

Inspection of St Stephens Playgroup

Parish Church Of St Stephen, Maidstone Road, Chatham ME4 6JE

Inspection date: 12 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	Requires improvement
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children and their families are greeted by friendly and caring staff. Children come in happily to explore the toys and activities set out for them. They enjoy making Christmas crafts and proudly share these with their favourite staff. This encourages their communication and creativity skills. Staff promote children's positive attitudes to learning. They frequently praise and encourage them and celebrate their achievements. Children delight in singing their favourite rhymes to their friends, and they all clap when they finish. This supports their confidence and self-esteem well. Staff encourage children's good behaviour. They are good role models. Children offer toys to their friends and respond positively to staff.

Staff promote children's thinking skills well. Children enjoy exploring play dough with different-sized cutters. They talk about the shapes they make and compare them together. Staff show interest and pose questions. This helps to develop children's mathematical skills. Staff plan their curriculum by tailoring it to children's next steps. They provide children with a range of activities that interest and motivate them. For example, children spend time filling containers with sand, concentrating hard to fill them up. This encourages their perseverance and resilience. Staff prioritise children's individual needs. Children who were non-verbal when they started now communicate confidently. All children make good progress.

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

- Leaders and managers have worked hard to review and enhance practice. They have sought effective support from the local authority and have plans for the future to continue to enhance provision. For example, they hope to invest in more staff training and develop the outdoor area further. They want to ensure they offer good-quality care and education.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents receive regular information about their children. They welcome the opportunities they have to discuss what their children have been learning. They report that their children have made progress in their confidence, independence and social skills. They appreciate the ideas they get to help their children at home.
- Staff are committed to improving their knowledge and skills. They appreciate the regular staff meetings they have to discuss children. They work well together to use children's next steps to plan activities. They enjoy their jobs and support each other well. However, opportunities for staff to discuss their own professional development needs are not regular enough to ensure training is targeted effectively to support children in their learning.
- Staff promote children's independence well. They encourage children to carry out tasks for themselves. For example, children choose their own snacks and serve themselves. They pour their own drinks and open their own lunch boxes.

Children immediately line up to wash their hands at lunchtime without being asked. This encourages good self-care skills.

- Staff promote children's understanding of healthy eating. They discuss with children about healthy food choices. They talk about the importance of washing hands before and after eating. Children share what their favourite foods are and explain which are healthiest. Staff encourage and support children to sit and eat together. They encourage them to try a range of foods. Children who found lunchtimes challenging now settle immediately to choose snacks, and they now eat a range of foods.
- Children benefit from a well-planned environment. Staff promote children's interests. For example, children enjoy building homes for the animals with coloured blocks. They spend time fixing them together and talking about them. This helps to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Staff promote children's listening skills well. Children excitedly join in when dancing to music. They listen attentively for when the music stops and follow staff's instructions well. They respond positively to staff and know the routines of the setting well. This develops their attention skills effectively.
- Leaders and managers have effective partnerships with external agencies, including local schools. They have strong processes in place for the sharing of information to support smooth transitions to school. This means children are well supported for their next stage in education.
- Staff encourage children's communication and language skills well. Children are eager to take home 'Dudley' the dinosaur and talk excitedly about his adventures. Staff encourage children to share family photographs and encourage children to talk about their families. This helps to develop respect for others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have ensured that safeguarding procedures and practices are reviewed effectively. Staff are able to confidently explain what they would do if they are worried about a child or if they have concerns about a colleague. They know where to go to access further support, advice or guidance. Leaders and managers ensure that effective processes are in place for the sharing of information between external agencies. They have effective procedures in place for the recruitment, induction and checking of the ongoing suitability of staff. Staff undertake daily risk assessments to ensure the premises are safe and secure. They have fire evacuation procedures in place so that staff know how to respond in an emergency.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen supervision arrangements to support staff's own professional development needs, knowledge and skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY491596
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10277358
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	30
Number of children on roll	28
Name of registered person	St Stephens Playgroup Partnership
Registered person unique reference number	RP534767
Telephone number	07513598615
Date of previous inspection	12 January 2023

Information about this early years setting

St Stephens Playgroup registered in 2015 and operates from a church hall in Chatham, Kent. The playgroup employs six members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold recognised early years qualifications. The playgroup opens from 9.10am until 1.10pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and from 9.10am until 3.10pm on Wednesday, during term time only. The playgroup provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

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 inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the playgroup and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector spoke to children, to find out about their time at the setting.
- Staff spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children.
- 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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