

Clever Tots

Clever tots, (Holy Tree Infant School) Crescent Road/Junction Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 5RY

Inspection date	18/11/2013
Previous inspection date	30/08/2011

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		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Teaching is good because staff plan activities based on children's interests and developmental needs. Careful and clear monitoring of the educational programmes ensure all children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Children and babies develop close attachments with their key person and they are given regular comfort and cuddles when needed. This results in children being happy, confident and sociable in the setting.
- A high priority is placed on maintaining security and keeping children and babies safe. This results in all children being very effectively safeguarded in the nursery.
- Partnerships with parents are strong and there is an effective two-way flow of information. This means that children receive consistency in their care and are well supported because staff are knowledgeable about family backgrounds and the children's home lives.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The opportunities for children to extend their early writing skills are not always fully explored.
- Some staff are not always confident about how to fully extend children's learning during activities, particularly when they talk with and question 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.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, nominated person, staff and children.
- The inspector viewed a sample of the children's development records and planning documentation.
- The inspector saw evidence of suitability and qualifications of the staff, the nursery self-evaluation form, risk assessment, policies and procedures and other documentation in relation to health and safety checks.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day and from parents' comments in the children's development records.

Inspector

Patricia Champion

Full report

Information about the setting

Clever Tots opened in 2007. It is one of three settings privately run and managed by the same owners. The nursery operates from a converted infant school in Brentwood, Essex and serves the immediate locality and also the surrounding areas. The setting opens Monday to Friday all year round, except bank holidays. Opening times are from 7am until 7pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions or attend for out of school care. Children are cared for in seven playrooms and have access to an enclosed area for outdoor play.

There are currently 152 children attending who are within the early years age group. There are also 25 children attending the out of school club. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language.

There are currently 29 staff working directly with the children. Of these, 23 staff have an appropriate early years qualification. There are 17 staff with an early years qualification at level 3 and six staff with a qualification at level 2. The manager holds a Montessori qualification at level 5 and is working towards a degree. The nursery receives support from the local authority. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- develop consistently high quality learning experiences by increasing some staff's understanding of how to extend and promote children's critical thinking by using effective questioning

- extend children's literacy skills by consistently including meaningful opportunities for writing during role-play activities, to enable children to communicate or act out activities they observe in adults.

Inspection judgements

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

Children and babies make good progress in their development because staff are secure in their knowledge of how they learn. They know children's individual interests well and provide good opportunities for them to follow these. Consequently, children are motivated and keen to take part in a variety of learning experiences, both indoors and outside.

Overall, teaching is good which means that children acquire many new skills and reach the expected level of development for their age. The staff respond sensitively to the body language and sounds that babies and toddlers make, so they know that their responses are valued. Older children are starting to communicate clearly and give animated responses when they chat to the staff and visitors about real and imagined experiences. Most staff skilfully use running commentary during activities to help the youngest children to develop their communication skills. Story times and singing activities are used well to introduce rhyming words and to increase vocabulary. However, occasionally some staff are not confident in their understanding of how to extend the older children's learning experiences through using effective questioning techniques. Nonetheless, because staff are fully supported and guided by the management team and other experienced staff, children still receive worthwhile learning experiences which enables them to make good progress.

Children and babies are supported well to develop their future learning skills, in readiness for starting school or moving on to the next playroom in the nursery. The indoor play environment is stimulating and richly-resourced. The outdoor area is planned to inspire children to investigate, use their imagination and discover new things. Children of all ages have ample opportunities to create and influence their own play or take part in experiences led by adults. They look at books for pleasure and learn about letters and sounds. They sort items according to shapes and colours and use numbers within everyday routines. Children have suitable opportunities to develop their early writing skills by accessing materials, such as pens, pencils and brushes on the low level storage shelves. Although they develop strong pencil control, children do not consistently have opportunities to experiment with writing for different purposes, for example, by writing lists, notes or labels during role-play.

Children and babies make effective progress because staff obtain information about their starting points, observe them closely and assess and plan carefully to meet their individual needs. The observations are supported by photographs and examples of creative work and mark making in individual development folders. Achievements are meticulously tracked to ensure that there are no gaps in learning and additional support is offered when progress is less than expected. This means that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language thrive and confidently participate in the learning experiences. In addition, the staff ensure that children who are experiencing challenging family circumstances are equally nurtured with full consideration and support to ensure they do not miss out on any learning and fun opportunities. Parents become involved in their children's learning and are supported well to continue this at home, for example, by sharing story books or when attending special events, such as open days. Formal meetings take place with parents and key persons to discuss children's progress. Regular reports and the required progress check when children reach the age of two, include the knowledge parents share of their children's achievements. Therefore, children benefit from the consistency of this shared approach.

