

LITTLE OWLS PRESCHOOL (BOXTED)

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Sarah Williams

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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*.

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Description of the setting

Little Owls Pre-school opened in September 2009. It operates from a pre-fabricated premises in Boxted, Essex. All children have access to an adjacent outdoor play area.

The pre-school offers places for children on the Early Years Register and a maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 51 children on roll. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 9:15am until 11:45am and 12:45pm until 3:15pm. There is an optional lunch club from 11:45am to until 12:45pm. The setting can support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and also children who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven staff, of whom four hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children benefit from high quality opportunities to make very good progress in their learning and all round development in this happy and welcoming, child-centred environment. Each child's uniqueness is recognised, and the strong leadership and management together with the committed and experienced staff team ensures that every child is fully included and receives a high degree of support for their individual welfare and learning needs. The setting demonstrates a sound capacity to improve due to a strong emphasis on team work, reflective practice and the ability to take action where areas for development or improvement are identified.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop the outside area to offer the full range of play and learning opportunities and incorporate free-flow play whenever possible to extend children's choices and decision making.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The leadership and management is very well developed at this setting: the manager and staff have high aspirations for quality through continuous improvement and the strong commitment to equality and diversity is very evident. Realistic and achievable aims are identified within the self-evaluation and shared by all staff. All children's individual needs are met well, through strong and

effective working partnerships with parents and other agencies involved in the care of the children. All resources, including the dedicated staff team, are very well-utilised to ensure a seamless, well-paced session for the children. Staff development is positively encouraged and well-supported. Staff make good use of training opportunities as they work toward targets for improving the setting. The appraisal system is thorough and effective in addressing individuals' professional development needs and assessing ongoing suitability of staff.

Well thought out and robust systems are in place with regard to partnership working. This ensures every child receives a high level of individual support throughout their attendance, for example, from outside professionals such as a health visitor or speech therapist. Clear and exceptionally well-presented policies and procedures, clearly linked to the relevant welfare requirements, are in place to underpin the setting's practices and day-to-day operation. There is a clear and thorough policy covering all aspects of safeguarding: up-to-date training is maintained, and a clear induction programme is in place for new staff. No member of staff or volunteer helper is left unsupervised with children until all checks have been completed. The strong emphasis on keeping children safe and secure is also evidenced through the thorough risk assessments in place which ensure that the building and resources are maintained well, keeping children safe and secure.

All staff demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and a professional outlook, with strong teamwork underpinning their approach. With high expectations for the setting's success, motivated by the manager, the result is that outcomes for the children are positive, ensuring they are supported throughout their attendance to reach their potential. The setting is stimulating, child-friendly and inviting: many child-generated displays are helpful in improving the ambiance of the setting and motivating the children. The resources and equipment are of good quality, safe and appropriate for the children's use. Children have use of an adjacent outdoor learning area that they are able to access at set times within the session: the area is not enclosed but includes mature trees, balancing equipment and grass and paved areas which staff utilise well to provide a range of activities whilst carefully supervising the children. Children respond well to this additional space and run and move freely making good use of the resources such as balls, sand and water play as well as imaginative play and refining their climbing and balancing skills.

The setting promotes equality and diversity and effectively ensures all children integrate well. The trained Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) ensures that systems are in place to support children with additional needs, or English as a second language. This ensures their inclusion and full participation and staff are able to seek outside help from a range of professional services where appropriate. The staff are able to successfully identify and close gaps in learning for all children by focusing the planning to meet specific needs: this feeds into the comprehensive assessment and record keeping based on meaningful and detailed observations. Planning is shared by the whole staff team and many activities are initiated by the key persons following children's interests and ideas: the staff value the children's participation and respect their contributions. The topic-based activities are designed to be fun and stimulating, adding to the core curriculum which offers broadly-based continuous provision, and is balanced to reflect all areas of learning. Consequently, the outcomes for children are very positive.

