

Letter Box Nursery

Letter Box Day Nursery, 99 High Street, WALTON ON THE NAZE, Essex, CO14 8BA

Inspection date	19/02/2014
Previous inspection date	30/09/2008

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	3
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Staff establish very positive and trusting relationships with parents. As a result, children are confident and settled.
- The new, ambitious manager is motivated and committed to her role and is working hard to put new initiatives in place to improve practice.
- Children are offered a good range of inviting activities and resources, in a welcoming and well-organised environment. This means that children are confident, active learners.

It is not yet good because

- Information gained from baseline assessments is not sufficiently used to form the next steps in individual children's learning. This leads to a lack of appropriate challenge for all children and they make satisfactory, rather than good, progress.
- Teaching practice is variable as staff do not always ask open-ended questions to support children to think and extend their own play.
- Monitoring of planning and assessment is not fully developed. As a result, it is not thorough enough to identify individuals and groups of children who are underachieving, so gaps in learning are closing slowly.

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 children and staff and the use of space both indoors and outdoors.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working with children.
- The inspector reviewed a sample documentation, policies and procedures, including self-evaluation and children's development records.
- The inspector undertook a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector talked with available staff and parents and held discussions with the manager and owner.

Inspector

Gemma Ruegg

Full report

Information about the setting

Letter Box Nursery was registered in 2008 on the Early Years Register and the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. It is privately owned and managed and operates from a converted commercial premises in Walton on the Naze, Essex. Children have access to a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The nursery employs 11 members of staff, including the owner and manager of the early years provision. Of these, two staff members hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2, six at level 3 and three at level 5. The nursery opens Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.30pm for 51 weeks of the year. There are currently 74 children attending who are in the early years age group. They live in the local and surrounding areas. The setting also provides out of school care for children up to 11 years of age. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- improve the use of assessment arrangements by using baseline assessments to precisely identify children's next steps in their learning and ensure children experience appropriate challenge, so that they make good progress in their learning and development
- improve the quality of teaching by using carefully framed, open-ended questions to fully extend children's creative and critical thinking throughout the session.

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

- develop the monitoring of assessment arrangements further to ensure individuals and groups of children who are underachieving, are quickly identified and supported with targeted intervention, so that they make good progress given their starting points.

Inspection judgements

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

The nursery provides a welcoming and friendly environment where the children are suitably stimulated to gain a satisfactory range of skills in readiness for school. Staff demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the seven areas of learning. A good range of resources are appropriately displayed at low-levels to provide children with the opportunities to follow their interests by selecting their own activities. For example, a child chooses to add dinosaurs to the play dough, where they discover the foot prints they make. This freedom of choice allows the children to develop their skills through exploration and investigation. This means that children are showing signs of being active learners. Children show enthusiasm for learning and are keen to take part in the activities. However, teaching practice is variable as not all staff ask open-ended questions to help children think. For example, a child tries to discover a pathway around an obstacle on a bicycle in the garden. Staff immediately tell the child 'If I move this pram and pieces of wood you can get through'. Staff fail to offer the child the chance to think and extend this learning opportunity. The newly developed sensory room excites children's curiosity as they explore interesting patterns, textures and baskets of natural objects.

Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, generally well. They work closely with parents and other agencies involved with the children to provide a consistent approach. Relevant observations are clearly recorded in a learning journal development record for each child, supported by photographs and examples of the children's work. Newly developed baseline assessments, which are completed once a term, are beginning to monitor children's individual progress through each area of learning. However, staff do not effectively use this assessment to plan appropriate next steps in children's learning. This means that children's individual progress is not effectively supported or challenged to reach their unique potential. Consequently, children make steady, rather than good, progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff promote the children's use of literacy and children enjoy making patterns in the sand tray. The nursery provides lots of opportunities for them to see and recognise their own names. For example, individual trays and coat pegs all have their names on and during snack time, children find their name to place on the snack display. Older, more able children use their name cards to copy as they write their own names on their pictures. Children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor area and a good range of equipment to support their physical development. Children enjoy playing outside where they offered choices and are encouraged to make decisions about their own play. Staff often take a step back and allow children to use their imagination. For example, one child uses the climbing frame to be a princess trapped in a castle. This supports children's natural curiosity and motivation to learn. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home. For example, the nursery has recently developed home bags with activities for the children to complete at home with their families.

