

Inspection of Little Squirrels Play Forest Magdalen

St Pauls Community Hall, Magdalen Road, Norwich NR3 4LN

Inspection date: 7 April 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 arrive happy. They settle quickly and are eager to explore. Leaders and managers have created a welcoming and nurturing environment where stimulating activities to provoke children's curiosity are in abundance. For instance, children make tea and potions as they experiment with water, herbs, tea and fruit. Their physical skills improve as they learn to use tools such as knives to chop fruit and a pestle and mortar to grind ingredients. Staff remain close by to offer support as children master their physical skills. This helps to promote their confidence to try new things.

Staff build close bonds with children. They provide effective settling-in sessions as well as stay-and-play opportunities, where children and their families explore the setting and get to know the staff. This helps children to settle swiftly in their new learning environment. All children make good progress in their learning. Staff use assessments effectively to identify any gaps in children's learning and take swift action to close these with targeted support.

Children are confident and resilient. Leaders focus strongly on supporting children's emotional well-being. Daily mindfulness activities help to support children's understanding of their feelings. Staff provide children with strategies, such as breathing techniques and recalling happy thoughts, to help children to regulate their emotions. Through discussions, children learn how to communicate their wishes and feelings with each other. This helps children to develop empathy and supports their understanding of the behavioural expectations of the setting. Children frequently display kind and positive behaviours towards their peers.

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

- Staff promote children's communication and language development well. Babies smile and giggle as they enjoy playful interactions of peekaboo and ready steady go. Staff use simple signing along with spoken words to help to build young children's growing vocabulary. Children hear lots of songs and rhymes throughout the day, which are shared with parents for them to sing at home. Staff engage in meaningful discussions with children. They narrate their play and introduce new vocabulary, such as splat and squelch as children explore muddy puddles.
- Children access a wide range of books. Staff have introduced focus stories to provide lots of repetition, along with a lending library to share books at home. Books are carefully linked to activities to extend children's learning. For instance, following a minibeast hunt activity, staff share a book on insects. They point out the different features of insects from the illustrations. Children demonstrate high levels of engagement and describe marks on butterflies' wings as 'giant eyes'.

They listen intently as staff explain these are to deter predators.

- Staff make children's learning around safeguarding fun and relevant to their play. Children actively join staff as they complete daily risk assessments. They learn to identify hazards and discuss how to resolve them. For example, the setting has incorporated a 'Risky Robin' poster. This acts as a visual reminder to children that they are in an area where they need to be mindful of potential risks, such as when playing near the swings or the firepit. Children discuss what they know about safety and support each other to stay safe.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. They speak positively about their children's experiences at the setting. Parents appreciate the various resources they have access to, such as the parent breakfast station and activity bags and books to take home to share with their children. In addition, parents are invited to monthly stay-and-play sessions, which they state helps them to feel included in their children's learning. Parents describe staff as approachable and caring. They value all the outdoor learning their children receive.
- Leaders are passionate about their provision. They are reflective and discuss ways to further improve the learning experiences for children in their care. Staff morale is high, and they comment on the supportive environment leaders provide. Staff are well qualified. They receive regular supervision and access a wealth of online training opportunities to build on their good practice. However, staff coaching is not yet sufficient to enable staff to identify areas to improve their practice and share their knowledge and skills with one another.

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:

- establish effective coaching methods that support staff to raise the quality of their teaching to a consistently high standard.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2714145
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10376173
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 4
Total number of places	47
Number of children on roll	71
Name of registered person	Little Squirrels Play Forest Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP543578
Telephone number	01603 977818
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Little Squirrels Play Forest Magdalen registered in 2022 and is situated in Norwich. It employs 10 members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications, ranging from level 3 to level 7. The setting is open Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. The setting provides funded early education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Louise Harris

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together to discuss and understand how the early years provision and the curriculum are organised.
- The inspector observed activities indoors and outside and assessed the impact these have on children's learning.
- The manager completed a joint observation and evaluation of an activity with the inspector.
- Children told the inspector about what they like to do when they are at the setting.
- The inspector had discussions with staff at appropriate times during the inspection. She took account of parents' views through verbal and written feedback.

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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