

The Beeches Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	203708
Inspection date	03/02/2010
Inspector	Hazel Meadows

Setting address	136 St. Andrews Avenue, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3AQ
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises
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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.

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Description of the setting

The Beeches Pre-school Group opened in 1990. It operates from four rooms, in an annexe behind a house in northeast Colchester, Essex. The building has level access and there are accessible toilets adjacent to the main playrooms. There is a secure outside area for outdoor play.

A maximum of 14 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens five days a week approximately 44 weeks per year. Session times are from 9.15am to 3.30pm. The group is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 51 children on roll, aged within the early years age range. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The Beeches Pre-school employs eight staff, with at least three staff at every session. More than half of the staff are qualified to, or working towards, NVQ Level 3. One part-time member of staff has qualified teacher status and one has an honours degree in Early Years. The group is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA) and incorporates some Montessori practice and equipment. It is registered to accept government funding for three and four-year-olds and receives support from Essex County Council Early Years Support Team.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children experience a variety of play and learning experiences and are happy and settled at this stimulating pre-school nursery. Children's individuality is valued and practice is inclusive. Staff are committed and enthusiastic and work cooperatively to care for the children, support their play and enhance their learning. Positive and trusting partnerships are established with parents and carers, ensuring children receive consistent support with their care, development and learning.

Comprehensive documentation and procedures are in place to promote children's welfare and mostly work well in practice. Staff are establishing a clear method of monitoring children's individual progress through the EYFS. Ongoing reflection and a commitment to offer good quality, promotes some improvement and encourages development.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve safeguarding procedures to ensure they are robust, effective and consistently followed to ensure the suitability of all staff by utilising evidence such as CRB disclosures and references
- review the layout and presentation of the indoor environment to enable

children to develop their independence skills and safely and easily access the full range of toys and resources

- review the amount of adult-directed activities, to ensure a suitable balance of adult-led and child initiated activities, to increase opportunities for children to initiate their own play and learning
- ensure observations are systematic, identify learning priorities for each child and are used to inform weekly planning, so that planning reflects the needs of individual children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff are watchful of the children and attentive to their safety. A good adult to child ratio further promotes children's welfare and safety. There are procedures for emergency evacuation in place, which is regularly practised. Risk assessments are undertaken for the premises, the equipment and for outings, to minimise risks to children and are mostly effective in practice. All staff have a sound awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues and are clear of their responsibilities to protect children. Senior staff have undertaken additional safeguarding children training to ensure they are well-informed regarding referral processes. Procedures are in place to ensure staff's suitability to work with children, however, these are not always consistently applied when staff are recruited. Any staff whose suitability checks have not been completed are not left alone with children. The group has a thorough, written safeguarding policy plus local contact details to refer to should they have concerns about a child.

Staff have varying levels of experience but work effectively together to ensure the smooth running of the group. Staff development is encouraged, with training accessed directly or on-line, and annual appraisals are undertaken. Regular, informal staff meetings enable all staff to be involved in the group's development. Reflection of practice is ongoing, which promotes some improvement and the management endeavour to ensure they are well-informed of current early years issues, locally and nationally. Resources at the group are varied and plentiful, although some areas are somewhat cluttered, making it difficult for children to safely and independently access the full range of toys available.

The group has a positive attitude and approach towards diversity and promotes good inclusive practice. Staff actively support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language. They work closely with parents, liaising with other childcare or health professionals if required, to try to ensure each child receives appropriate support at an early stage. Their positive approach is further reflected in some of the resources and activities available. Comprehensive details are obtained about each child to support their welfare and signed, written consents are in place to ensure children are cared for according to their parents wishes. All records are securely kept and accurately maintained. Comprehensive written policies are in place and are currently being reviewed and reorganised.

Staff establish trusting partnerships with parents which promotes children's welfare

and continuity of care. Comments received from parents during the inspection are positive. They find staff approachable and state their children are happy and settled and make good progress. Parents are kept well informed of general information through frequent discussions with the staff plus notices and displays. The pre-school has established links with local schools that children are due to attend, to promote a smooth transition for the children into nursery or full-time school. The group has access to support from the local authority advisory staff as required.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children settle well at the group and soon become familiar with the routine. Children are well behaved as they are well occupied and clear explanations are offered to them to help them manage their behaviour appropriately. All children are included and enabled to take part in activities and make some of their own choices, for example, choosing whether or not to go outside. Staff get to know the children well as individuals and this is aided by 'My Unique Child' booklets completed by parents when their child first starts at the nursery. Staff play with children at their level to promote and enhance their learning and a key person system is in place to ensure all children are well supported. The leadership has established a method of monitoring children's progress through the EYFS using Learning Journeys, although these are not utilised to their potential to record children's progress and to identify their next steps. The Learning Journeys and observations are not always used to inform planning for individual children and weekly planning therefore tends to predominantly be aimed at the whole group.

Staff are clear of the areas of learning and use a variety of methods and approaches with the children. Fun games are utilised to inspire children's learning. For example, an action game using words such as behind, in front of and under helps increase their understanding and use of positional vocabulary. The group introduces topics to focus children's learning experiences, for example, learning about transport was encouraged by children watching the busy road from the front garden of the nursery. This led to much discussion about their environment and resulted in the children enthusiastically and competently painting pictures of what they have observed.

Sessions vary day-to-day and some are somewhat adult directed, with children waiting to be told what to do. For example, children are split into groups and regularly sit one at a time with an adult, counting dots on a dice and trying to write out sums in an exercise book. Other sessions offer children more freedom to explore, become active learners and thinkers and to make their own discoveries. Children have opportunities to develop their hand-eye coordination and are gaining competence with tools such as scissors and glue sticks. They concentrate and persevere for considerable periods as they use coloured paper, scissors and glue to make their own creations and develop their own ideas. They have regular opportunities for mark-making and develop their writing skills through ready access to pencils and crayons and they delight in painting with water outside. Children's imaginative skills are well supported with props such as dressing up

clothes and role play equipment. They are becoming skilled at problem solving as they manage puzzles of varying degrees of difficulty and make increasingly complex models with construction toys. Programmable toys and laptop computers offering a variety of educational games support children's understanding of, and competence with, technology.

Children enthusiastically take part in action songs and keep fit movements, which promotes a healthy lifestyle. They have regular opportunities for fresh air and exercise in the garden and in the warmer weather they are offered opportunity to freely go outside or stay indoors. Children begin to master skills of balance and coordination as they play with balls, the trampette and ride on toys outside. Children understand the importance of good hygiene and independently wash their hands after toileting or messy activities. Snack options are healthy and nutritious, consisting of a variety of fruit, which encourages them to make healthy choices. Children's independence is encouraged as they help to cut or peel the fruit and pour their own drinks.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	3
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	3
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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