

Letter Box Nursery

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

Inspection date	12/03/2014
Previous inspection date	30/09/2008

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

- The quality of teaching is good. Practitioners know the children in their key person group well. They use their observations of play to proficiently identify children's learning needs. The wide and varied range of activities offered enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Children are effectively protected from harm through the nursery's clear policies and procedures. All practitioners hold qualifications in safeguarding children and update their understanding through regular training courses.
- Partnerships with parents and others are secure. Parents are provided with a good amount of information about the nursery. They are encouraged to play an active role in their children's development and to help to identify their next steps in learning.
- Children are provided with very good opportunities to guide their own play. They freely access the exciting range of resources indoors and outdoors and are encouraged to transport equipment from one area to another to enhance their learning.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to further extend opportunities for children to develop independence skills through routine activities, such as snack time and mealtimes.

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 rooms for children aged from two to five years and the garden. She viewed all areas of the nursery during the inspection.

- The inspector held discussions with the registered provider, the manager, the room leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, practitioners and children at appropriate times throughout the inspection.

- The inspector looked at records and documentation relating to children's details, information about children's learning and development, accident and medication records, proof of the checks used to assess practitioners' suitability, proof of practitioners' qualifications, written risk assessments, written policies and a selection of other relevant records.

- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to at the time of the inspection.

Inspector

Lynn Hughes

Full report

Information about the setting

Letter Box Nursery was registered in 2008 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It is situated in converted premises in the Walton on the Naze area of Essex, and is managed by a private company. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from three main rooms and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The nursery employs 11 members of childcare staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at levels 2 to 6.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 8.30am until 5.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 74 children on roll who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. 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 further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- review the organisation of snack and meal times to provide opportunities for children to fully develop independence skills during routine activities.

Inspection judgements

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

Children are keen, motivated and excited about learning. The practitioners demonstrate a good knowledge of how children learn and use their expertise to plan exciting and challenging activities for all children. Good use of observations enables key persons to effectively identify children's next steps in learning and to tailor planning to meet individual children's learning needs and styles. Children's progress is effectively recorded in their learning journals and shared with parents. In addition, each key person holds clear information about each child's progress by way of a tracker. This enables the key person and manager to identify if there are any gaps in children's learning or in the provision for each area of learning. The success of children's learning is enhanced by proficient practitioners who demonstrate secure knowledge of when to intervene in children's freely chosen play. They capture and sustain children's interests in discussions and activities. Evidence shows that all children, including those who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their learning.

Children are great explorers. They thoroughly enjoy being creative in the nursery's

recently created 'mud kitchen'. They hunt for bugs and other natural things with their magnifying glasses. A large puddle which develops in the nursery garden whenever it rains heavily provides an exciting opportunity for puddle jumping. Drain pipes are positioned on fencing close to where the puddle appears, to provide opportunities for children to make use of the rain water in their play. An exciting game with the parachute in the garden engages the children's interests and helps them to define skills, such as working together and keeping the ball on the top of the parachute. Children's language skills are proficiently enhanced by practitioners using clear language to communicate. They ask well-considered questions which provide opportunities for children to think about their answers and to respond in their own time. Children's natural curiosity is promoted through access to a wide range of natural objects and items of interest. Technological equipment enables children to develop their understanding of how things work. Good opportunities are in place for children to use their home language in play throughout the nursery. The nursery also translates learning journals into children's home languages to enable all parents to become actively involved in their children's learning.

The wide range of planned and freely chosen play experiences provided for children enable them to develop essential skills for the future. For example, children are provided with good opportunities to develop their literacy skills when they practise handwriting and draw with the exciting range of resources available to them. They explore mathematics in everyday activities, such as counting how many children are present and how many cups they will need at lunchtime. Practitioners working with older children within the nursery recognise the importance of preparing them for school readiness. They achieve this by focusing on developing good manners and effective listening skills.

