

Inspection of Squirrels Preschool

West Totton Centre, Hazel Farm Road, Totton, SOUTHAMPTON SO40 8WU

Inspection date: 25 June 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 greet children at the pre-school gate and support their transition into the building. Children separate from their parents with ease and walk into the preschool. They find their coat pegs and hang up their bags. Children enter the playroom and choose from the range of activities laid out for them. This helps to develop their independence.

Staff understand the importance of supporting children's emotional well-being. Children confidently seek out staff for play and support. They share their personal stories and staff show genuine interest and always respond. This helps children to feel valued. Staff know the children well and respond to their individual requirements. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They reinforce positive behaviour through praise and encouragement.

Staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum. They understand the importance of communication and language skills and plan focus groups to develop children's vocabulary. Staff lead sessions with infectious enthusiasm, building children's anticipation as they open the box to explore what is inside. Children are familiar with a song that staff repeat and show excitement as they join in the words and clap along. This helps to increase children's communication and language skills and build their self-esteem as they join in the familiar activity.

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

- The manager and staff take appropriate actions following any significant incidents that occur, to make sure they are keeping children safe. For example, they have reviewed staff deployment to ensure it is effective at all times. Staff have opportunities to discuss their development through supervision sessions and the manager has high expectations. Consequently, staff report they feel valued and enjoy working at the pre-school. However, at times, there is not regular communication between the manager and the committee members to ensure fully consistent practice.
- Children access a variety of activities at the pre-school. They enjoy taking part in creative activities. However, on occasion, staff do not fully consider the different abilities of the children taking part. For example, at times they do not adapt or vary teaching to offer children the right amount of challenge and extend their learning.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) takes prompt action so that children receive support at the earliest possible opportunity. They work effectively with other agencies to ensure children receive targeted support. All children including those with SEND make progress from their starting points.

- Overall, staff promote and support children's behaviour well. They help children who have minor conflicts resolve them positively and give gentle reminders to be kind. Staff understand the importance of role modelling. This contributes positively to children's own behaviour. However, at times, staff do not provide consistent guidance to help children learn about what is acceptable. For example, on occasions, staff challenge children as they climb on fences, but at other times, such as when children knock toys on the floor, this behaviour is not pursued. This gives children mixed messages when learning right from wrong.
- Children confidently help themselves to the fruit and pour their own drinks. Staff remind children to wash their hands before meals and after using the toilet. This helps children to understand the importance of good hygiene and healthy lifestyles.
- Staff support children's physical development well. They set up a range of activities for children to practise and refine their skills. For example, children navigate the swing, moving their legs backwards and forwards. Children transfer water between containers and pour it over the carefully selected seashells. This helps to develop their large and small motor skills.
- The manager and staff work well with the the local schools. This helps to support children with transitions. Staff also work in partnership with other settings children attend. This helps to develop a shared approach to children's care and learning.
- Partnership with parents is good. Staff find out about children's interests and development at settling-in visits. They share information about individual children's development with parents using an online platform. Staff encourage parents to contribute details of trips and holidays the children undertake. This gives staff the opportunity to include this information in their planning.

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:

- develop communication further between leadership to continue to support the smooth running of the pre-school
- strengthen staff's teaching practice to focus more precisely on building on children's knowledge and skills, based on what they already know and can do
- help staff to provide more consistent support for children's growing understanding of rules and boundaries.

Setting details

Unique reference number	511345
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10353825
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	84
Name of registered person	West Totton Squirrels Pre-School Learning Alliance Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP905960
Telephone number	02380 862 266
Date of previous inspection	11 June 2019

Information about this early years setting

Squirrels Preschool registered in 1989. It operates in Totton, Hampshire. The pre-school receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. It is open each weekday during school term times from 7.55am to 3.55pm. There are 16 members of staff, 15 of whom have appropriate early years qualifications from level 2 to level 4. In addition, the pre-school employs an administrative assistant.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lindsay Osman

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.
- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the pre-school and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The SENCO spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- 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 manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of communication and language activity.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and 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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