

Old School House Kindergarten

239 London Road, Stanway, Colchester, ESSEX, CO3 8PB

Inspection date	25/06/2013
Previous inspection date	08/01/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Children make excellent progress in all areas of learning and development because staff use highly effective teaching methods and create a stimulating, well-resourced environment for children.
- Children's next steps in learning are accurately assessed and shared with parents, through an effective two-way flow of information, so children benefit from being able to continue their learning at home.
- Children quickly develop firm, meaningful attachments to their key persons, helping them feel very safe and secure so that they can grow in confidence and independence.
- Organisation of all aspects of the setting is outstanding: as a result, sessions flow smoothly and staff maintain a calm and purposeful atmosphere where children are exceptionally well cared for and make excellent progress in their learning.
- Recruitment and induction procedures are rigorous so all staff are thoroughly checked and vetted to ensure suitability; ongoing suitability and training needs are addressed at regular appraisals. There is high morale and satisfaction among the team, which results in a very low staff turnover and consequently, excellent continuity of care for the children.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector interacted with, and observed, children working, at play and during routine care, indoors and outside.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager and deputy, and other senior staff and carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation including evidence of staff suitability, certificates, and children's developmental records.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents gathered in advance of the inspection on returned, completed surveys.

Inspector

Sarah Williams

Full Report

Information about the setting

Old School House Kindergarten opened in 1996. It operates from six rooms in a house in Stanway, Colchester. Access is via a small step to the front of the property. A secure enclosed outdoor area is used for outdoor play activities. The group is open five days a week from 8am to 6pm all year round. There are currently 101 children attending. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register.

There are 20 members of staff. Two of the staff have Early Years Professional Status or Qualified Teacher Status and all members of staff hold other early years qualifications to at least level 3 or higher.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- consider enhancing outdoor provision, to promote more open-ended and natural play, to enhance children's creative thinking and problem solving skills.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children make exceptionally good progress in their learning and development. The prime areas are promoted very well through activities and routines to ensure children develop confidence and independence, attaining the highest standard of readiness for school. They become self-reliant, develop excellent social skills and are fully able to communicate their ideas, needs and feelings. They show concern for others and make firm friendships as they explore and play together. Physical development is promoted highly effectively as all children, from the youngest babies attending, have freedom of movement to select where, and with what they would like to play. Children confidently select resources from low-level, well-labelled or clear containers and drawers. Pictorial timetables help children understand the routines and patterns of the day, so they know what is coming next and can be prepared for changes. Staff always use calm, clear voices when speaking to children and allow them time to process what they are hearing before being expected to answer. Children know that what they say will be valued and accepted, so their confidence and self-esteem is assured.

Children develop positive attitudes to learning and enthusiastically engage in meaningful, purposeful play and exploration of the materials provided. Planning of activities is based on staff's thorough knowledge and understanding of every child's interests and precise and accurate assessment of the next steps in learning. More formal sessions are introduced as

children approach school age; they enjoy small group teaching in a separate room, with focused displays and well thought out resources, to consolidate their understanding of literacy and numeracy. For example, they recognise their own and their friends' names from laminated name cards and practise writing their names and recognising letters and sounds. The teacher is acutely aware of each child's level of understanding and stage of development as she works closely with small groups and completes assessments after every session. These activities prepare children for learning to read as they understand story structure, rhyming and that print carries meaning to communicate and express ideas. They explore shape and colour, matching and naming two dimensional shapes, and become adept at basic calculation with the aid of appealing mathematical equipment and puzzles. Children practise changing for a physical education session and proudly talk about why they are doing this, and the effects of exertion on their bodies. This prepares them for the changes they will encounter when starting school and becoming part of a larger group with less adult interaction.

Babies' care rooms are inviting as they are bright and colourful, but not over-busy. The high quality toys are easily accessible and organised into themed baskets and containers. Cosy spaces allow children to curl up and observe what is going on in the room or snuggle up with a favourite toy or book when they need a quiet interlude. Sensory experiences using a variety of materials they can squeeze, shape and manipulate, encourage them to experiment and investigate, tapping into their natural curiosity. These are included every day so children are continually stimulated to experience new textures and tastes or smells. Full body protective crawler suits are provided so they can enjoy outside play in most weathers, developing their physical strength and coordination as they crawl or clamber on the low-level equipment. Babies clearly relish these experiences and beam with delight as they master a task such as crawling through a tunnel.