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

Children are settled, comfortable and relaxed in the nursery environment. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in the nursery's settling-in procedures and to guide their child's entry to nursery. The effective management of this important time ensures that children quickly form strong relationships with the adults caring for them. A buddy key person system ensures that children always have someone special to care for them if their main key person is absent. Children learn about the nursery rules through the practitioners' gentle reminders. They understand the importance of using their walking feet indoors to prevent tripping and falling accidents. Children are encouraged to take some calculated risks in their play to promote their understanding of safety. For example, much of the outdoor equipment is transportable, enabling children to move and carry their chosen resources from one area to another. Children learn quickly how much they can carry and how to move items safely.

The nursery environment is bright, welcoming and inviting. The rooms are organised to enable children to freely guide their own learning. For example, they safely select resources from low-level shelving, which is effectively labelled for easy identification. Both of the rooms for children aged over two years lead directly to the well-equipped and exciting garden. Planning for the outdoor environment covers all seven areas of learning and provides good opportunities for children who learn better in an outdoor environment to flourish. Transitions throughout the nursery are managed well. For example, when

babies are moving from the baby room to the two-to-three's room, practitioners accompany them to the room a number of times for visits. This provides good opportunities for them to familiarise themselves with the new room and to get to know the practitioners and children.

Children learn about keeping healthy through discussions and planned activities. For example, an activity during key worker time enables children to explore the contents of a wash bag. The practitioner encourages them to think about the contents, such as a toothbrush and toothpaste, and to talk about the importance of cleaning their teeth. This promotes a lively discussion about healthy routines. Children enjoy a wide range of snacks and meals during their nursery day. The meals are cooked at the sister nursery from fresh and wholesome ingredients. During routine activities, such as snack and lunch time, children are provided with some opportunities to develop independence skills, for example, by pouring their own drinks from small manageable jugs. However, there is scope to further enhance these experiences by providing more regular opportunities for children to make their own sandwiches, cut their own fruit or serve some food during main mealtimes. Children understand the importance of fresh air and exercise as they freely access the nursery garden. Practitioners also make very good use of the local environment to enhance children outdoor experiences. For example, they go for walks in the town and regularly visit the beach.

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

Children are well protected from harm through the nursery's clear policies and procedures. All practitioners update their safeguarding knowledge regularly through appropriate training, and the nursery holds in-house workshops to refresh practitioners' knowledge of their own safeguarding procedures. There is a clear complaints procedure in place, and the manager is proactive in dealing with any concerns raised about the nursery provision. For example, the operation of the automatic door has been reviewed following a concern being raised. In addition, the staff are vigilant to ensure that children are appropriately dressed when they play outside, and spare clothing is provided by the nursery to enable children whose clothes have become wet during play to be changed into dry clothes.

Leadership of the nursery is secure. The registered providers play an active role in the management team and support the nursery manager in her working practices. Effective monitoring of the nursery's practices, daily organisation and educational programme ensure that the practitioners and management focus on continuous improvement. The nursery manager communicates proficiently with her team of practitioners and is beginning to develop stronger links with the management team who oversee and manage the nursery's sister setting, located close by. This has proven successful for sharing good quality and promoting the registered provider's commitment to very high standards. The nursery's effective appraisal and supervision systems provide practitioners with opportunities to be heard and to share their views on the organisation of the nursery. Effective use of self-evaluation enables managers, practitioners, parents and others to contribute to the nursery's ongoing plans and developments. For example, the manager recently introduced a sensory room, following feedback from parents and professionals

visiting the nursery. She has plans to further develop the outdoor area by providing more opportunities for children to express themselves imaginatively.

Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents spoken to at the time of the inspection express their complete satisfaction with the nursery and comment on the way in which their children are supported. Some parents feel that the friendly and approachable practitioners are the nursery's key strength. Other parents place the nursery's ability to identify and support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as high. The nursery works with a number of professionals and other agencies to effectively meet the needs of all children attending and to support the whole family. Good methods of communication ensure that parents are kept fully up to date with their children's development. They are encouraged to play an active role in planning for their children's learning by attending regular open events and discussing their children's progress with their key person. Links with other early years settings which children attend are good. This provides a forum for sharing information about children's progress. Transitions between the nursery and local schools are managed well to ensure that children moving on to their next stages of learning are well supported.

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	959351
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 851400

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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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