

Inspection of Little Owls Preschool (Boxted)

King George Playing Field, Cage Lane, Boxted, Colchester, Essex CO4 5RE

Inspection date: 26 September 2025

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 have a clear focus on helping children to build a strong sense of belonging at the pre-school. They support children to hang up their belongings on arrival and encourage them to access the exciting play and learning opportunities available. They get to know children well and build strong relationships. For example, they interact with children readily throughout the day and encourage them to ask questions as they play. This helps to motivate children's communication and language skills and inspires their curiosity.

Staff care about the children's emotional well-being. They focus on helping children to feel relaxed, safe and happy in their care. For example, the strong key-person system ensures staff know how to help each child to settle. Staff have high expectations for children's independence. Children are encouraged to cut their fruit and pour their drinks during their snack times with tailored support provided for individual children. Learning is generally sequenced to allow all children to develop their skills. For example, staff guide the children's hands when they are learning how to cut up a banana, before gradually reducing the physical support so they can learn to do this independently.

Staff model the use of please and thank you in their communications and show children how to take turns. This helps children to be helpful towards their friends and adults. There are many opportunities for children to be creative and practise making marks. The home corner is equipped with everyday items, allowing children to be imaginative within their play. For example, children follow the same theme as they pretend to iron the clothes and fold them up. Staff organise the learning environment to create opportunities for children to access the outdoor learning space as they choose. This means that children explore the natural world and tackle more physically challenging tasks, such as climbing and balancing.

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

- The management team and staff provide high-quality learning and teaching to children in their care. Managers are present within the setting and staff reflect positively on how supported they feel. Managers foster an open and honest relationship with staff, which helps to create a close-knit team who support each other well.
- Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of the children in their care. Where children need additional emotional support, staff are aware and warmly reassure them until they are feeling more settled and ready to engage more independently.
- The pre-school aims to equip children for their next stage in learning. They focus on offering experiences like those of a school-based provision. For example,

during circle time, they sing a familiar song to help children to ready themselves to listen to a story. Gentle reminders about using their ears to listen and being quieter so they can hear, help to support their listening skills further. Leaders seek feedback from local schools to help them to shape the curriculum and ensure children develop the tools and skills to further their learning.

- Relationships among children, parents and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture. Parents speak about the setting with warmth and overwhelming positivity, outlining their children feel happy and safe and have an extremely positive learning experience. Staff establish strong relationships with parents, ensuring they are kept fully informed. This helps to promote strong continuity of care for children especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Using observations, communication with parents and linking with other agencies, staff provide tailored and supportive care for children with SEND. This helps to ensure all children can access the curriculum to the best of their ability.
- Staff have clear learning intentions for all activities. However, some adult-led activities, such as circle time, are not precisely adapted to ensure the youngest children and those who speak English as an additional language remain engaged and extend their learning as much as possible.
- The pre-school implements a nutrition policy based around healthy eating initiatives. Staff provide literature for parents to support their choices around the contents of their child's lunch box, using a familiar traffic light system. This helps to support children's health. Lunches are transferred from lunch boxes to plates, giving children independence and choice about what to eat and to encourage a homely environment.
- Mathematical concepts and number language are present throughout the learning environment. Staff skilfully incorporate mathematical tasks into activities. For example, while playing outside children are supported to count collected conkers and compare their sizes.

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 adapt adult-led activities, such as circle time, more precisely to suit children's individual learning needs, ensuring that all children can participate meaningfully and make the best possible progress.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY400589
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10399631
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	33
Number of children on roll	49
Name of registered person	Little Owls Preschool (Boxted)
Registered person unique reference number	RP904081
Telephone number	01206 273226
Date of previous inspection	9 December 2019

Information about this early years setting

Little Owls Preschool (Boxted) registered in 2009. The pre-school employs 10 members of childcare staff. Of these, all staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. One member of staff holds qualified teacher status, and one holds early years teacher status. The pre-school also employs a business manager. It opens from Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 8.45am until 3.15pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Becky Brame

Inspection activities

- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing while at the pre-school.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- 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 deputy manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation during story time.
- Parents shared their views of the setting 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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