Toddlers cooperate in making a train track layout and experiment with different vehicles, confidently selecting them from a drawer unit. One boy chooses magnetic pieces to create a model spaceship and proudly show this to a member of staff, describing how he made it, and fixing it when it comes apart. A young child becomes engrossed in using scissors to make snips all round a piece of paper; she says 'you have to be careful with scissors, they can cut you'. Children use cutlery at mealtimes and, when they are deemed ready, are invited to cut up the fruit at snack time, thus they learn how to use a range of tools expertly and safely.

The kindergarten welcomes visitors, such as, police and firefighters, to bring the wider world to the children in a safe and controlled way. Many of these are parents engaged in interesting professions, which they share with the children. This is another key way that parents are involved in their children's learning in a first-hand way. Children try on uniforms and talk to the 'people who help us' to learn about what they do. This stimulates role play and imagination, which is carried through following the visits and gives children a grasp of how the wider world around them operates. Photographic displays help children recall events and are used imaginatively throughout the kindergarten. Toddlers and older children use the garden area for a variety of exciting play and learning. For example, they have water and sand, ride-on toys and an easel with either paints or coloured pencils to they can draw or write. Space for dens is provided, such as behind some low trees and bushes, or under an artfully draped combat net and there is a large storage shed with a

huge selection of additional resources, which children can ask for by looking at pictures to remind them of the choices available. While the outside area is used by all children for a range of activities across all areas of learning, there is scope to look at providing further open-ended or natural play with found or natural materials. Some words and numerals are placed near resources but there is scope to increase signage and text to promote literacy and show uses of print in different contexts.

Children's development profiles contains photographs and details of children's progress and assessments, with next steps clearly set out so that parents know what staff are working on with their children and enable them to continue with these at home. Children's development at age two is assessed and the outcome shared with parents. The kindergarten have taken a highly professional and original approach to meet this requirement: senior staff have worked with the early years practice adviser to collate a large file of evidence and guidance, to assist staff carrying out the progress checks at age two, to ensure that they are precise and accurate, and identify any gaps in progress so that additional support can be put in place. This ensures that all children progress to their full potential and sets a firm foundation for the next and future stages of learning.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

A strength of this outstanding setting is the attention given to ensuring that children make effective emotional attachments to the adults caring for them. The carefully managed settling-in procedure is flexible and takes account of families' and children's differing needs, so parents can attend as many or as few times as they wish until their child is settled and happy to be left. The key person is assigned early on so that a meaningful partnership with parents can begin to be forged. The flow of information is seen as paramount to sustaining excellent care and well-being of children. A daily diary sheet provides details of routine care for parents for children who are too young to speak. Parents can also see appealing displays of photographs of their children engaged in many and varied activities, all captioned to explain the learning that is taking place. When it is time for children to move into a new room, careful arrangements are made to ease the transition. Children have a series of pre-visits to familiarise them with the new room and staff, and the key person briefs their next carer so that they are fully informed to ensure continuity. Children who have siblings in other rooms have opportunities during the day to see them, in the garden or when rooms join up during quieter periods at the end of the day. Babies each have a book with photographs of their family members, stored accessibly at floor level, so they choose to look at these at any time for reassurance. Events such as Fathers' day, when dads are invited in to share activities with their children, help to make firm links between the home and the setting and boost children's self-esteem and give parents insight into the sorts of activities their children engage with on a daily basis.

The kindergarten is very safe and secure as staff follow stringent security procedures and carry out comprehensive risk assessments to ensure that everything children come into contact with is safe and suitable. Notices outside remind parents and visitors about basic security and safety arrangements, setting the scene before they enter the premises. Stair gates keep children safe in the upstairs rooms and they follow safety rules, such as using the dual handrails when negotiating the stairs and moving between areas. Children

practise an evacuation plan so that they know what to do in the event of an emergency to keep themselves safe. Visitors to the kindergarten are screened before entry, and all sign in and out of the premises, so children are protected and safe.

Children relish the home cooked meals, which are prepared onsite from fresh, locally-sourced ingredients. The appetising, nutritionally balanced meals take account of children's allergies and dietary requirements so that only suitable foods are offered. Older children serve themselves and decide how much they would like. This develops their independence and self-care skills well. Snacks are equally healthy and ensure that children's energy levels are topped up as the day progresses. All children have access to drinks throughout the day as their own cups and beakers remain within reach, helping to keep them hydrated. Children learn good hygiene and are helped to use the toilet independently. Visual cues are strategically placed, reminding them of handwashing and drying sequences. For children at the potty training stage, staff work with parents and at the child's pace, sensitively assisting them to adjust to new routines.

