

Inspection of Squirrels Pre-School CIO

Hales Drive, CANTERBURY, Kent CT2 7AB

Inspection date: 8 December 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	Inadequate
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children and their families are warmly welcomed at this friendly setting. Children settle quickly to explore the activities set up for them. They delight in purchasing items from the role-play café with pretend money, chatting with their friends in the queue. This develops their communication and mathematical skills effectively. Staff encourage children's independence well. Children choose their own snacks and pour their own drinks. After snack time, they help to put the things away. This supports their confidence. Staff plan interesting activities for children based on their interests. Children enjoy exploring the 'winter wonderland' that staff have set up, and they talk about snow and different animals they find outside. This encourages their understanding of the world around them.

Staff have high expectations of children. They encourage and support them, praising their good behaviour. This helps children to develop positive self-esteem. Staff are vigilant about children's safety. They gently remind children how to use the climbing equipment safely outside. Children take care to manage their personal space when energetically dancing to Christmas songs with their friends. This helps them to develop their social skills. Staff promote children's creative skills. Children spend time mixing ingredients together to make 'reindeer food'. They proudly share what they have made with staff, who celebrate their achievements. This supports their emotional well-being.

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

- Leaders and managers reflect on and evaluate their provision. They have worked hard to make improvements to ensure that requirements are met and raise the quality of the provision. They proactively seek advice and support from the local authority. For example, they have enhanced their planning systems to ensure that activities target children's next steps well.
- Children benefit from being cared for by staff, who are well qualified. Staff keenly take on additional training to enhance their knowledge and skills. However, there are times when staff are less confident in knowing how to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that, on occasion, the support children with SEND receive is not targeted as precisely as possible.
- Children benefit from the support of caring staff, who help them to make progress. Staff use funding well to enhance the environment to support children's individual needs. They ensure that information is shared effectively with external agencies and schools so that children and families receive support where needed. This ensures that children are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Staff promote children's learning well. They reflect on the needs of the children.

For example, staff provide a sensory space where children can relax with comfortable cushions and lights. Children enjoy exploring the light projectors together, talking about the different shapes they make. This supports their language and thinking skills.

- Communication with parents is effective. Staff help parents to support their children's learning at home. For example, staff have developed 'busy bags' for children to take home and share. They encourage families to take books from the lending library to encourage reading at home. This helps to promote a love of books.
- Staff plan a motivating curriculum. They have successfully prioritised communication, as well as social and physical skills, which they identified as gaps in learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. Children enjoy exploring a range of activities linked to their interest in cleaning their teeth. They work together to brush play dough out of blocks, talking about how to make sure they really clean them. This supports their knowledge of self-care.
- Children benefit from the support of staff, who are genuinely interested in them. They keenly join in with children, playing and talking with them. Staff are good role models. They encourage children to be kind and caring towards each other. At lunchtime, children help their friends to open their lunches and talk about what they all have. This promotes children's positive behaviour well.
- Leaders and managers are well supported by the trustees. They work together well. Staff appreciate the regular opportunities they have to talk about children and share ideas. Leaders and managers have ambitious future plans to further enhance the setting. For example, staff want to create a growing and planting area to support children's understanding of the natural world.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have ensured that safeguarding practices and procedures are robustly in place and effective. Staff can accurately identify signs and symptoms of abuse and know where to go for advice and support. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about children or colleagues. Leaders and managers ensure that staff benefit from regular supervision arrangements and opportunities to share information. Staff complete regular checks and undertake daily risk assessments to identify risks and hazards. Leaders and managers have appropriate arrangements in place for the recruitment, induction and ongoing suitability of staff.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- enhance the guidance for staff to develop their confidence in supporting

children's individual needs effectively, particularly for children with SEND.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY549510
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10302084
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	20
Number of children on roll	32
Name of registered person	Squirrels Pre-School CIO
Registered person unique reference number	RP549509
Telephone number	01227766537
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2023

Information about this early years setting

Squirrels Pre-School CIO re-registered in 2017. The pre-school is open from 9am to 3pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and from 9am to midday on Thursday, during term time only. The pre-school receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are seven members of staff, of whom six hold relevant early years qualifications.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Victoria Salisbury

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 manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- 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 manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation during snack time.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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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