

Inspection of St. Michaels Pre School

St. Michaels Church Hall, 2 High Road, DARTFORD DA2 7EG

Inspection date: 28 February 2024

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	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive happily at this welcoming and friendly setting. Staff plan an interesting and motivating curriculum. Children are eager to explore the stimulating range of activities set up for them. Children enjoy visiting the role-play travel agents to 'purchase' tickets for the aeroplane. They develop their communication and social skills as they talk to staff and friends about where they are going, wheeling their suitcases around the room. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported by staff. Children who are non-verbal when they begin at the setting make good progress with their speech. They excitedly join in with a small-group activity designed by staff to support children's developing language skills. They blow bubbles and encourage repetition of 'pop, pop, pop' to enable children's sound formation.

Staff promote children's positive attitudes to learning well. They praise and encourage them frequently. Younger children particularly delight in choosing stickers for helping at snack time. Staff develop children's interest in mathematics by providing a regular 'number hunt'. Children proudly share how many numbers they have found and begin to recognise numbers in their written form. Children enjoy a wide range of activities to spark their imaginations and curiosity. For example, older children enjoy exploring paints, and staff provide real daffodils to encourage their interest. Younger children enjoy making models with play dough. Staff encourage children's good behaviour and help them to develop control and patience. For example, they encourage the use of timers to help children understand when it is their turn.

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

- Children behave well. They respond well to staff, who are kind and caring. Younger children play cooperatively with their peers, dressing and feeding dolls together and taking turns. Children build strong relationships with their friends and staff. This helps them to feel secure and develop their social skills.
- Staff prioritise children's emotional well-being. Children point to pictures of different colour monsters to identify how they are feeling. Where children need support to manage their feelings, staff are calm and patient in their approach. Staff have developed a comfortable space where children can relax if needed. This helps children to feel safe.
- Staff promote children's interests. Older children enjoy exploring the paints with their hands. Younger children spend a long time rolling out play dough. However, at times, staff do not always recognise when children could be supported further in their learning to develop their knowledge and skills.
- Children benefit from staff who know them well. They plan activities based on their interests. For example, children enjoy talking with staff about which items

float or sink. This helps to develop their mathematical understanding.

- Children's communication skills are prioritised successfully. Staff share with children their 'bird books', talking about different birds they have seen outside. They create talking tins for them to take home to share with their families, which promotes discussion in the larger group.
- All children make good progress, particularly those with SEND. Staff provide effective support and provide children with regular 'boost' sessions to enhance their listening and language skills. Children enjoy cuddling up and sharing stories and rhymes with staff.
- Children benefit from a range of experiences to develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. For example, staff talk to children about St David's Day. They go on regular trips in the local area to support children's knowledge of the world around them.
- Leaders and managers work well with other professionals. They seek specialist advice and support from the local authority, where necessary. This helps to meet children's individual needs effectively. Managers ensure they share information well with other settings and schools to support children's smooth transitions.
- Leaders and managers are passionate about providing good-quality care and education. They are proactive in raising funds to develop the provision. For example, they have secured grants to develop their allotment and have ambitious plans for the future to support children's learning about growing and planting.
- Communication with parents is good. Parents appreciate the regular updates about the progress their children are making. They speak highly of the approachable staff. They appreciate the focus on children's outdoor experiences and community links. They talk positively about the ideas they get to help their children's learning at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- enhance staff's skills to recognise when they can support children further in their learning to help extend and embed their knowledge and skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	127613
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10312014
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	30
Name of registered person	St Michael's Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP522398
Telephone number	07765 024 181
Date of previous inspection	18 April 2018

Information about this early years setting

St. Michaels Pre School registered in 2016 and operates from a church hall in Wilmington, in Dartford, Kent. The pre-school is open each weekday, from 9.15am to 12.15pm. On Tuesday and Thursday it offers a lunch club from 12.15pm to 2.30pm, during term time only. The provider employs five members of staff. Of these, four staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Victoria Salisbury

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider 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 provider.
- The managers 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 talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke with the nominated individuals about the leadership and management of the setting.
- 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 inspector carried out a joint observation of a communication and language activity with the manager.
- 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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