

Felsted Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	404877
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Inspector	Jacqueline Lawson

Setting address	Felsted Primary School, Watch House Green, FELSTED, CM6 3EB
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Felsted Little Acorns pre-school opened in 2001. It is a registered charity and is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the pre-school. It operates from a single room in a demountable building within the grounds of Felsted Primary School in Felsted, Essex. A maximum of 23 children from two to under five years may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 08.45 to 12.15 and 12.45 to 16.00 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor area.

There are currently 56 children on roll. Of these, 46 children receive funding for early years education. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language. The setting has access for those with mobility difficulties or disabilities.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and three members of staff are currently working towards recognised qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Provision at Felsted Little Acorns pre-school is a satisfactory; children are happy and enjoy their time while at the setting. Staff know the children well and care for them in a safe environment. The welfare and learning needs of all children are met adequately. Systems in place ensure that the children are included in the activities on offer, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those that have English as an additional language. The manager has a satisfactory understanding of the self-evaluation process and evaluations are generally accurate. As a result the setting has a satisfactory capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- organise the pre-school room and outdoor environment so that children have access to resources and learning opportunities that cover all six areas of learning
- link planning to assessment better so that it is clear how tasks will be modified to meet children's varying stages of development
- involve all staff in the self-evaluation process so that skills and expertise can be used effectively to identify where improvements are needed and bring about desired changes

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The welfare of the children is important to the manager and staff. They have clear procedures in place to keep them safe. For example, they know what to do if a child needs to take medicine or has an accident on the premises. All of the staff are trained in first aid. Recruitment and vetting systems are robust and staff look after the children well. They attend training sessions and courses to further develop their knowledge and meet regularly to discuss the children's progress. Staff are committed to inclusion and making sure that all children are given equal access, although planning and assessment does not yet clearly reflect this. The manager understands the need for self-evaluation of the setting to consider and improve the quality of the care and learning offered to children. However, a clear, robust and collaborative approach to self-evaluation is not yet evident to help the pre-school to develop further.

Partnership with parents and other stakeholders is good. The parents are happy with the setting and know that their children will be safe and enjoy their time at pre-school. One parent said, typically, 'It's wonderful. My child loves coming here. I will be sad when it is all over and she goes to school.' Parents are kept well informed and there is a comprehensive prospectus that contains all the information that parents need to know about the setting. The pre-school works well in partnership with the school. Some of the staff from the school visit the pre-school and the pre-school children attend some school assemblies. This helps the children to become familiar with school routines and to transfer confidently. The pre-school also has its own section on the school website.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

The pre-school offers a range of activities for children that complies satisfactorily with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The setting is well resourced to cover all of the six areas of learning. The programme of activities has been developed and enhanced in a number of ways since the last inspection. Music is taught by a specialist teacher, who also teaches music in the primary school. 'Kindaroo,' a specialist company, come to the pre-school for a morning and afternoon session per week to develop musical movement, balance, role play and staying healthy. On the day of the inspection the play leader talked about taking a walk in the woods. The children were asked to consider why it is important to exercise and how they would protect themselves from the sun. They also had fun skipping under the play parachute. One of the parents gives French language lessons to the children, once a week. A book club is offered to the pre-school children and enjoying books is supported by taking a book home weekly, from the book box, in their own book bag. Parents can write in their reading diaries if they wish. Mark-making and emergent writing is encouraged and children write their own names, for example, on their Mother's Day cards. However, some of the learning areas, such as the role play area, are not fully used because of lack of planning around the space available. The pre-school room is crowded and not easy to move around in, with children trying to push prams between the tables and chairs and playing with cars in the corner.

There is evidence on the walls of the children celebrating diversity. For example, the Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day and Easter. However, many of the activities are adult-led and pre-prepared, for example, in the form of worksheets or pre-cut templates and there are only a few examples of the children's own paintings named and displayed on the walls. Parents are supportive of the pre-school and sometimes come to help or provide resources. One parent arranged for the police helicopter to land on the field next to the setting and the children were allowed to scramble over it and explore in it. The setting organises for eggs from a specialist company to be brought to the pre-school every spring for the children to watch them hatch and observe the baby chicks as they grow. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world is also developed through practical activities such as growing daffodil bulbs for Mother's Day or when discussing shadows formed whilst playing hopscotch. Children enjoy using the pre-school computer. However, other technological resources, such as programmable toys, mobile phones and cameras are underdeveloped.

The children are taught about healthy eating and they bring a packed lunch with them in the morning. They are encouraged to wash their hands after going to the toilet or before they share their mid-morning snack. Some independence is encouraged. For example, the children help to tidy up at the end of the session. However, skills in cutting with child safety scissors, making choices for junk modelling and expressing and sharing their opinions during circle time, to develop independent learning, is not clearly planned for. The setting has the use of a large outdoor playground with a gazebo and other permanent resources, such as a wooden boat to sit in. The staff have produced a file showing photographs of outdoor activities. However, this is not clearly linked to planning nor do children have free access to the outdoor environment. This hinders the full use of the outdoor provision and the children cannot fully enjoy messy play, such as sand and water, painting, building larger structures or further develop their indoor learning in the outside environment. The school uses the playground during each session for a short playtime but there is still plenty of time for the children to enjoy the ample outdoor space. The pre-school staff have implemented planning to meet the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. However, this is not as robust as it could be because planning is not detailed enough or clearly linked to assessment, to provide a fully comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of all learners. The children have individual learning files but these are not used to full advantage to underpin learning or demonstrate the progress made by each child. In some cases the 'post it' notes from observations made by the children's key workers, have not been used to plan the children's next steps in learning. As a result there is scope to improve what is done and how it is done in relation to helping the children thrive more in their learning.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	3
How well are children helped to stay safe?	3
How well are children helped to be healthy?	3
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:

Met