

Inspection of Surrey Hills Forest School

Birtley Brook Estate, Bramley, Surrey GU5 0LB

Inspection date: 6 December 2021

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 highly engaged and motivated to learn in this delightful setting. They have superb opportunities to play and learn in the carefully designed spaces, such as the bird hide and tool station. Staff create a welcoming environment deep within the woods and encourage children to explore freely and independently. The manager demonstrates immense passion, knowledge and ambition and is keen for children to experience hands-on learning in the natural environment.

Children are encouraged to work together to overcome challenges. As a result, children build good friendships. They respond well to the staff, who help them to manage their feelings and behaviour. Children confidently approach staff for comfort and reassurance, especially when feeling the cold and needing a warming cuddle. All children are happy and secure. They show great enthusiasm and positive attitudes towards their learning.

Children spend long periods doing activities which help them deepen their knowledge. For example, they play with toy dinosaurs, building habitats and caves to keep them warm. Staff talk to children about the dinosaurs being camouflaged by the leaves and twigs. Children behave incredibly well in this setting. They listen really well to staff's instructions and know exactly how far they can go in the woods. Children are very aware of the rules made for their safety.

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

- Staff have high expectations for all children and plan a stimulating curriculum that broadens children's experiences. They know the individual children well and assess their development closely. Staff take their lead from children's play and spend a good amount of time joining in and guiding their learning. They are passionate about developing children's understanding of the natural world. For example, staff observe children while they use magnifying glasses to look closely at small creatures they find.
- Children learn about their local environment. They enjoy supervised walks around the lakes, observing and discussing the fish swimming around and watching the geese fly overhead. They talk to the resident artists, craftsmen and tree surgeons. This helps to promote children's understanding of the world around them and of being part of a wider community.
- Mathematical concepts are cleverly woven into daily routines and activities. In the woods, children use positional language and talk about 'heavy' and 'light' as they fill buckets with pine cones. Older children are taught about using scales to weigh more accurately, when following a recipe for salt dough.
- The manager sets high standards for everyone and reflects on his practice. He uses self-evaluation to identify areas for development. For example, the setting

has recently built a camp kitchen so that children can cook their own lunches and has provided better hygiene facilities by creating composting toilets.

- Children enjoy a wealth of planned activities and experiences, alongside the freedom to explore and learn for themselves. Staff monitor children's progress and use their assessments to plan for what children need to learn next. However, the planning and organisation of the use of technology does not involve and engage all children. Children have access to binoculars and cameras but opportunities are missed for utilising the resources effectively.
- The manager carries out regular appraisals and talks to the staff about their needs and professional development. Staff are encouraged and given opportunities to attend training courses. However, these do not always match the needs of the setting and therefore do not have a direct impact on the experiences of the children.
- Staff have warm and caring relationships with the children and parents. Children are happy and have strong bonds with staff. They snuggle in and listen with delight under the trees as staff read their favourite stories.
- Children have access to real tools and resources. They demonstrate excellent physical skills as they build a dinosaur cave. Older children are highly purposeful in what they make and thoroughly enjoyed the project of building a den from old pallets and branches.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager has a good understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage. He has robust recruitment procedures in place to check the suitability of new staff. The manager and staff complete all mandatory training, such as children protection and paediatric first aid, to ensure they have a good understanding of how to safeguard children. Daily risk assessments help ensure that the learning environment is safe and secure for children while they play and explore. The manager deploys staff very well to ensure children have effective supervision when learning outdoors.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- maximise opportunities to promote children's use of technology during their play and learning
- develop opportunities for professional development of staff to raise the quality of teaching and learning experiences to an even higher level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2536503
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10215220
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	10
Name of registered person	Surrey Hills Forest School Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	2536502
Telephone number	07947993154
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Surrey Hills Forest School registered in 2019. It operates from woodland on the Birtley House estate in Bramley, Surrey. The forest school operates two days a week, Monday and Friday, from 8am to 4pm during term time only. There are three members of staff. The manager holds a relevant early years degree and forest school qualification.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Amanda Harrison

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.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk around the setting and discussed how the curriculum is organised.
- A joint observation of staff practice was carried out by the inspector and the manager to evaluate the quality of teaching.
- The inspector observed and evaluated interactions between staff and children throughout the inspection.
- The manager showed the inspector a range of documents, including first-aid certificates, Disclosure and Barring Service checks, and staff recruitment and training information.

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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