

Inspection of Little Pals Forest School

465 St Johns Road, Clacton, Clacton, Essex CO16 8DU

Inspection date: 15 October 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children excitedly enter the nursery and part from their parents and carers with ease. They are greeted by kind and friendly staff who welcome them into the nursery room to begin their day. Children are keen and active learners. They immediately find their friends and engage in freely chosen play, making use of the interesting range of resources that are stored within their reach for easy self-selection. Staff are on hand to support and facilitate children's ideas. They have clear expectations of the children. As a result, children behave well and follow the nursery rules and boundaries proficiently. For example, they enthusiastically tidy away the toys and equipment in preparation for the next part of the day.

Staff engage in purposeful discussions with the children. They introduce new vocabulary and help children to learn new words relating to their chosen interest. For example, staff teach children the word 'mollusc', when they use the internet to research slugs, following a session of outdoor learning. Children's knowledge of the world is effectively enhanced as they frequently go on trips and outings outside of the nursery. For example, they recently visited the local beach as part of their celebrations around 'World Mental Health Week'. They visit libraries, garden centres and have participated in litter picking activities.

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

- The nursery is managed by a team of directors who have oversight of three linked nurseries. They effectively share responsibilities for various management roles, such as operations, finance and funding. This enables the management team to effectively support the day-to-day managers at each of the nurseries. The management team works well with the local authority and engages in local forums, where they have the opportunities to share and learn about new guidance and procedures. Staff are well supported and coached, for example, through supervision meetings, training and staff meetings.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents spoken to at the time of the inspection, share that they are really happy with the care of their children. They feel that a core strength of the nursery is the friendly staff team and state that their children really enjoy attending. Parents feel well informed about their child's day through the effective handover discussions and through the written information shared daily on an online application.
- Staff tailor learning activities to extend experiences for children. They plan around weekly themes, such as recycling. This helps staff to focus the learning intentions and bring in ideas to extend the children's experiences. For example, they talk about the packaging in their lunchboxes and read the instructions for recycling. Plans include making soup from a range of root vegetables and then using the skins to create dye to paint with.

- Staff manage the differing needs of younger and older children effectively. They recognise that younger children need to be able to move around and are less likely to want to sit together for large group stories for example. As a result, younger children enjoy some additional garden and physical play time, while older children listen to a story together.
- Children's learning is generally well-supported. However, there are some inconsistencies in the methods of teaching used by various staff. For example, some staff are less proficient at asking appropriate questions to extend children's thinking, providing time for the children to consider their responses and not answering the question for the children. The management team is currently considering strategies to strengthen the quality of teaching to a consistently high level.
- Children's mathematical knowledge is generally extended by staff helping them to count and use numbers in their everyday activities. Some staff extend the use of mathematical language effectively, helping children to fully explore this aspect of learning. However, this is not consistent throughout the nursery. For example, the manager is aware that there are fewer opportunities for children to explore mathematics in the garden.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture of 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 strengthen the quality of teaching to a consistently high level so that all children benefit from strong learning
- improve planning to ensure that children develop a greater knowledge of mathematical concepts in everyday play.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2736119
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10370131
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	2 to 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	24
Name of registered person	Little Pals Childrens Centre Nursery Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP529083
Telephone number	01255 423745
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Little Pals Forest School was registered in 2023. The nursery employs four members of childcare staff. All four hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above, including two with early years teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday term time only. Sessions are from 8am until 4pm. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two-, three- and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lynn Hughes

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke to directors about the leadership and management of the setting.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of group activities with the manager.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.
- 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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