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

Children and babies are happy and extremely settled in the setting. This is because staff fully understand the importance of having positive relationships with parents and they work closely with them to assist children's transition into their care. For example, in consultation with parents they gradually lengthen the time of settling-in visits over several weeks. Every child has a key person and plenty of information is gathered from parents, which means the nursery has a good understanding of children's individual needs and how to meet them. As a result, children make secure attachments with their key person. There are also other key staff working in rooms that can take over the role of the key person during any absences. This provides security and stability for children and helps give them a sense of belonging when they see familiar staff. The transfer between rooms is well supported to support children's emotional well-being. Vital information is shared and children go on settling-in visits to the new playrooms so they can make friends with the children and meet the new adults caring for them. The nursery has established close links with local primary schools to help prepare and support children for the transition into full-time education.

Children are polite and behave well in the setting. The staff are good role models for children to follow as they use calm voices and provide secure boundaries, so children know what is expected of them. For instance, children help tidy their toys away and learn about simple rules relating to kindness and responsible behaviour. In addition, when staff need to gain their attention they listen carefully. Staff help children to understand about personal safety and gently explain that their actions can cause harm to other. For example, children are encouraged to share resources, to be gentle with equipment and not to throw sand or run while indoors. A fire evacuation procedure is in place and is carried out with the children on a regular basis. This supports children to develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe in an emergency.

Staff pay effective attention to promoting children's good health. All areas of the premises are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and the kitchen has been awarded five stars for food hygiene by an environmental health officer. Children are actively encouraged to wash their hands before eating and after toileting or playing outside, so they learn good self-care skills. Nappy changing and potty training is sensitively and hygienically undertaken to ensure that children remain comfortable. Children have individual flannels and bed linen in order to minimise the risk of cross-infection. Staff sit with children at meal times and encourage them to eat the nutritious meals and snacks. Older children have very good opportunities to develop their independence at meal times. For example, they capably serve their own food or pour their drinks. Babies and toddlers have their drinking cups within eyesight so they do not become thirsty or dehydrated. Children and babies develop good physical skills as they use their bodies in different ways and learn to use a variety of equipment in the fresh air. For example, children delight in climbing and balancing or successfully manoeuvring a wide range of wheeled toys in the garden.

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

Leadership and management of the nursery are good because the manager and assistant managers are committed to providing a safe, secure and high quality learning experience for all children. As the manager takes the lead for two sister nurseries, the assistants step up if she is not on the premises and this means they work well together by sharing roles and responsibilities according to their expertise. All the required documentation, such as policies, procedures and records are systematically maintained and confidentiality is observed. The staff complete safeguarding training and have a good awareness of the approved procedures to follow should a concern arise with a child. Robust recruitment and vetting systems are completed to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. The nursery has a written risk assessment in place which is reviewed and supplemented when new equipment or situation occurs. Daily checks are carried out by staff in the rooms or outdoor area in line with the risk assessment. This effectively identifies and minimises risks to children's safety. The staff are vigilant about the security of the children. There is a controlled entry system for the main entrance to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the premises unnoticed. In addition, closed-circuit television has been installed to ensure the management can see what is happening in each playroom in the nursery.

The self-evaluation process takes into account the views of staff, parents and children and is effective in evaluating practice, identifying strengths and priorities for development. In addition, the nursery-school seeks the views of other early years' practitioners and professionals. This means that the areas targeted for future development are well researched and planned improvements have a highly beneficial impact on the children who attend. The performance management of staff is good. There is a comprehensive staff induction and training programme in place which is a combination of in-house and external training and development opportunities. For example, the management team are currently working towards degrees and use staff meetings to share information. Staff regularly update their first aid certificates or complete training so they can deal with anaphylactic reactions. This means that the staff are continually developing their knowledge and skills and are making sure that they can meet children's' individual needs. New staff are encouraged to assess their own development needs and are supported to do this through coaching and mentoring. In addition, the manager is hands-on and is now spending more time in the rooms role modelling best practice. This is beginning to help give staff greater confidence in their interactions with the children.

The recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed. Children now have more choice in their play and the management team collect data and track information on children's progress. This information is used effectively to help staff to improve outcomes for children and prepare them for school. The partnerships with local schools and children's centres is good. Teaching staff and other early years professionals visit the nursery to ensure that children and their families get any additional support they need. Parents are kept well informed of their children's activities and have opportunities to share their views when they attend open days or consultations with their children's key persons. There are also parent representatives on a forum who help to reassure new parents about nursery life. Several parents were spoken to during this inspection. They say the nursery has a very friendly atmosphere and compliment the approachable staff team on the way they help the children to settle.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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	EY346623
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	938733
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	85
Number of children on roll	177
Name of provider	Clever Tots Limited
Date of previous inspection	30/08/2011
Telephone number	01277 220727

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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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