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

Leadership at the setting is outstanding because senior staff, supported by key personnel from the parent company, organise every aspect of the day in meticulous detail. For example, staff rotas ensure children are cared for by familiar staff every day. Regular, floating staff known as 'butterflies' move between rooms at busy times to cover staff breaks. They take their duties seriously and ensure they know all the children they are looking after well, so that they can engage meaningfully with them and maximise their productive time. The manager and deputy have a daily presence in the rooms so that they are aware of what staff are doing and can carry out informal monitoring and supervision as staff interact with the children. This ensures that the highest standards are maintained and any issues arising from practice are dealt with efficiently. It also makes the management very accessible to all staff, and helps them feel supported and valued.

Recruitment and induction is rigorous, and targeted, to make sure that new staff understand the routines and their particular responsibilities according to clear job descriptions. New staff are supported throughout a flexible probationary period and encouraged, along with established staff, to suggest any ideas and improvements. This helps them become part of the team and feel valued. If accepted as useful, the suggestions are collated into an action plan, which forms a running record of achievements and clearly shows how the setting approaches continuous improvement. All staff are thus included in the evaluation of the setting, which identifies strengths and areas for development. Recent action taken has seen a new approach to children's opportunities to make marks, so at all stages a wealth of resources, indoors and outside, encourages children to draw and write, developing confidence in their emerging skills. Currently, a new approach to assessment and tracking of children's progress is being trialled, which is designed to make consistency easier to achieve across the whole staff team. Further planned improvements are to provide covered outdoor space to maximise use of the area in all weathers. Improvements and actions taken are all made very explicit

so staff and parents can see that their ideas and suggestions have a positive impact.

The provider ensures that all staff have an excellent understanding of how to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements. Safeguarding and child protection are given a very high priority. Following a recent serious matter regarding safeguarding, an action was set by Ofsted to ensure that all staff are clear about referring concerns to the appropriate authority in a timely manner. The provider responded by revisiting the policy and procedure and adding information regarding local authority procedures. They provided enhanced training for existing staff to ensure that their knowledge and understanding is sound and that there will be no recurrence of the error. The manager attended specialist, designated person training so that she can take a lead role and support all staff in their understanding and management of any concerns arising. She is supported by the provider and the early years practice adviser who oversees the settings within the company. Staff spoken to during the inspection are clear in their understanding of how to protect children by responding promptly, and effectively, when they have a concern about a child's welfare. Staff know that a child arriving with an existing injury or presenting any concern is monitored and the details are recorded so that action can be taken. Safeguarding is discussed at every staff meeting and all staff regularly update their knowledge with either online refresher courses, in-house training, or an external day course. The safeguarding policy and a useful flow chart, is displayed so that it is available to parents: they are reminded and can be clear of the kindergarten's approach to child protection and, therefore, reassured that their children are extremely well protected. All new staff have a clear induction, which includes ensuring that their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters is sound, and that they are able to take action in-line with the setting's policy.

Another key feature and strength of the setting is the priority given to every staff member's professional development. Alongside the ongoing supervision and appraisal, which determines individual strengths and weaknesses, there is an expectation that staff will seek out and attend a minimum of four courses a year. This includes online courses, mandatory training, such as first aid and health and safety, and curriculum courses relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage. All staff report back to their colleagues after a course, so knowledge is shared, improving practice and outcomes for children. An early years practice adviser attends all settings in the group to oversee the educational programme and assess the effectiveness of staff interaction with children, to ensure that the quality of teaching remains at a consistently high standard. Additionally, the managers from each setting meet together regularly to share ideas and good practice. Advice and guidance from outside bodies, such as, the local authority are welcomed; the setting is proactive in seeking guidance and keeping abreast of developments so that the quality of care is exceptional. Morale and motivation amongst staff is high because they feel part of a successful setting and strive to maintain the standards and reputation that have built up by giving their best to the children they are working with.

Partnership working, including with other providers of early years education, as well as professionals, such as, speech therapists and health visitors, is well-established and has a positive impact on children's care and well-being. Key persons quickly determine when additional help is required and work with parents to set a plan in place, so that children do not miss out on any learning or play opportunities. By reviewing these plans regularly and

working closely with parents and others caring for the child, children's needs are exceptionally well met.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	402180
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	899579
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	46
Number of children on roll	101
Name of provider	The Old School House Kindergarten Ltd
Date of previous inspection	08/01/2009
Telephone number	01206 213800

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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