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

Staff establish good partnerships with parents; they are encouraged to discuss and complete an information form about their child's likes, dislikes and current routine. This helps staff to understand and meet their individual care needs. Staff are observant to

children's needs and have a nurturing approach; they quickly attend to children's care needs and comfort them with cuddles. Staff work closely with parents to ensure each child's transition from home to nursery is a smooth and positive experience. Children can have several trial sessions to help them become familiar with their key person and to develop their confidence and support their emotional attachments. The nursery has a buddy key person, so that there is a member of staff ready to cover and take over the care needs of children if their key person is away. This further supports children's emotional well-being. Children show generally good levels of self-esteem and confidence, which supports them with their future learning and school. The nursery has effective links with the local schools the children will attend. Also, children are supported and prepared to aid smooth transitions on to school.

Good behaviour is clearly promoted by all staff, who provide positive role models of behaviour and treat children with kindness and respect. Staff give appropriate praise, which means that children feel valued and this boosts their self-esteem and confidence. Staff remind children about walking inside and model how to share with their friends. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they handle tools, such as scissors in the creative area. Children are cared for in a safe environment and are well supervised.

Staff support children's emerging understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle that involves physical exercise and a healthy diet. Varied and healthy snacks and meals are offered, encouraging children to make positive health choices. Staff are aware of any individual dietary requirements and an alternative is provided. Children are encouraged to manage their own personal needs. For example, they take part in hand washing routines before and after eating. Staff interact with the children during mealtimes discussing which foods are healthy and offer support with cutting food, which supports their social skills. Children are encouraged to use their imagination. For example, children discuss about eating their runner beans then being able to run around the garden faster. All children have daily opportunities for fresh air, daylight and exercise in a well-resourced outside area. Staff support children in their explorations as they learn to balance and move with coordination. Older children develop their physical skills by regularly using the outdoor equipment, where they learn to jump, climb and slide.

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

The manager and staff understand their responsibilities in meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The management team have attended essential safeguarding training and as a result, have effectively trained staff members to ensure they have a clear understanding of how to recognise and report any child protection concerns. This is further enhanced by a clear set of policies and procedures to support staff practice. One policy a week is displayed in the entrance way to encourage parents to keep up to date with the nursery procedures. The premises are safe and secure with suitable risk assessments and daily checks being completed. The management team understands the importance of safe recruitment procedures. This is supported by an effective recruitment checklist, which ensures all legal requirements are met. For example, two satisfactory references are obtained, Disclosure and Barring Service

checks are completed and a clear initial induction process and a monitored probationary period are undertaken.

The newly appointed manager is ambitious and well driven, she shows high levels of commitment to improve the nursery provision. She is supported by an enthusiastic team, who are committed to providing quality care and learning experiences for all children. The educational programmes are monitored to ensure children have a broad range of activities covering the seven areas of learning. However, the manager recognises that planning and assessment is not fully developed and is not consistently thorough enough to identify gaps in children's learning and plan interventions for groups of children that may need additional support. Self-evaluation is an ongoing process, through regular discussions and reflection of practice and team meetings, which promotes continuous improvement. The manager is creating new ways to involve parents and children in the self-evaluation process. For example, postcards have been sent home to gain feedback. These are then posted in the nursery post box and displayed on the display board. Under the new management team, staff are having regular supervision meetings and annual appraisals to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Ongoing staff development and training is encouraged and supported to improve practice.

Required details are gathered about the children and written parental consents are obtained to ensure children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. Parents speak highly of the nursery and value the friendly, welcoming staff and environment. Ongoing communication is promoted and encouraged and parents are able to speak to staff at anytime. Parents' comment that they are kept well informed about their child's care and activities through a daily diary and information boards within each room. Strong, trustworthy relationships are established, with one parent commenting 'He has such a strong relationship with his key person, it's hard to get him home'. Parents are kept well informed about events and activities at the nursery through regular communication, newsletters, the nursery's website and social media sites. Parents have confidence in the staff and find them very approachable and supportive. The nursery works alongside the local schools to ensure the transition is smooth and to enhance continuity.

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	EY369169
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	870832
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	56
Number of children on roll	74
Name of provider	Elm Barns Ltd
Date of previous inspection	30/09/2008
Telephone number	01255 552797

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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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