

Inspection of Apple Tree Day Care Nursery

304 Cressing Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 3PG

Inspection date: 26 July 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children choose from a wide range of activities and have lots of opportunities to play outside. They learn how to germinate seeds and watch them grow until they can be planted out in the vegetable patch. Children help staff care for the plants. Together, they pick the herbs, runner beans and peas, which they try at mealtimes. This helps to support children's understanding of the world around them, including where their food comes from.

Children behave well and are confident. They share and take turns while playing without adult support. For example, children enjoy playing hide and seek. They take turns to count to 10 before going to look for their friends, who giggle as they hide behind trees and staff.

Children listen to staff and respond enthusiastically to their questions. They share their thoughts and ideas with staff, who challenge children to find solutions to problems they encounter. For example, when children build a long train track in the garden using wooden interlocking pieces, staff encourage them to look for curved shapes to bend the track around the trees.

Children eagerly engage with staff who read them their favourite stories. Painted wooden figures depicting characters, such as a mouse, snake and the 'Gruffalo' are hidden among the trees. Children delight in spotting these. This helps to support their literacy skills and love of books.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Staff plan a good range of activities that help to support children's learning and interests. However, sometimes, they do not fully consider how to organise tools and equipment to ensure children have more opportunities to manage tasks for themselves. For example, children find adult-sized garden forks a little challenging and need help to dig out the weeds in the vegetable patch.
- The educational programme for children is effective. Regular observations, along with knowledge of children's current interests, allow staff to plan a curriculum that supports what children need to learn next. Staff identify any gaps in children's learning and plan suitable next steps to help them catch up. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in relation to their individual starting points.
- Staff develop close bonds with children, which helps to support their emotional development and confidence. Key persons comfort and reassure children as they settle into the nursery or move into a new room. A good buddy system helps to ensure that even if their key person is not available, there is someone else they can turn to for help or a cuddle.

- Staff are supported well by the manager, who provides them with regular supervision meetings to enhance and extend their practice. They frequently access online training courses to improve their knowledge and raise their teaching skills. Room leaders encourage and guide the other staff working in the room, which helps to strengthen their skills.
- Children are happy and settle quickly. They spend as much time as possible playing outside in the fresh air, which helps to support their physical well-being and good health. The mud kitchen gets plenty of use as children explore what happens when they mix sand and mud. Staff encourage children to pick the herbs and add to their mixtures. Children use watering cans to collect water from the water container and create 'mud sundaes', which they proudly gift to the manager and staff.
- Partnerships with school teachers are good. Staff encourage teachers to visit the children. They provide information about children's development and interests, which helps to support their move to school.
- Since returning from the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic lockdown, staff have noticed that many children have fallen behind in their communication and language skills. Staff access support from other professionals, such as speech and language therapists to help children to catch up.
- Parents have good opportunities to find out about their children's learning and their achievements. They are happy with the care and support staff provide. Children and their families receive regular ideas and activity sheets that they can do together at home. This was introduced by the manager during the first lockdown and has continued, even though most children are now back in the nursery.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are aware of safeguarding issues which might affect children in their care. They attend regular training and understand the signs and symptoms that could indicate a child is at risk of harm or abuse. Staff know the dangers posed to children from extreme views and behaviours and how to report their concerns. They have a clear understanding of what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff or they have concerns about a colleague's conduct. Risk assessments help to keep children safe. Staff are quick to react to any changes, such as damaged apples falling from the fruit trees. This helps to prevent any accidents.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- enhance staff's understanding of how to extend children's independence when

using tools and equipment.

Setting details

Unique reference number	650048
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10130484
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 11
Total number of places	51
Number of children on roll	71
Name of registered person	Just Like Home Day Nurseries Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP520403
Telephone number	01376 321858
Date of previous inspection	29 October 2019

Information about this early years setting

Apple Tree Day Care Nursery registered in 1997. The nursery is open five days a week from 7.45am until 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. An out-of-school club operates from 3pm until 6pm through school term times and from 7.45am until 6pm in school holidays. There are 15 members of staff, including the manager. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager who holds a level 5 qualification.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sue Mann

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The inspector viewed all areas of the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation together.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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