

Bicknacre Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Martyn Richards

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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

Bicknacre Preschool opened in 1977. It operates from a double classroom on the site of Priory Primary School in Bicknacre, Essex. It is open each weekday morning from 9am to 12 noon and for three afternoons from 1pm to 3.30pm, term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 26 children in the early years age group may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 44 children aged from two to five years on roll. The setting receives funding in respect of some children. The children come mainly from the local catchment area and a majority transfer to the adjacent primary school. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and any children who speak English as an additional language, although there were none on roll at the time of the inspection. The setting is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register.

The setting employs eight members of staff. Five of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification and two others are enrolled for forthcoming training. The setting has close links with Priory Primary School, and with certain other schools to which some children transfer.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Bicknacre Preschool is a safe and inclusive setting, where children and their parents and carers are made welcome. Good relationships, effective management and a shared ethos build on this secure foundation and ensure that children's needs are met well. Children's individuality is recognised, and the programme of activities is planned to largely accommodate their varied ages, abilities, creativity and interests. They enjoy coming to the setting and make good progress in their learning and development. This is a self-critical setting, with a staff team committed to improving standards year by year, although the self-evaluation process is not fully focused on assessing the direct impact the setting has on children's learning. Staff have a good capacity to continue this improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review and improve the self-evaluation process to focus more sharply on the impact the setting makes on children's learning and progress
- provide more opportunities for children to use their initiative and imagination in their creative work in art and design activities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety is seen by staff as their top priority. The suitability of adults working with the children is carefully checked and all visitors to the setting must be signed in and out. Gates and doors are secure against intrusion. Staff both conduct and record frequent fire evacuation practices, and make sure emergency routes are uncluttered. All staff have had training in child protection and clearly understand their roles with regard to safeguarding. They know how to identify possible indicators of mistreatment and what they must do in this event. Parents are made aware at induction meetings of the setting's responsibilities in this area. Every year a full assessment is made of the site, accommodation and resources, to ensure there are no unnoticed risks to the children. In addition, the managing committee conducts regular termly health and safety checks. Staff also carry out daily written checks of the room and the equipment intended to be used. There are clear and thorough procedures for circumstances in which a child might not be collected at the usual time, or might be collected by an unauthorised adult. Staff keep meticulous records of accidents and incidents, and make certain parents are fully informed about them. Taken together, the setting's actions to ensure safety are extremely thorough indeed.

Since the last inspection, the rooms have been reorganised and partially refurbished, and made more suited to the needs of children and staff. They are colourful and inviting. At the suggestion of parents, an attractive raised garden has been built beside the outdoor area and is in the process of being planted up. Staff share responsibilities, often working in pairs, and this adds to the consistency of their approach to the children. They are deployed well, and are sufficient in numbers to supervise children both indoors and outside. The setting sets out to meet the individual needs of all its children and have the necessary skills, training and resources to support them effectively. Vulnerable children are well cared for and staff liaise closely with support agencies when necessary. A recent focus in planning has been to improve motivation for boys' learning through more use of outside play activity. This is bearing fruit as boys show improved levels of application and concentration outside, for example, when building unstable castle towers with large bricks. This is a reflective setting, with staff and the committee determined to continue its improvement. A good programme of staff training ensures skills are maintained and shared, and new initiatives evaluated. A systematic self-evaluation process has been introduced, enabling all aspects of the setting to be scrutinised. The resulting document paints a very clear picture of the range of opportunities, care and support provided for the children. It is less clear, however, in its evaluation of the direct link between its provision, and the progress the children make.

There are good links with several of the schools to which the children transfer and especially with the host school. Taster events are held to familiarise children with their new schools and to ease the anxiety of parents and children over transfer. The passing on of records helps make sure children's learning continues without dislocation in their new school. Links with parents and carers are a particular strength of the setting. Parents are involved in their children's early education from

the very beginning and the setting fosters excellent links with them. There are induction meetings for new or prospective parents where they can see the setting in session and their child can try out some of the play activities. They find out about the managing committee and how they could be involved in its work. Once a child is enrolled, a key person is allocated and termly one-to-one meetings begin between staff and parents to develop agreed play plans for their children. These focus on the progress that has been made to date and on what needs to follow. Parents also receive regular newsletters and complete a survey of their views about the setting. Their suggestions are acted upon, for example, in the establishment of the new garden.

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

Children enjoy coming to the setting where they grow in confidence and make good progress. The programme provided gives a good balance of activities initiated by staff, such as the weekly theme, and the "letter of the week" scheme and activities the children choose for themselves. Children are encouraged to self-register as a way of helping them to recognise their own written names. A group of children are attracted to a leaf printing table and enjoy using sponges to print shapes with thick paint. This draws on their outdoor observations as part of the current autumn theme. Others lay out an elaborate model road and struggle to avoid toy cars ending up in opposite directions on the same track. Two children play with modelling dough finding out which of the simple tools they have are best suited to cutting and shaping it. On the computer, two children explore a pattern-making programme, using the suite of icons so fluently and quickly that a visitor has to ask them to slow down. One child sits on a member of staff while listening to a story and several others gather around to make a small group. Outdoors, children enjoy trying to stabilise a model tower to avoid its collapse, by building up its base, while others make music on the percussion instruments which are made up of a selection of metal pots and pans attached to the boundary fence. Later in the day they enjoy a vigorous session of outdoor play on tricycles, scooters, and pedal cars. Those wanting a calmer time can practise as pavement artists with coloured chalks on the hard playground surface, or improvise with the box of varied percussion instruments brought out for their use.

Staff are on hand during activities and their planning ensures they know how best to intervene to support each child. One child is supported to speak more by a staff member, who joins him in his game and asks questions about the activity. A nervous child is encouraged to try out something new with adult help. Because staff are alert to the learning potential of each activity, play becomes productive as well as enjoyable. Staff make frequent observations of each child's progress and achievements across the early learning goals and these observations are checked regularly to make sure no significant gaps are emerging.

Children listen politely and with interest to each other, to staff and to the stories they enjoy. They recognise their names and are familiar with some of the sounds the letters make. Their early pencil marks have come to resemble recognisable letters and words. Children love stories, know which way up a book must be held,

and like to add their own anecdotes to the illustrations before them. They recognise simple regular shapes, can count a small collection of objects, and are at ease with terms such as "bigger than" and "more than". Through their weekly themes they know a little about how plants grow, about the seasons of the year, and how to operate a computer mouse, program and printer. The children are thoughtful in their choice of colours for paintings and printings, and in choosing textures for the scarecrow collage they are making together. They have developed good skills in keeping their drawings within the paper area, in cutting out along a line and in producing a recognisable self-portrait, complete with freckles and teeth. Many of their original drawings and paintings show good levels of imagination and initiative, but sometimes challenge is limited when children work within adult-produced outlines in craft and design activities. Children's behaviour is excellent, as they are calm in their play. They have an excellent understanding about how to stay safe in and out of the setting because of staff's support and they show this through their mature use of tools, such as pencils and scissors. They exercise choice sensibly, fetch and tidy equipment well, and chat confidently with visitors. They can explain why it is important to wash their hands before eating and they enjoy the healthy fruit snacks provided. Snack times are pleasant occasions, which contribute significantly to the homely ethos of the setting. Children learn about a variety of cultures and customs through celebrations of festivals such as Diwali and Easter. The skills and positive attitudes the children acquire at the setting 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

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	1
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

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	1
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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