

Inspection of St Marys Wootton (Bedford) Preschool

St Marys Church Hall, St Marys Road, Wootton, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 9HB

Inspection date: 19 January 2022

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 welcomed at the pre-school door and happily leave their parents with support from friendly staff. They settle quickly and enjoy exploring a wide range of activities that are freely available, inside and out. Children's emotional needs are supported by staff who give them reassurance and time to settle in. Children behave well, as staff constantly demonstrate positive behaviours through good role modelling.

Children learn to concentrate and focus as they play alongside staff and their peers. For example, they become engrossed for long periods of time in the home corner. They use household items that engage them in imaginative cooking as they prepare cakes and pizzas. Children develop their interest in books as they help run the weekly library and take turns to choose a book to take home. Books are available around the setting and are used alongside activity tables to support children's learning. Children love their outdoor play. They develop their physical skills as they choose from a variety of resources, such as bicycles and a mud kitchen. Children negotiate the challenging equipment available, including a balance rope and hammock. Children learn to safely use tools, such as stick whittling, during forest school activities.

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

- Managers recognise the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on children's development, specifically behaviour and communication development. During periods of the pandemic lockdown, the manager provided home learning tasks for children and their families to participate in. Videocalls and doorstep visits were used to check on the children's and their family's well-being.
- Staff plan the curriculum around children's current interests and the seven areas of learning. Staff feel able to make suggestions and focus on children's interests to engage them in activities. They spend time evaluating activities and assessing what changes can be made. However, at times, staff are not clear how the activities support children's individual learning needs. This means they do not always consistently challenge and extend children's development.
- Additional funding is used to broaden children's learning experiences. For example, children have visits to a local farm with their families. New resources have been purchased to support children during small group activities. Funding is also used to support staff's knowledge when working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The well-established key-person system is effective. Children are emotionally supported as they prepare for school. Staff use children's current interests to help engage them during their settling-in period. Staff actively engage with children during play and encourage back and forth conversations. They ask

questions and allow the children time to think and respond.

- Staff speak calmly and kindly to children and regularly remind them of the rules, such as walking inside. Staff explain to children why they have the rules and how they help to keep everyone safe and prevent injury and harm.
- The manager spends time assessing the staff team and prioritises their mental well-being. Staff report they feel emotionally supported by management. They have yearly appraisals to monitor their performance and training. However, staff are not provided with regular opportunities for individual supervisions to discuss any challenges or issues they may have.
- Parents speak positively about the pre-school and comment that their children are happy attending and that the communication between staff and parents is good. For example, the setting uses a confidential online system to share photos and information effectively. Parents report that their children are well supported in their move to school and feel they are well prepared.
- Daily routine activities such as snack time provide some opportunities for children to develop their independence. However, staff do not consistently encourage children to try and practise independence skills, such as putting on their own coats and outdoor boots or pouring their own drink at snack time.
- Staff regularly use an established language programme. Children enjoy taking part in sessions that encourage their communication and language development, including turn taking by rolling a ball while singing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a good understanding of their safeguarding roles. They know the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, including the impact of extreme beliefs and behaviours. Staff know the procedures to follow and are confident to talk to the safeguarding leaders if they feel a child is at risk of harm. Staff are aware of how to contact the local agencies that they can refer concerns to. Management regularly train staff in safeguarding, using online training sessions, inductions, and questionnaires. Established recruitment processes help ensure staff are suitable to work with children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- enhance staff knowledge of curriculum planning to sharply focus on learning intentions for each child
- support all staff to consistently teach and challenge children to develop independence skills
- organise regular supervision times for all staff.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2538795
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10215287
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	32
Name of registered person	The Parochial Church Council Of St Marys Church Wootton Beds
Registered person unique reference number	2538794
Telephone number	01234 767158
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

St Marys Wootton (Bedford) Preschool registered in 2019. The pre-school employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, one holds an appropriate early years qualification at level 2 and five hold qualifications at level 3 or above, including one with qualified teacher status. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions are on Monday from 9am until midday, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9am until 4pm and on Thursday from 9am until 3pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Rachael Small

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 of the pre-school.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact on children's learning.
- The Inspector spoke to staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The manager took the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- A joint evaluation of an activity was completed with the manager.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector held a leadership and management discussion with the manager and deputy manager at an agreed time. The inspector reviewed relevant documents, including first-aid certificates, the safeguarding policy and accident reports. The committee chairperson joined the meeting for 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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