

Inspection of Elmwood Preschool

22 Guys Farm Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex CM3 5NB

Inspection date: 25 January 2023

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

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children's interests are highly valued in this exceptional setting. Staff know the children well and offer various opportunities for children to explore and investigate, creating awe and wonder in children's learning. For example, children show an interest in planets and space. Children and staff sing songs about planets, discuss what astronauts wear and how they move in space. Children are provided with opportunities to speculate and test their own ideas through art and craft activities linked to space.

The exceptional staff have a deep understanding of children's backgrounds. They plan enriching learning opportunities to extend on children's knowledge and provide them with rich learning experiences. For example, children enjoy visits from a farm and an insect company, where they explore millipedes. Children learn how everyone is unique. For instance, when guide dogs visit the setting, children learn about their role in helping their owners. Children also visit a residential home, where they read stories and play games with residents.

Children's behaviour is exemplary as they are extremely engaged during activities. Staff are superb role models. Together, children and staff discuss emotions and what makes them 'happy' or 'sad'. Children use sand timers to share resources. They take turns playing football and praise one another when they score a goal. Staff read to children with enthusiasm and encourage children to predict what will happen next in the story. Staff inspire children to use their imagination when storytelling, bringing the story to life.

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

- Children flourish from having warm, high-quality interactions with staff. Staff have extremely high expectations of children as they teach them new vocabulary. Children learn the use of tools and say, 'We can use the magnifying glasses', when they go on a bug hunt. Staff extend children's learning through commenting on what children are doing, for example 'the lion is stamping' as they play with the animals. They introduce the word 'stem' as children draw flowers. Staff use simple sign language with children to help develop their communication and language skills. This especially has a positive impact on supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children learn how to be healthy. They learn the importance of exercise and the effect this has on their bodies. For example, when they run, children note the increase in their heartbeats. Children discuss healthy foods and where they come from. Staff are incredibly responsive to challenge children's learning further and ask questions to prompt children's thinking skills, such as 'Where do carrots come from?'

- Staff learn what is important to children and their families. They discuss the festivals they celebrate at home. For example, children learn about Diwali and Chinese New Year. They explore clothing, music, food and cultural traditions that extend their experiences. Children watch associated videos and learn what a 'parade' is.
- Staff create excellent partnerships with parents and schools, to help children to be ready for primary school. They provide parents with home learning suggestions, for example reading stories together and going for a walk to collect pine cones and leaves. Children spend time in the school regularly. They use the sports hall, where they learn to get dressed for physical education lessons, and have story sessions in the Reception class. Children show a mature independence as they competently pour their drinks and put their coats on. Routines such as these strongly support children in gaining skills and making a smooth transition to school.
- Children's mathematical skills are well supported. Children show excellent concentration skills as they learn to match quantities to numbers. Staff expertly challenge their learning, for example, through exploring the concept of 'one more' and 'one less' with children.
- Leaders are exceptionally reflective and have regular meetings with their team. They work together to adapt their environment to meet children's interests and needs. Staff comment that they feel extremely well supported by management and feel their well-being is highly valued.
- Parents praise the staff and say that the setting feels like 'one big family'. They comment that staff are very supportive and that they have noticed a difference in their children's confidence and speech since starting at the setting.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a deep understanding of how to keep children safe. Managers support staff in refreshing their knowledge through regular training opportunities. Staff know the signs and symptoms of abuse and what to do if they have concerns about a child. They are also aware of the process they should follow if they were to have concerns about a member of staff. Staff are aware of safeguarding risks, including female genital mutilation, radicalisation and county lines. Children learn about risks and how to keep themselves safe. For example, when they talk about fire safety, children comment, 'Don't touch it because it will burn you.'

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY482970
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10264427
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	46
Number of children on roll	83
Name of registered person	Elmwood Pre-School Community Interest Company
Registered person unique reference number	RP902716
Telephone number	01245 329529
Date of previous inspection	15 June 2017

Information about this early years setting

Elmwood Preschool registered in 1983. The pre-school employs 18 members of childcare staff. Of these, 10 hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3 and four hold a qualification at level 2. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 8.30am until 3.30pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Stef Montgomery

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 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 manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together to discuss the areas of learning, their curriculum and what they want children to learn, both inside and outside.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- The inspector spoke to children about what they are doing at the setting.
- The inspector spoke to parents to take account of their views on the setting.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation, including first-aid certificates and checks on staff suitability.

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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