

Inspection of Layer Preschool

Queen Elizabeth Hall, New Cut, Layer-de-la-Haye, Colchester, Essex CO2 0JU

Inspection date: 24 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

Children flourish in this welcoming and cosy pre-school. Staff pack away the pre-school due to the multiple use of the venue, however, the dedicated staff take great care and time to create a fun and rich learning environment for children. There is a strong emphasis on supporting children's well-being and promoting outdoor learning in the natural environment. All children, including those new to the setting, settle quickly as time is given to ensure children feel safe and secure. Children happily arrive and are keen to explore activities on offer. Settling-in sessions for new children are tailored to meet the needs of the individual child. They leave their parents with ease and engage in their play with enthusiasm. The ambitious curriculum is designed around children's interests, and builds on what they already know. Therefore, activities provided capture children's curious minds and there is a busy, calm and happy atmosphere throughout the session.

Children demonstrate they are confident and have established warm and trusting bonds with their key person. All staff members speak knowledgeably about the children in their care. Children have made friendships and are 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. The management and staff team positively promote and support the skills children need to be independent and confident learners. This means children are well prepared for the transition to school.

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

- Children relish their time outdoors. They make decisions about where they want to play and can flow freely from indoors to the garden. A well planned and considered curriculum outdoors, ensures those who prefer to explore outside access quality activities that support all areas of their learning.
- Children work well together, for example they decide to use planks and tyres to build an obstacle course. They persevere and negotiate how they will balance safely and talk about it being 'sturdy'. They have fun in the fresh air and giggle as they test out the track.
- Children are thoroughly absorbed in their chosen activity. They show sustained concentration as they huddle and make potions in the mud kitchen. They skilfully fill pots from a water butt independently, to add to their mixture. They make predictions as to what is needed when it is too 'runny'.
- Children make good progress in their speech and language development. This is because staff have a good understanding of how to promote confident communicators. They model language well and introduce new words to extend

children's vocabulary. For example, staff discuss ponchos and wigs, and the materials they are made from, as children dress up and use these in their role play.

- Children are provided with a broad curriculum that covers all the areas of learning. Younger children explore with shapes, numbers and colours as an early introduction to mathematics. However, at times, mathematical activities for older children do not build on and extend their learning. This does not fully help them to build a deeper knowledge and understanding of additional mathematical concepts.
- Children have many opportunities to make marks and learn the skills for early writing. They use water and brushes to paint in the garden. They strengthen their muscles as they manipulate dough. Children proudly draw pictures for their parents. Displays and celebration of children's art work create a real sense of belonging. Children delight in the reassurance and praise they receive for their achievements.
- Children's behaviour is good. This is because a sharp focus is given to support children's well-being. Stories and activities help children learn how to express their feelings and emotions and regulate their behaviour.
- The team have established strong partnerships with parents. Parents value the communication with staff and the support their children receive. They comment the staff are friendly, approachable and welcoming. Parents say there is a constant two-way flow of communication. Therefore, parents feel fully included in their child's development, progress and achievements. Parents appreciate the time taken every day to greet and welcome their child.
- Staff are led by a committed and dedicated management team. All staff speak enthusiastically of their roles at pre-school. They say they feel valued and that their welfare is considered. Staff speak of the support and encouragement they receive for their own personal development, therefore, staff retention is good. Staff recognise this has a positive impact for the children.

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:

- strengthen opportunities for the most-able children to develop a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.

Setting details

Unique reference number	203940
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10398694
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	32
Name of registered person	Layer De La Haye Pre-School Learning Alliance (Colchester) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP523814
Telephone number	07467433442
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2019

Information about this early years setting

Layer Preschool registered in 1992 and is situated in Layer-de-le-Haye, Essex. The pre-school employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday from 9am until 3pm, during term time. It provides government funded early education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lynn Hartigan

Inspection activities

- The manager showed the inspector around the areas that children access.
- The inspector and the manager discussed how staff organise the environment and plan the curriculum and experiences for children.
- The inspector and the manager carried out a joint observation.
- The inspector held discussions with staff, children and parents at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a sample of documents, which included evidence of staff's suitability and training.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on the children's learning.

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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