The staff are sensitive to the needs of the families and local community. Indeed many families have a long-standing association with the group, which has been established for many years and meets a local need very effectively. Parents appreciate that their children make firm friendships that will follow them into their school years. The setting is fully committed to working in partnership with others, and parents, carers and children are involved in decision-making processes. The staff value and act upon suggestions made whenever possible. For example, a recent questionnaire highlighted issues regarding outdoor play and changes were made to accommodate parental wishes.

The setting is looking forward to a move to new, purpose-designed premises with an attached outdoor area where they will be able to offer full free-flow play with all areas of learning included, both indoors and outdoors, and focus on the natural world by growing and harvesting flowers and produce. Building is due to begin soon and plans are in hand to move in during the coming autumn.

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

Children very much enjoy their time at the setting, and respond enthusiastically to the learning opportunities, activities and resources available to them. They engage with the resources showing good concentration and perseverance, for example, using the small world play animals and insects imaginatively. They enjoy painting and imaginative collage and craft activities with a range of materials and textures to explore. Children show pride and ownership of their work, most paintings and pictures can be taken home, with some examples added to the children's records. Children are curious and spend time experimenting with a selection of unusual musical instruments in the outside area, where they can make as much noise as they wish. The 'thunder maker' is particularly appealing and impressive. Children dress appropriately for outside play: most are adept at putting on their shoes and coats, or ask for help when they need it.

Children develop good habits which promote a healthy lifestyle. They have physical play opportunities indoors and outside with balls and hoops and on wheeled toys and the fixed equipment. They eat nutritious snacks in a relaxed atmosphere at snack time when the whole group sit down and share food and drink in small groups. Children are fully involved in preparing and serving the snack, developing confidence and independence and showing a good understanding of routine. The lunch club helps prepare children for the transition phase when they start school and again is a relaxed and social time when children can chat about their homes and families to staff sitting with them. Simple pictorial cues in the bathroom area remind children of hand washing routines. Children show that they can independently take care of their personal needs, taking a tissue and disposing of it in the bin provided.

Staff are always on hand to assist as required and position themselves well throughout the different areas of the setting so as to be supportive yet unobtrusive, allowing children to work and play without dominating them. An

inviting book area is available with a broad selection of both story books and non-fiction books. Circle time rounds off the sessions and is a valuable time for developing the skills of both speaking and listening. Children participate actively by choosing the story and responding to questions and pictures, naming characters and predicting events.

The activities provided are based on the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and deliver high quality results for the children, helping them to achieve the early learning goals and ensuring all areas are covered. The continuous provision includes a large and well-resourced role play area which is in constant use. A very young child, who just recently started attending, plays at dressing and undressing a baby doll and putting it to bed. The child returns periodically to check on it. Children make a den under an interest table and develop a complex game involving a large assortment of props and items, all playing cooperatively and harmoniously. The mark-making table is especially well-resourced with good quality writing implements and choice of paper to encourage children's emergent writing. Older children can opt to take part in more focused sessions of handwriting, pre-reading and numeracy, if they show readiness and interest.

Observations and photographs, along with many examples of children's work, build into an excellent, comprehensive overview of every child's progress and achievements and clearly identify the next steps in learning. Parents have ample opportunities to discuss and contribute to their child's record and many appreciate this as a positive feature of the group. Children are consistently busy and engaged in their work and play, having largely free choice and time to complete activities and investigations that interest them. Children make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities, working through the stepping stones at their own pace. Diligent staff attention and respect for each child's uniqueness ensures all children have a strong sense of belonging and feel safe within the setting. A sensitive approach to individual family circumstances ensure children's individual needs are recognised.

Children benefit from this stimulating and child-focused environment, which allows them to develop in all the six areas of learning, supporting their skills for the future. All staff have a sound knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and their enthusiasm and dedication motivates children to learn effectively and supports their all round development in a warm and caring environment.

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	2

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	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
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

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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	1
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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