

Inspection of Sandytots

Stafford Children's Centre, Stafford ST16 3NQ

Inspection date: 28 August 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 at this nursery show genuine care and affection to children. Children enjoy spending time with staff and seek them out for comfort when they are upset. Staff stay close to children who are new to the nursery and help them to feel safe and settled.

All children have a positive attitude to learning. Staff apply successful teaching methods to capture children's attention and keep them engaged in learning. Staff support children to learn about their own feelings and those of others. They provide activities that teach children to take turns, and as a result, children behave well.

Children enjoy learning outdoors. Staff teach them about the bugs they find. They model how to handle the bugs with care and find them a safe space to put them so children can see them. Children learn about the size of different bugs and how they move. They pay attention to this and are interested in what they have discovered. Staff support children to find a suitable place for the bugs to live outside and encourage children's thinking skills as they ask for suggestions.

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

- The curriculum is well understood across the nursery. Leaders have designed a programme of learning that is sequential and builds on what children already know and can do. Staff incorporate children's interests into the activities they plan, which means children are keen to explore what is on offer. Staff regularly review the skills children have achieved and create new learning targets for them. This means children make good progress.
- Children become good communicators. Staff choose familiar stories to share, which helps children to recall information they have previously learned. They ask questions to challenge children's thinking and give them time to respond. Staff learn to use Makaton to communicate with younger children and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work closely with external agencies and parents to ensure that any extra support children require is coordinated.
- Children learn to be independent. Younger children learn to use spoons to feed themselves with support from staff. Older children use cutlery competently and manage their own self-care skills, such as using the toilet alone. This helps to prepare children for their move to school.
- Overall, staff deploy themselves well to ensure they can support children as they play. However, there are times when staff do not always consider how to be fully effective in their deployment. For example, there are areas where children play outdoors which cannot always be seen, and staff complete other tasks during

busy routines rather than ensure the needs of children are being consistently met.

- Staff have opportunities to support their own professional development. Leaders identify training that will improve staff's knowledge and skills relating to the children they care for. They have regular supervision meetings to review their performance. However, support and coaching for staff do not currently focus enough on supporting them to understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. For example, some staff rely on others to take responsibility or wait for direction before carrying out routine tasks. Consequently, there is not always a consistent approach across the nursery.
- Leaders are reflective and respond to local and national developments to ensure their procedures are effective in keeping children safe. For example, they have recently reviewed their lockdown procedures in response to media reports concerning challenges in the surrounding area.
- Partnerships with parents are a real strength at this nursery. Leaders plan regular play-and-stay sessions for parents to attend, where they make connections with others and build relationships with staff. They benefit from seeing their children in the nursery environment and gain ideas on how to support learning at home. Parents comment that children are happy to attend, staff are friendly and they feel supported as a whole family unit. They see their children making progress and receive information daily about what children have been doing.

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 arrangements for supporting and coaching staff, so that roles and responsibilities are fully understood and carried out consistently across the nursery
- strengthen staff deployment so that children's needs are consistently met.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY469523
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10361970
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	0 to 8
Total number of places	122
Number of children on roll	182
Name of registered person	Sandytots Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP909340
Telephone number	01785256155
Date of previous inspection	21 September 2021

Information about this early years setting

Sandytots registered in 2013. It is based in Stafford and opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 6.30am until 6.30pm. In addition to the nursery, Sandytots also offers a before- and after-school club and a holiday club. The nursery employs 33 members of staff. Of these 26 hold a relevant qualification at level 3 to level 6. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Christine Ward

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 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 joint observations of group activities with the manager.
- 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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