

# Birchanger Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 402982  
**Inspection date** 12/10/2010  
**Inspector** Martyn Richards

**Setting address** Birchanger C of E Primary School, Birchwood, Birchanger,  
Hertfordshire, CM23 5QF

**Telephone number** 0777 3730754

**Email**

**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

Birchanger Nursery originally opened in 1990 but changed ownership in 2001. It operates from a new, purpose-built room in the grounds of the Birchanger Primary School. The setting serves the local and wider area. The setting is registered to take up to 24 children aged from two years six months to five years at any one time. There are currently 38 children on roll, 18 of whom were present at the time of the inspection. Children may attend for a variety of the sessions during the week.

It opens five days a week during school term time. Sessions are from 9am to 12.30pm on Mondays and Fridays, and from 9am to 11.40am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. It is also open from 12.25pm to 3.05pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and on Wednesdays during the school Spring and Summer terms.

The setting has close links with its adjacent primary school, and with a Children's Centre in Stansted. There are seven full and part-time staff working with the children. The manager has a graduate teaching qualification, and five other members of staff have appropriate childcare qualifications. A further member of staff is completing a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and has received accreditation from the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

The setting is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register, and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Birchanger Nursery is a very effective setting where the good quality of care and security for the children provides a solid foundation for meeting their learning and developmental needs. Sessions are characterised by the calm and gentle manner of adults, by the excellent attitudes and behaviour of the children, and by their enthusiasm to participate in whatever activities are in hand. It is a fully inclusive setting, providing a programme well matched to the different ages, abilities and interests of the individual children. Records of achievement reflect most aspects of children's progress. The nursery has developed very close links with the children's parents, who support it enthusiastically, and have worked hard to raise the funds for its new, purpose-built classroom. The nursery has improved significantly since it was last inspected, and self-evaluation processes are largely effective. Consequently, it has a good capacity to continue this improvement into the future.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- refine the self-evaluation process to focus more analytically on the impact the

- provision has on the learning and development of the children
- review and improve the cumulative record of individual achievement to give a sharper indication of progress over time across the learning programme.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

The manager and staff are vigilant about the safety of all the children. The credentials of all adults wanting to work in the nursery are carefully checked, and all other adults are required to sign in and out when they visit. The activity room has unobstructed evacuation doors, locked internal doors where necessary, and a separate kitchen area. The outdoor area is also securely protected from intrusion and from children slipping out unnoticed. A good ratio of nursery staff to children ensures that outside supervision is thorough. A password system has been recently introduced for parents to use in the event that they are unexpectedly unable to collect their child from the nursery. There are also clear procedures for the actions to be taken if a child is not collected at the end of a session. Staff hold, and record, regular fire drills. All staff have training in child protection. They understand their responsibilities in this regard, and how to recognise indications of possible mistreatment. They have made sure that parents also appreciate the nursery's duties in this area. Staff carefully check the site for possible risks to the children, and ensure there are no hazards when children are taken off-site, for local walks for example.

The nursery has made significant progress since it was last inspected. It now has attractive new buildings, resulting from determined fund-raising within the local community. The outdoor area has been brought more fully into use, and now has covered areas enabling children to play in the fresh air even when the weather is poor. Questionnaires for parents have been introduced, and the results carefully analysed. These lead to action plans to meet the concerns of parents, such as, improvements in the opportunities parents have for discussing the progress their children are making. The nursery's processes for recording children's achievements in individual Learning Journals have been refined. Future plans include further development of the outdoor area, in terms both of its resources and of how it is used. The recommendations of the last inspection have been implemented well. The commitment to improve the nursery is also evidenced in the establishment of a systematic self-evaluation process. The evaluation document produced gives a good picture of the wide range of opportunity provided for the children, but has less detail on how the nursery checks the impact of these opportunities in promoting good achievement and development. All the activities provided are available to both girls and boys, and staff provide some choice and challenge in their questions and suggestions according to the age, interest and ability of individual children. They help children develop an awareness of other cultures and life styles, for example through finding out about other European countries, and learning about festivals such as Christmas, Diwali and the Chinese New year.

