

Inspection of Friars Centre Playgroup

8 Centurion Close, Shoeburyness, Essex SS3 9UT

Inspection date: 11 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff consider each child's unique needs when they set up their rooms. This results in a safe, inclusive environment where all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can move around confidently to practise and develop their skills. Staff have planned the outdoor area to provide a range of physical challenges and new experiences for children. For example, they recognise that some children may be less familiar with how fruit and vegetables are grown so have developed an area where they can grow and harvest their own vegetables.

Children are progressively developing their communication and language skills. Staff engage the youngest children in singing action songs and playing instruments. This helps foster a greater understanding of the meaning of words and promotes a sense of rhythm. Staff expressively read stories and ask children questions to help them think about the characters and what is happening. They support older children to retell and recall a story while they make 'gingerbread' figures out of dough. Children repeat familiar phrases and bring the story to life. Staff skilfully introduce mathematical concepts and language as children play. They compare how tall the children are to the height of the tower they have built. Older children are introduced to more complex ideas when staff ask them questions, such as 'Is it secure?'. Children behave well. Staff encourage them to share and take turns.

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

- Leaders are very reflective and have recently made significant changes in the playgroup. The manager says the youngest children have benefited from being cared for in a smaller group. Staff agree that younger children are now more vocal, and they have seen a positive impact on older children's behaviour.
- Staff feel well supported and say they have a manageable workload. There is an effective programme of staff supervision meetings. Through their observations, leaders identify appropriate training to enhance staff practices. Staff are also able to request specific training, such as basic sign language, to enhance their professional knowledge.
- Parents provide information when children start to enable staff to support children to know and learn more. They continue to observe and make assessments to identify any gaps in children's learning and development. Staff regularly share children's progress with parents.
- Leaders recognise that some children were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and this has, in turn, influenced their curriculum. They focus strongly on promoting children's speech and language development and social skills. However, staff do not consistently encourage children to be independent. For instance, they do not always give children the opportunity to try and put their

coats and hats on by themselves or practise their self-help skills at snack times.

- Staff involve children in everyday tasks and foster a sense of responsibility. For example, children are allocated a section to tidy and eagerly show their friends where the toys belong. They understand the importance of following rules and explain to staff how they will keep themselves safe when they play outside in icy conditions.
- Leaders work closely with key persons to decide how best to use additional funding to close gaps in children's learning or to enhance their experiences within the playgroup. Staff have carefully considered which resources will spark children's interests. They notice that children are now more willing to 'give things a go' and include others in their play.
- Staff form strong partnerships with schools that children are due to attend and meet with teachers to plan smooth transitions. They developed an innovative map, highlighting local landmarks to help children become familiar with their community and their eventual journey to school.
- Staff take account of the youngest children's individual needs and abilities before they transition to the next room. This helps to ensure that children are ready and best prepared for their move and contributes to supporting each child's emotional well-being.
- Staff provide extremely strong support for children with SEND. The team works closely with parents and other professionals. Staff follow prescribed programmes, such as those devised by physiotherapists. Parents feel fully involved in all processes and appreciate the support they receive. This integrated approach helps all children to make progress.
- Parents describe staff as 'very caring'. They enthusiastically comment that their children have benefited from their time at the playgroup. Parents express that their children have grown in confidence and say they 'wouldn't think of placing my child anywhere else'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to extend the opportunities for children to develop their growing independence.

Setting details

Unique reference number	119478
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10305049
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	55
Name of registered person	Friars Centre Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP901802
Telephone number	01702 292 516
Date of previous inspection	9 February 2018

Information about this early years setting

Friars Centre Playgroup registered in 1974. The playgroup employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The playgroup opens Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 9am to 3.30pm. The playgroup provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Fiona Sapler

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 deputy manager, manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the playgroup and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Staff and children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- Parents shared their views during the inspection.
- The manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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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