

Inspection of Apple Barn Pre School

53 Bentfield Causeway, Stansted CM24 8HU

Inspection date: 9 May 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children flourish in the small, welcoming and cosy pre-school. There is a strong emphasis on supporting children's well-being and promoting outdoor learning in the natural environment. Time is given to ensure children feel safe, secure and settled. Settling-in sessions are tailored to meet the needs of the individual child. Therefore, children happily arrive with enthusiasm and excitement to start their day. They leave their parents with ease and quickly engage in their play. Children demonstrate they are confident and secure and have established warm and trusting bonds with their key person and the small team of staff, who all speak knowledgeably about the children in their care.

The curriculum is designed around children's interests and builds on what they already know, with invitations to learn following flexible themes. For example, the 'healthy me' theme helps children understand the importance of staying safe and well. In addition, activities that are fun also support children's understanding of their emotions. They are beginning to learn the language they need to express how they feel. Children have made friendships and are generally kind to one another. Staff are very respectful of children's individuality and what is important to them. They are attentive and speak kindly to the children, who demonstrate good manners. Children understand the high expectations of the pre-school and enjoy the praise and positive reinforcement they receive for their efforts. Therefore, children's behaviour is very good.

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

- Children delight in daily planned adventures to the nearby woods. They excitedly explain to visitors to the pre-school the need to be careful as they walk along the quiet roadside leading to the woods and the importance of wearing a high-visibility tabard, showing they are aware of the importance to stay safe.
- Children investigate the world around them as they engage in lots of physical activities in the 'magical' woods. They enjoy the space and freedom to run at speed in the fresh air. Children demonstrate how squirrels climb trees, and they remind visitors that pine cones are food for the squirrels. They give names to trees, such as the 'dragon tree', where adventures happen as they use their imagination.
- Children show sustained concentration using the sand pit. They persevere as they make sandcastles and discover the sand must be wet for this to succeed. They predict how much water is needed and are thrilled with their creation.
- Children have many opportunities to learn simple mathematics. This is supported through all activities. For example, they sing familiar number songs and discuss shapes and size while completing puzzles. They also learn about weight as they decide if objects are heavy or light.

- Children have many opportunities to make marks and learn the skills for early writing. They draw pictures of strawberries and decide they want to name the fruits they draw. Staff spend time helping them and they follow instructions well.
- The management has high expectations for the children attending and demonstrates a clear passion to provide the highest quality care and education. The management observes and monitors staff practice through observations, being hands on and role modelling good practice. Staff speak positively about their roles and feel valued and supported through continuous professional development opportunities.
- Professional, friendly relationships have been established with the parents, who speak highly of the pre-school. Daily conversations take place as children arrive, and annual questionnaires are used to seek parents' views, which inform changes made to improve outcomes. However, staff have not consistently embedded ways to share up-to-date information to help parents continue to support their child's learning at home.
- Many parents comment on how fortunate and grateful they are for such a 'wonderful' pre-school for their children. Parents say that their children are excited to attend and have made excellent progress in numeracy and literacy. Many speak of being reassured their children are learning in a fun and safe environment.
- Overall, staff support children to get the most out of their learning. They engage children in conversation and provide running commentaries during activities. Staff are attentive and speak kindly and respectfully to the children. They introduce new words to extend vocabulary. For example, staff explain the need to pull up the 'tongue' of the shoe when children make good attempts to put on their shoes and discuss the fastening. However staff do not consistently provide children with time to consider and process their answers and often give solutions to a problem.

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:

- build on the good communication with parents to develop ways to consistently share up-to-date information about how they can support their child's learning at home
- guide staff to provide more opportunities for children to consider their thoughts and responses to questions.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY548191
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10388460
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	15
Number of children on roll	22
Name of registered person	Bass, Joanne
Registered person unique reference number	RP548190
Telephone number	01279 647256
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2019

Information about this early years setting

Apple Barn Pre School registered in 2017 and is situated in Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex. The pre-school employs five members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday from 9am until 3.30pm, during term time only. It provides government funded early education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lynn Hartigan

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the curriculum and what it is that the team want the children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- Parents provided the inspector with oral and written feedback at the inspection.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation together.
- The inspector spoke with the staff team during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of the staff working in the pre-school.

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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