

Inspection of Forest School For Life

Silfield Street, Silfield, Wymondham NR18 9NL

Inspection date: 8 January 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are warmly greeted upon arrival by a senior member of staff and their key person. Children spend time outdoors, mostly within a secure base camp area. In addition, there are covered areas and a large, purpose-provided wooden structure, heated by a wood burner. This is where children can spend time in inclement weather. Babies and toddlers' care needs are appropriately met. Staff follow these children's individual routines. Nappy changing is carried out in a sensitive manner. Children are settled to sleep in the fresh air. Staff are calm and supportive, encouraging children to be polite, kind and respectful of each other and the environment. Younger children show that they feel secure as they confidently seek out their key person for a reassuring cuddle. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn to use a range of strategies to explore and recognise their own emotions.

Staff engage children in a wide range of activities, most of which are created from natural materials and embedded within an ecologically sound philosophy. Children recognise and name different leaves, as they make a winter collage. They learn about, and become involved in, planting, growing and harvesting foods. They enjoy social mealtimes together, eating colourful, nutritious food that has been prepared in the outdoor kitchen. Children learn how to nurture life as they care for the resident chickens. They use their imaginations as they spot 'fairies' hiding behind the trees on their woodland walk and go on 'outings', where they explore and discover life in the ponds and the meadow.

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

- In December 2024, the provider notified Ofsted of a significant incident. A child was able to walk through the entrance gate, unaccompanied, at collection time. The child was unharmed. Following the incident, the provider took immediate action. They carried out a full investigation. They installed additional gates for added security and revised the arrival and collection procedures to reduce the risk of such an incident happening again. Arrangements for the children are safe and secure.
- Leaders use their knowledge and experience to provide a well-planned, natural outdoor learning environment. This changes with the seasons. Recruitment procedures are robust. Staff, some of whom are new to the setting, receive an effective induction. All staff receive regular supervision, and there are good opportunities for them to enhance their knowledge and to attend a broad range of interesting and thought-provoking training.
- Staff support children to be independent, active, confident and resilient. Children learn how to keep their bodies warm in colder weather and how to put on their gloves. Children are taught how to recognise, assess and take risks for

themselves. They practise handling scissors and tools safely, as they engage in seasonal crafts. Children negotiate ladder steps and climb onto a swing in the tree, without adult intervention.

- Staff place a strong emphasis on building children's communication and language skills. They use some simple sign language and ongoing spoken commentary about what the children are doing. Children hear a rich range of vocabulary. Staff break into song and rhyme, as the children gather round the campfire. Children know to join in with familiar refrains. Children access a wealth of books. Staff read and tell stories with animation. They use puppets and props to capture children's interest and give children opportunities to practise their speaking skills.
- Overall, staff demonstrate effective teaching techniques. Some skilfully capture and maintain children's attention, as they decide how to fix foraged twigs together to make a stick figure. Staff pose questions to help children to think, giving them time to work things out for themselves. Staff build on what children already know and can do. They introduce a new skill, as they model how to 'lash' two sticks together. However, not all staff confidently support and extend children's learning this effectively. In addition, planning for the youngest children is not always flexible enough or focused on giving them the best opportunities to practise emerging skills.
- Parents, many of whom travel some distance, speak very favourably about the setting. They receive a broad range of information and daily feedback. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning by joining in with family nature events and family breakfasts. Staff have a good overview of those children in the setting with SEND. They work closely with parents and other agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to support those children who are slower to speak.

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 mentoring and coaching, so that all staff are confident to plan, support and extend children's learning, building on what children already know and can do
- support staff to identify the youngest children's emerging learning needs and to focus on giving these children the best opportunities to practise key skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2696863
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10382298
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	1 to 6
Total number of places	33
Number of children on roll	51
Name of registered person	Furness, Victoria
Registered person unique reference number	2696861
Telephone number	07830379520
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Forest School For Life is an outdoor setting. It is located within a 20-acre woodland site, close to the town of Wymondham, in Norfolk. It registered under its current ownership in 2022. The setting employs 16 members of childcare staff. Staff's qualifications range from level 2 to level 7. Forest School For Life opens Monday to Thursday, from 8am to 5pm, all year round. The setting provides funded early education for children. It also offers a holiday club for children up to the age of eight years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Dawn Pointer

Inspection activities

- We carried out an inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information that we received about the provider.
- The provider and the inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years foundation stage curriculum on offer.
- The inspector spoke with staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The provider and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- The inspector held a management meeting with the provider and reviewed relevant evidence to demonstrate the suitability of staff working in the setting.
- The inspector spoke to a sample of parents and took account of their views.

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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