The school and the nursery work well together, especially as children reach the age of transfer to Reception class. There is a good programme of familiarisation activities to instil confidence in the children, and useful records of their

achievements accompany them to school. The nursery's links with parents are a particular strength, and one appreciated enthusiastically by the parents themselves. In a letter to the nursery, one parent wrote, "I'd like to say a big thank you to you all for all the help, support and learning my child has received during her time in the nursery - I can't praise you all enough; you are fabulous and we are very sad to be leaving". Parents are involved from the very beginning of their child's attendance. They meet with their child's Key Person, and together discuss the child's needs and achievements to date. This information guides the planning of activities, and also provides a baseline against which a child's progress over time can be demonstrated. Parents enjoy induction sessions, and feel very comfortable in approaching staff if they have any concerns. They receive newsletters about the nursery, and a regular survey of its strengths and areas for improvement. The nursery acts energetically on the suggestions parents make. Nursery leadership is based on teamwork, and on the successful development of a shared understanding of the aims of the provision. This has brought consistency among staff, and underpins its effectiveness in meeting the needs of its children.

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

Activities for the children are carefully planned by staff working collaboratively. The programme is based around weekly themes, each theme designed to involve children in an important area of the early years learning programme. This outline is displayed for parents to see. Staff meet weekly to add detail to the coming week's programme. They share observations of individual's learning which they have recorded during the past week, and build these into the activities they plan. This means that children who show a new interest, or have difficulty with a new process, or who would benefit from an additional challenge, are accommodated within the programme. Each child's Key Person has a central role, and is responsible for helping her children put together the photographs or other evidence of achievement in their Learning Journals. These journals give a good indication of the high points of a child's nursery experience, and provide a somewhat patchy view of his or her progress over time, because children - quite naturally - are keen to take their Journals home as soon as they can. Staff are exploring a computer system for accumulating and sorting this information, and it is intended that this will show progress in more detail over the six areas of early years learning, and note when significant milestones are reached.

Staff planning shows a good balance between indoor and outdoor activity, and between those chosen by the children, and those initiated by adults. When children play at self-chosen activities, staff sit alongside them, helping, making suggestions or asking questions. This well-judged interaction helps ensure that play is productive and promotes learning, without removing initiative from the child. Many of the learning opportunities are generated by engaging practical activities. For example children kept fertile eggs in an incubator, and watched the chicks hatch and grow. The photographs of this initiative testify to the rapt engagement of the children, and to their skills in recording the event in their pictures. It also generated new language, and a widened understanding of the life processes of birth and growth. In learning about other countries, children worked on making a

copy of Gaudi's Lizard mosaic in Spain, and tried their hands at making Spanish fans. They also thought about some of the customs peculiar to the United Kingdom, making fruit scones for a cream tea for example. These activities enlarge their understanding of the wider world, teach them about how materials change when heat is applied to them, help them discover which materials can be easily fixed together, and which require a different approach. Each activity also involves new vocabulary, and promotes new questions and interests.

The children love stories, and listen spell-bound to a lively and expressive story session. They can explain the pictures and like to contribute their own ideas and experiences to the story. Many know which way to hold a book, where it begins and ends, and the difference between text and illustration. Most recognise their own names as they self-register, and some can copy or trace their name, or write it freehand. They can count objects with reasonable accuracy, and know common shapes such as squares, triangles and circles. Most understand terms such as "more than" and "less than". They handle small tools such as crayons and brushes well to make pictures, prints and collages, exploring tones of colour, pattern repeats and the effect of additives on the texture of paint. Children grow in independence and in making decisions for themselves. They learn to take turns, and to ask politely for snacks which may be out of reach. Many can help themselves to water from the jug at snack time without adult help. They enjoy driving toy cars in the outdoor area, chasing bubbles they have blown, jumping, climbing and sliding - all activities which help them gain control of their bodies. Snack time is a calm and civilised family occasion. The children enjoy the fresh fruit and drinks, sitting together at an attractively-laid table. They understand the need to wash hands before eating. Their excellent and safe behaviour, and friendly positive attitudes throughout the day contribute much to the gentle and accepting ethos of the nursery. The skills and attitudes they acquire in the nursery will serve them well in their future education.

## 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

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

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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	1

### 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

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
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	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

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