

Inspection of Bluebell Forest School

Matching Village Hall, The Green, Matching Tye, Harlow CM17 0QS

Inspection date: 26 April 2024

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

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children are very happy and flourish at this setting. They have a genuine thirst for learning. This is because staff plan an enticing curriculum with activities that embrace children's unique interests and preferred pattern of learning. These sustain children's engagement for long periods of time and results in a calm and productive environment. Staff use excellent positive body language during their high-quality interactions with children, such as laying down next to them, to be on their level. They know exactly when it is not appropriate to interrupt children's flow of thoughts and ideas. Children are expert problem solvers, develop excellent physical skills and learn to assess risks from an early age. They work out how to get in and out of hammocks and safely traverse across suspended ropes. Children show that they feel very loved and secure as they snuggle up to staff who read them their chosen stories. Staff are highly experienced and exceptional role models, so children are extremely well behaved and guided by the setting's agreement. Children know to consistently use their good manners and walking feet indoors. They confidently help their friends and visitors put on outer clothing ready to go to the forest.

Staff help children to become respectful adults of the future. Differences are celebrated and discussed openly. Children learn what it is to be unique. Staff and children create and share photo family cards that support children to understand about the diversity of families without bias. Children experience awe and wonder in their everyday experiences. Staff provide children with the freedom to pour water on the muddy forest ground. Children beam with delight as they create a smooth surface and search for appropriate sticks to practise writing their name in the soil. Children have exceptional independence skills because staff work tirelessly to ensure that routines are firmly embedded. They help to prepare their own snack and confidently use real crockery.

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

- Staff deliver a high-quality and ambitious curriculum that is varied and precisely tailored to meet the individual needs of each child. They know children extremely well and build on what they already know. All children are provided with a high level of challenge through their chosen play. This successfully supports them to reach their own individual potential. All children, including those who receive additional funding, make outstanding progress.
- Children benefit from a wealth of rich experiences during forest school sessions that fosters their love of nature and high level of exploration. Staff intuitively enrich children's curiosity as they listen intently to environmental sounds and search for insects. For example, they clearly explain to children the importance of returning the baby slugs they discover to their natural habitat so that they

remain protected from the weather, and how they will thrive with access to natural vegetation.

- Children's emotional development is strongly embedded in staff practice. Their high-quality interactions encourage children to advocate for themselves from a young age. Staff talk to children about the reasons why they or others might feel. Their superb sensitive support results in resilient children who are prepared for changes in their lives. Staff are excellent role models and teach children an abundance of important social skills, such as valuing each other's ideas and thoughts. This helps children to interact harmoniously with their peers and form strong friendships.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of how to successfully promote communication and language. Children excitedly choose their favourite songs and rhymes to sing. They kindly request for the visiting local resident to play them on the piano. Children embrace their love of words and suggest new ones to include in songs, along with familiar sign language. Staff consistently adapt how they speak to children using clear and simple sentences. They purposely introduce new vocabulary in context, such as 'antenna', as children find a centipede in the forest. Their excellent use of questioning challenges children to use complex sentences. Consequently, children are articulate and expressive communicators.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive exceptional support. Staff work in partnership with parents and external agencies to ensure a comprehensive package of support and interventions is highly effective. Children with SEND make truly inspiring progress over time.
- Partnerships with parents are of an exceptionally high standard. Parents comment how their children are 'thriving' and feel very well informed about their children's progress. They describe the staff team as 'fantastic' and regard them an extension of their family. Staff welcome parents to an abundance of workshops and events to share ideas and extend their knowledge of the forest school approach.
- The inspirational manager provides exceptional professional development opportunities for staff that is precisely targeted to further support the needs of children. She consistently seeks out new initiatives that enables staff to implement excellent practice. Other early years professionals are warmly welcomed to the setting where knowledge is shared and to observe best practice. This helps to improve outcomes for other children.
- Staff's well-being is of the utmost importance to the manager. She has recently completed a counselling course to provide her with the skills to support her enthusiastic staff team. Staff feel valued and very proud of their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY545422
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10335854
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	30
Number of children on roll	47
Name of registered person	Bluebell Forest School Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP545421
Telephone number	07878555294
Date of previous inspection	28 June 2018

Information about this early years setting

Bluebell Forest School registered in 2017. The setting is open from 8am until 3pm Monday to Thursday, and from 8am until 1pm on Friday, during term time only. There are nine staff members who work directly with children; of these, eight hold relevant childcare qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager who holds a master's degree. The setting follows the Montessori educational philosophy combined with the forest school approach. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lorraine Pike

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider has 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 her evaluation of the provider.
- The joint manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about the curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- A joint observation of an activity was carried out by the inspector and the manager. The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector held a number of discussions with staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager. She looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of staff working in the setting.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day.

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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