

Inspection of Viking Junior Academy

Wentworth Primary School, Viking Road, MALDON, Essex CM9 6JN

Inspection date: 17 July 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

Staff skilfully use their interactions to engage all children in the activities on offer. They assess children's understanding by asking interesting questions. For instance, children remember that liquid will overflow if they place too many pieces of plastic fruit in a bowl of water and eagerly recall that it will evaporate in the hot sun. Staff support children's language acquisition through, for example, naming parts of animals that children may not already be familiar with. They talk about elephants' tusks and why camels have humps. Staff relate this to children's own experiences of drinking enough water to stay healthy and use more complex vocabulary, such as 'hydrated'. They read animatedly and share familiar stories. Children excitedly anticipate what comes next in their favourite book.

Staff are very respectful to each other and provide positive role models for children's behaviour. Children clearly know the pre-school rules and routines. They say please and thank you and happily offer other children resources when they have finished playing. Snack time is well organised and promotes children's independence. They have opportunities to practise their self-help skills, including pouring their own drinks and attempting to use tongs to pick up fruit. Staff gently encourage them to keep trying when they find this difficult. As a result, children persevere and proudly show staff when they are successful.

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

- Staff feel well supported through a programme of regular supervisions and team meetings. They are encouraged to complete a wide range of online training to support their professional development. Leaders and managers assess the effectiveness of training through discussions with staff and by monitoring practice.
- Leaders and managers have devised a curriculum, which identifies priorities for children's early education. They say that the pre-school provides the stepping stones for children's learning. Staff recognise that children need to gain certain skills first to make progress. However, they do not effectively plan activities that consistently reflect the curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- Parents provide information about their children's learning and development at the beginning of their time at pre-school. Staff use this information and their ongoing observations to find out what children are learning and to decide how they can help them to know and learn more.
- Staff set up some areas of the provision, such as the mud kitchen, for children to play cooperatively, explore and investigate. However, they have not considered further ways to provide sufficient challenge for children who are more able and want to find out and learn more for themselves.
- Staff manage group times well to maintain children's interest. Throughout the

pre-school session, they sit with children at their level and engage in their play. Staff support children's communication skills and encourage back-and-forth conversations. This helps to show they value children's ideas and opinions.

- Children are developing their mathematical understanding. For example, staff count along as children happily jump on stepping stones that are numbered one to ten. Children laugh and confidently correct themselves when they jump out of sequence. Staff place moveable dots on the floor to show children a suitable and safe route to navigate their way to the bathroom or to go outside at various times of the day.
- Leaders and managers place high importance on planning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff provide focused support to help all children make progress and get the most out of their time at pre-school. They work closely with parents and other agencies for advice and to share appropriate strategies. Leaders consult with staff to identify how best to use additional funding to benefit their key children.
- Leaders and managers provide many opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning. This includes a lending library and stay-and-play sessions. If necessary, they offer flexible sessions and settling-in arrangements to suit families' specific needs and to ensure children have the best possible experience at the pre-school. Parents describe staff as very supportive and approachable and appreciate that they regularly communicate with them about their children's progress.
- Staff share children's excitement about going to school, helping to smooth the transition. Leaders and managers have put in place systems to enable staff to share information about children's learning and development with other settings children attend to promote continuity.

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:

- support staff to develop a deeper understanding of how to deliver the curriculum intent and plan activities that reflect what they want children to learn
- explore ways to provide higher levels of challenge for older and most-able children to extend their learning even further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY409367
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10344351
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare 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	74
Name of registered person	Viking Junior Academy Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP903169
Telephone number	0758 3261354
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2018

Information about this early years setting

Viking Junior Academy registered in 2010. The pre-school employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3 or above. Sessions are from 8.50am until 2.50pm each weekday during school term time. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It also offers before- and after-school care and a holiday club for school-age children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Fiona Sapler

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 manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the pre-school and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The provider, staff, children and parents spoke to the inspector during the inspection. The inspector also took account of parents' written views.
- The manager spoke to the inspector about her role as special educational needs coordinator and how they support children with SEND.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children and assessed the quality of teaching.
- The manager and provider carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the inspector.
- The inspector reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.

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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