

Inspection of Next Steps Preschool

St Martins Church Hall, Church Road, Dover, Kent CT17 9LW

Inspection date: 25 April 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 and families are at the heart of this kind and caring pre-school. Staff welcome children at the door with smiles and cuddles. This effectively supports children's emotional well-being. Staff promote children's positive attitudes to learning well. They encourage children to do things for themselves. Older children butter their own toast at snack time and wash up their plates. Younger children immediately put their coats away on their pegs. This effectively supports children's independence skills. Staff successfully encourage children's good behaviour. They frequently praise children and are good role models. Children behave very well. They celebrate their friends' achievements, saying that their attempts are 'amazing'. This effectively supports children's self-esteem and confidence.

Staff have high expectations of children. They plan an interesting and motivating curriculum based on children's needs and interests. Children demonstrate high levels of engagement. Older children enjoy playing outside in the 'next steps' car garage for a long time, chatting together about fire engines. Younger children maintain interest in making play dough shapes with staff for a sustained period. This supports children's concentration and perseverance skills well. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities demonstrate that they are confident and comfortable at the setting. They form special bonds with staff, who know them well. Staff are patient and calm. All children make good progress from their starting points.

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

- Staff encourage children to recall previous learning to help them to develop key skills. For example, younger children enjoy looking at photos of their trip to the shops to buy ingredients to make cakes. Older children talk with staff about their trip to the hairdressers and take turns being the 'hairdresser'. This helps to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
- Staff promote children's understanding of others successfully. For example, children are encouraged to bring in photos of their families to learn about each other. Staff share their own photos and talk about who is at home with them. This helps children to feel included and to learn that all families are special.
- Children benefit from staff who prioritise their understanding of self-care. Staff encourage children to brush their teeth after eating. They help them to know how to use their toothbrushes effectively by brushing their own teeth with them. This encourages children's understanding of good oral health and how to keep themselves safe.
- Children benefit from staff who work hard to develop exciting spaces for them to play and learn. Children especially enjoy exploring outside, spending time digging in the sand and mud. Staff create a special sensory space where children

can relax. However, at times, staff are not deployed most effectively to help children in their play and learning. For example, they are sometimes busy with other tasks or are not positioned in a way that ensures they notice when children need more support to extend their learning.

- Staff promote children's interest in books and stories. Children enjoy sharing their adventures with 'travelling bear'. They enjoy joining in with rhymes. However, on occasion, staff do not always provide consistent support for the youngest children to help them communicate. This, at times, impacts on their use of words and language.
- Leaders and managers are passionate and hardworking. They have very positive relationships with the local church and community to help support families. They work closely with schools and other early years settings to ensure smooth transitions. They use funding effectively to support individual needs, for example by purchasing specific toys to help children to settle in.
- Staff are proud of their jobs and work very well together. They say they feel very supported in their roles. Staff are well trained and provide children and families with high-quality care and education. Staff are excited to work with families to develop an outside 'forest' area in the future.
- Communication with parents is very good. Parents appreciate the extra lengths staff go to, to help them. Staff accompany families on visits to support them. Parents talk highly of the stay-and-play sessions they attend, which help them to understand how to help their children at home. Parents appreciate the wide range of experiences their children get to learn about the world around them.

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:

- strengthen the deployment of staff so that children receive more consistent support to extend their learning during their play
- support staff to implement further strategies to encourage younger children's early communication skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY500822
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10335379
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	50
Number of children on roll	47
Name of registered person	Next Steps Preschool Of Elms Vale
Registered person unique reference number	RP535450
Telephone number	01304 226234
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2018

Information about this early years setting

Next Steps Preschool registered in 2016. It operates from St Martin's church hall in Dover, Kent. The pre-school is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 8.30am to 3.30pm and Tuesday from 8.30am to 11.30am. The provider receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The pre-school employs seven members of staff, five of whom hold a relevant early years qualification at level 2 or above.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Victoria Salisbury

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the pre-school 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 deputy manager 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 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 deputy 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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