

Inspection of Toad Hall Nursery Hitchin

23-25 Bury Mead Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1RT

Inspection date: 31 January 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

Staff greet children warmly as they arrive, helping them to separate from their parents and carers well. Staff implement an ambitious curriculum that is embedded well throughout the nursery. Activities are thoughtfully planned to extend children's curiosity and sequence their learning. For example, children become engrossed in making 'Gruffalo crumble'. They use spoons to scoop up various elements, such as soil, flowers and foam and mix them together. This is extended to a 'Gruffalo hunt' in the garden that encourages movement and storytelling. Children show positive attitudes towards their learning, helping them to make good progress in their development.

Staff value children's voices and implement a number of strategies for children to express their views and opinions. For example, children are encouraged to take on leadership roles, such as eco-warriors and become student council members, where they can share their views and make decisions. These roles involve responsibilities, such as litter picking and health and safety walks, teaching children about environmental care and risk assessment. Staff act as positive role models and set out clear expectations which encourages children to behave well. They help children to learn routines and effectively manage transitions, fully supporting the well-being of children.

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

- Staff show good knowledge of children's next steps and provide children with a rich range of learning experiences to support this. For example, children explore the concept of weight as they play with rice and scales. They learn key vocabulary, such as 'heavier' and 'lighter', deepening their understanding of measurement. Younger children enjoy mark making with paints, using a variety of tools, such as spatulas and brushes. Occasionally, in some areas, staff do not always consider how best to organise the room to consistently support children's learning.
- Staff fully support children's communication skills. Younger children participate in 'Tiny Talk' sessions, while older children have access to French classes, enhancing children's confidence in learning language. Staff actively play alongside children and narrate their play helping them to hear and learn new words. Babies thoroughly enjoy a range of nursery rhymes, helping them to build on the foundations of their speaking skills.
- Physical development is well supported, both indoors and outdoors, with activities, such as yoga sessions that help children practise balance, coordination, and mindfulness. Outdoor play further enhances motor skills, with children actively involving staff as they engaging in activities, such as painting, trike riding, and mud kitchen play.

- Parent partnerships are highly valued, with families engaged through events, such as stay-and-play sessions, grandparents' days, and festivals. Welcome breakfasts help new families connect with the nursery and each other. Regular newsletters, nutrition boards, and feedback questionnaires keep parents informed and involved. Initiatives such as the 'book swap' encourage reading at home, strengthening literacy development.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive strong support. Staff promote a collaborative approach, working closely with parents and external professionals. They ensure an inclusive environment, liaising with the team to adapt spaces and implement strategies that meet individual learning needs. For example, lanyards with visual cues have been created to help make children's transitions more manageable into the nursery, enabling them to have a positive start to their day.
- The nursery actively participates in the local community through regular outings, including forest-school visits and trips to the park. Children engage in meaningful experiences, such as baking biscuits and delivering them to local businesses. These activities help children develop an understanding of their community and the wider world.
- Staff feel valued and appreciated and receive various recognition strategies to celebrate their achievements. Leaders have robust procedures in place for the supervision of staff. For example, peer observations help staff to celebrate good practice and identify areas to develop. Staff have access to a wide range of training to further strengthen their skills, such as Makaton training, to support children's communication skills. This ensures that staff can consistently deliver high quality care and education to children.

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 staff to provide consistent opportunities for children to be able to extend their learning and development even further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY239470
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10367403
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	127
Number of children on roll	156
Name of registered person	Careroom Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP910483
Telephone number	01462 450354
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2019

Information about this early years setting

Toad Hall Nursery Hitchin registered in 2002. The nursery employs 51 members of staff. Of these, 40 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above, including one who holds qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year, except for bank holidays. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Emily Woodhead

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the setting and discussed the early years curriculum.
- 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 carried out a joint observation of an activity in the preschool room with the manager.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The children communicated with the inspector during the inspection. The inspector spoke with parents and carers during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of the staff working in the nursery, and a selection of other records.

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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