

Inspection of South Woodham Pre-school

Woodville Primary School, Brent Avenue, CHELMSFORD CM3 5SE

Inspection date: 19 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 provide a highly nurturing and stimulating environment that promotes children's curiosity, independence and sense of belonging. The carefully designed outside area allows children to explore safely and engage in nature-based learning. Open-access resources enable children to take responsibility for their own learning and make independent choices. Children vote for activities they want to take part in. Staff give them the opportunity to make suggestions, and the children use a token system to decide what activities are offered. Children feel listened to and understand that their decisions are respected.

The curriculum is carefully shaped around confidence, inclusion and well-being. Personalised elements, such as name pegs and family boards, foster emotional security and self-esteem. Staff enrich learning through role play, focus words, such as 'tools', and activities linked to children's interests. These include building yards, dinosaurs and sensory play, supporting both literacy and numeracy development. Staff use appropriate initiatives, including the 'kindness tree' and recycling opportunities to help children understand positive behaviour, respect and sustainability.

Staff develop children's independence and prepare them for school by implementing routines, such as registration, access to school grounds and community visits. These routines build children's confidence for primary school as they practise completing tasks independently. As result, children approach transitions with high levels of confidence.

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

- Staff provide highly individualised support that meets children's medical, sensory and communication needs. They work closely with external professionals and families to ensure that therapeutic strategies are consistently embedded. Therefore, children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make clear progress from their starting points.
- Leaders are committed to continuous improvement by evaluating practice in detail and setting clear next steps. They focus on extending children's learning through supporting independence during routines. As a result, children benefit from leaders who drive staff development and ensure daily interactions maximise learning and personal growth.
- Staff engage children well at mealtimes, using conversations about food and home life to extend vocabulary and build connections to their own experiences. However, at times staff do things that children could attempt to do for themselves. For example, they sometimes open wrappers and remove lids for children. At these times, children's independence is not promoted to the fullest.

- Parents speak highly of the setting and describe significant improvements in their children's confidence, emotional well-being and communication. They value the strong partnerships staff build with families and professionals, recognising how well staff take time to understand children's individual needs and communication styles. Children develop skills such as engaging confidently with others.
- Staff monitor well-being closely, using small groups and quiet areas to prevent children from becoming overwhelmed. This helps children to build their confidence and self-regulation. Staff act quickly if a child is absent, ensuring all children are accounted for.
- Staff provide continuous opportunities for decision-making and creativity. Children access resources freely, create collages and display their work proudly. They celebrate one another's successes, such as gymnastics certificates, through clapping and conversation. This helps to foster children's self-esteem and respect for others.
- Respect is modelled well by staff. They help children to understand what it means to care for others. Children work together cooperatively, share resources and support peers. Staff manage emotions sensitively, helping children regulate and re-engage quickly.
- Staff extend learning through meaningful role play and exploratory activities, such as using magnets to go 'metal detecting' in sawdust. Children show persistence, enhance their fine-motor skills and explore their scientific curiosity. Staff adapt activities thoughtfully, ensuring children experience success before tackling more complex challenges to build confidence and resilience.
- The diversity of the community and cohort are well reflected. Staff introduce cultural experiences, such as celebrating Chinese New Year with parents, reading stories and sharing red envelopes. Opportunities such as these help to develop children's positive attitudes towards diversity and foster a respect for others.
- Staff ask a range of questions and encourage children to test their ideas, such as observing what happens when they add water to other materials. However, staff sometimes ask closed questions that limit conversation and reduce children's opportunities to explore topics in depth.

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:

- plan more effectively for children to practise their independence and self-help

skills, particularly at mealtimes

- strengthen techniques for promoting speech and language through effective questioning, so that children make even swifter progress towards communication.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY337755
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10399693
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	43
Number of children on roll	47
Name of registered person	South Woodham Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP907843
Telephone number	01245 425 746
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2019

Information about this early years setting

South Woodham Pre-school registered in 2006 and is run by a committee. The pre-school employs 12 members of childcare staff. The manager holds an appropriate early years qualification at level 4, ten staff hold a qualification at level 3, one member of staff holds a qualification at level 2. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, during school term times only. Sessions are between 8.40am and 3.15pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Laura Paternoster

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the pre-school and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children told the inspector about their friends and what they like to do when they are at pre-school.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke with the manager about the leadership and management of the setting.
- Staff spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- 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 manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation during a mealtime.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of 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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