

Inspection of Little Merlins Pre-school

Culdrose Community Centre, Hibernia Road, Helston, Cornwall TR13 8DJ

Inspection date: 7 May 2025

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 happily wave goodbye to their parents and run to play with their friends at the start of the day, showing curiosity and engagement. Toddlers are guided by staff to transfer water between containers, developing their hand strength. They take part in activities for long periods, demonstrating good levels of concentration. Staff develop strong relationships with children, understanding the positive impact this has on children's learning and development. All children make good progress and feel safe and secure.

Staff have developed a broad curriculum that supports children in being ready for the next stage of learning. There is a strong focus on outdoor play and developing social skills. Children enjoy playing in mixed-age groups in the outdoor area. Babies smile as they watch older children play with toy cars. Pre-school children help babies new to the nursery settle by joining staff in playing games with them.

Children are guided to explore and learn about a variety of religions and cultural celebrations. They explore Flora Day, supporting children to understand the heritage, traditional dances and songs of their local community. Children build an understanding of animals and nature, providing food and water daily for the nursery chickens. They develop knowledge about life cycles as they collect eggs from the coop. Regular visits to a local horse stable, where older children help groom and muck out the stable and enjoy a horse ride, develop children's confidence and social skills.

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

- Staff guide children to develop a love of books and stories. They read to children throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors. Children sit in the shade and listen as staff bring books to life with interesting voices. Through these stories, children learn about experiences beyond their own. A lending library is also provided, where children take books home, extending their love of books and bringing reading into their home life.
- Children's creativity is encouraged as they explore their imagination through role playing and dressing up in costumes. Older children are keen to point out that they are wearing traditional costumes, including white dresses, top hats and long gloves. They imagine themselves as adults taking a stroll. As they observe flowers, they create their own using coloured salt dough and straws, developing their creative ideas.
- Staff guide children to develop their language and communication skills. They often sing to babies, teaching them new words and helping them understand rhymes. With older children, staff have conversations, asking questions like, 'What colour is that object?' However, staff tend to ask questions that only need

short answers, not giving children time to think and respond more. This reduces the opportunities for children to explore their own ideas and interests in detail through conversations.

- Children are kind and eagerly take turns and share. For example, when they want to play with the monkey bars, they wait until their friend has finished their turn. Children follow instructions, such as washing their hands before eating. Staff praise children's achievements and support children to understand how their behaviour impacts on others.
- Children are supported in developing their independence skills. Staff encourage children to drink water to stay hydrated and to recognise their name labels on water bottles. Staff help children develop healthy eating habits by providing healthy food options during snack times. After lunch, children take turns brushing their teeth, supported by staff in developing healthy routines.
- Staff plan activities cohesively. For example, creative activities link with the cultural celebrations of the week. Staff ensure that they review children's progress to provide a full curriculum experience. However, activities for older and most-able children do not provide the further challenge these children need.
- Leaders support staff to stay up to date with early years developments through ongoing training. For example, staff training on enhancing outdoor learning experiences has had a positive impact on children's development. Staff refine their practice by reflecting on feedback from colleagues. Valued in their roles, staff work well together as a team. Managers have strong links with other early years professionals and schools.
- Parents' feedback is very positive, and parents are keen to recommend the pre-school to others. The effective communication is praised, with parents feeling well informed about their children's activities and progress. Additionally, parents comment on how happy their children are and the strong friendships they form at the pre-school.

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 and encourage children to explore their ideas and interests even further to benefit their conversational skills
- strengthen the planning of activities for older and most-able children to ensure that they receive further challenge.

Setting details

Unique reference number	102854
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10398328
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	1 to 4
Total number of places	36
Number of children on roll	40
Name of registered person	Little Merlins Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP904604
Telephone number	01326 562894
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2019

Information about this early years setting

Little Merlins Pre-school registered in 2000. This committee-run group operates from purpose-built premises attached to a community centre on the edge of Helston, in Cornwall. The provision opens each weekday from 9am to 3pm, during school term times. It provides government funded spaces for childcare. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold level 5 qualifications and six staff members hold early years qualifications at level 3.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Victoria Jones

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this is having on the children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk of the setting.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The children spoke with the inspector during the inspection.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity, and they evaluated this together.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the setting.

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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