. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The pre-school operates Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, during term time only. Sessions run from 9am until 1pm Monday and Thursday, and from 9am until 3pm Tuesday and Friday. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Dawn Pointer

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 indoor and outdoor learning environment and considered the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and the inspector discussed how the early years provision is organised, including the aims and rationale for their curriculum.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and reviewed relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents during the inspection and took account of their views.

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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