

Inspection of Holding Hands Pre-School

Mares Farm, High Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP7 0HR

Inspection date: 13 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children access an exciting, varied and interesting curriculum because leaders and staff place children's needs and interests at the heart of their planning. As a result, children are constantly engaged and completely immersed in their learning. There is an atmosphere of fun, warmth and happiness that is strongly instilled by leaders and staff. Children are greeted with extreme warmth when they arrive, and staff take a genuine interest in what they share about their home lives. Consequently, children settle quickly into their play and are completely self-assured.

Children's behaviour is excellent. There is a strong focus on supporting children's emotional well-being. Staff provide ample opportunities to help children express and understand their emotions. This includes regular mindfulness sessions, and a sensory room called the 'Pod', where children can take 'time out' and relax if they are feeling overwhelmed.

Children have access to an abundance of rich experiences that help them to learn about the world around them. Staff plan weekly outings and are meticulous in ensuring there are clear learning intentions from these activities to help expand children's knowledge and experiences. For example, children visit museums and learn about how local people used to live historically. They use public transport to visit nature reserves, which they have had less opportunity to do over the COVID-19 pandemic. They learn the value of money and about the food they eat, as they buy seeds from the local market and grow and nurture the plants in their garden.

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

- The manager and staff work together meticulously to deliver an exciting, challenging and well-sequenced curriculum to closely meet children's individual needs. They exude a passion for providing all children with the highest quality of learning and giving the best possible start to their education. They constantly evaluate their curriculum as a team and look at ways they can build on children's experiences and development. There are highly focused and ambitious plans in place to improve the quality of the provision further.
- Children's development is monitored exceptionally closely and constantly. All staff, including leaders, know children incredibly well and understand how to support their learning needs. Their teaching is consistently of a high quality. Staff expertly tailor their interactions with children to allow them ample opportunity to express themselves, solve problems and try things out for themselves. They interact readily with children as they play to extend and support their learning. Daily focused activities are provided to support children who are at risk of falling behind their peers, to help them catch up rapidly.
- All children thrive and make tremendous progress in their learning, including

those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders and staff show a formidable commitment towards providing support for children with identified gaps in their learning at the earliest opportunity. They work closely with and take account of advice from other professionals. This includes a private speech and language therapist who is funded from the pre-school budget.

- Staff foster a strong love of books and reading. They read animatedly and expertly interact with children to encourage lots of discussion and to introduce vocabulary. Children's passion for particular books is extended in unique ways, such as staff performing a Gruffalo pantomime over Christmas. Children were able to post a letter to a popular author, enclosing photographs of themselves enjoying her specific stories and associated craft activities. Children and staff are immensely proud of the personal letter they received back in response.
- Partnership with parents is excellent. They individually receive detailed, weekly personal emails from their child's key person to tell them about their week at pre-school. This includes ways they can extend their children's learning at home. Leaders chose an online portal that could be set up in different languages to help parents who speak English as an additional language be fully informed of their child's development.
- Managers place the utmost priority on investing in staff's professional development. Staff feel extremely well supported by the manager. They benefit from focused time to work towards their qualifications. The manager plans regular interactive training activities in team meetings to continually enhance their already excellent practice.
- Children are incredibly well supported to develop their independence skills. They relish the responsibility of helping to prepare the fruit and vegetables they have grown in their garden for snack time. They select their own choices from the self-serve snack bar, pour their own milk or water and take their food to their table.
- Staff are excellent role models. They issue instructions followed by 'please' and 'thank you'. Rare and minor conflicts between children are dealt with in a calm and warm manner, without raised voices. Staff supportively reinforce expectations for behaviour and encourage children to learn about making positive choices. Children demonstrate a strong affection for their friends and are kind to each other.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff have an excellent knowledge of the signs that could indicate a child is at risk of harm. They are confident in their understanding of the procedures they need to follow if they have concerns about a child's well-being. They are aware of their responsibilities to make sure that leaders take the appropriate course of action if they raise concerns. Managers liaise closely with other agencies responsible for child protection. They are extremely thorough and confident in challenging decisions made by other agencies if they do not think children will be fully safeguarded. Staff place a high priority on children's safety and well-being.

They maintain excellent communication to make sure all children are closely supervised as they play freely around the setting.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY498738
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10248665
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	32
Name of registered person	Holding Hands Pre-School Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP900923
Telephone number	01494 729342
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2018

Information about this early years setting

Holding Hands Pre-School re-registered in 2016. The setting is situated in Old Amersham, Buckinghamshire. It is open Monday to Friday, during school term time, from 8am to 4.15pm. There is a breakfast club from 8am to 9.15am, a morning session from 9.15am to 12.15pm, a lunch club from 12.15pm to 1.15pm and an afternoon session from 1.15pm to 4.15pm. The pre-school receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The pre-school employs nine staff. Of these, one holds qualified teacher status, one holds a qualification at level 6, the manager holds a qualification at level 5 and three staff hold a qualification at level 3.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Carla Roberts

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 provider.
- This inspection was carried out as a result of a risk assessment, following information received about the provider.
- The deputy manager, manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- 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 inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery, medication records and staff qualifications.

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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