

Inspection of The Funhouse Pre-School

Janet Duke Primary School, Markhams Chase, Basildon, Essex SS15 5LS

Inspection date:

9 September 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Staff make a significant difference to children's lives in this highly effective pre-school. Leaders and staff have created an ambitious curriculum that promotes children's progress across all areas of learning. The clear intent of the curriculum ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Staff carefully adapt their teaching to meet the experiences, needs and strengths of each child, including those who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Key persons build highly meaningful relationships with children through exceptional one-to-one support. Children settle quickly and feel extremely confident within the environment.

There is an exceptional focus on developing children's understanding of managing their emotions. Staff use a story and resources about a monster to enable children to identify and talk about their feelings, such as anger or worry. Staff nurture excellent behaviours and respectful relationships. Children quickly learn to show empathy and care for others. Staff are highly skilled in recognising and responding to children's nonverbal cues. They interpret expressive sounds with precision and adapt their practice immediately, such as offering snack early when children show signs of hunger. Consequently, children feel deeply understood and secure. They develop impressive levels of regulating their feelings and an awareness of their emotions. This prepares children exceptionally well for their future learning and life beyond the pre-school.

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

- The wider curriculum provides rich opportunities for children to explore and develop their skills. Staff use seasonal topics, such as around autumn, outdoor learning and a nature table to expose children to the natural world. They use these experiences to build children's curiosity and extend their vocabulary. For those children with limited experiences, this is particularly impactful.
- Leaders take a highly inclusive approach, supporting not just children but their families too. They address barriers, such as access to food, transport and essential appointments. As a result, children arrive ready to learn, feel secure and engage confidently in activities.
- Staff collaborate effectively with families and external professionals to provide targeted support for children with SEND. They carefully review and adapt strategies, ensuring that each child's individual needs are met and that they make strong progress. Staff value professional guidance and integrate this seamlessly to enhance children's learning experiences and outcomes. This helps gaps in children's development to significantly reduce.
- The culture of mutual respect is evident throughout the pre-school. Children look after toys and equipment, resolve conflicts independently and remind one

another of the expectations for their behaviour. Strategies, such as hand clapping to gain children's attention and the use of sand timers for transitions, result in calm routines and prepare children for the expectations of school.

- Children are remarkably independent and resilient. They overcome obstacles and demonstrate a prominent 'can-do' attitude. They happily take care of their own needs, such as handwashing, and recognise healthy and unhealthy foods. Children manage their self-care extremely well. They understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles, such as which foods are only 'sometimes' foods.
- Parents and carers speak highly of the pre-school. They explain how supportive staff are and the noticeable levels of progress their children make. Parents themselves feel extremely supported and confident in meeting their child's needs. This is attributed to advice and guidance from staff. As a result, children's well-being and development is considerably reinforced.
- A community approach is prominent. Staff plan displays, remembrance events and 'red, white and blue' days to help instil respect for history and community. Children learn pride in achievements and develop a strong sense of belonging through these meaningful experiences.
- Staff handle transitions extremely sensitively. New children entering sessions receive expert reassurance through cuddles, hand-holding and calm words. This helps them to separate confidently from their parents. Children settle very quickly, building resilience and trust.
- Staff weave opportunities for early literacy and numeracy throughout daily routines and play. Staff skilfully introduce mathematical and scientific concepts through children's play and everyday discussions. For example, children identify shapes, explore speed and develop vocabulary, such as 'mermaids', when playing in the sand.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY428418
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10399718
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	52
Name of registered person	Funhouse Preschool Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP520377
Telephone number	01268450587
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2019

Information about this early years setting

The Funhouse Pre-School registered in 2011 and is located in Basildon, Essex. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, from 8.45am to 3.30pm, during school term time. There are seven members of childcare staff, including volunteers. Of these, five staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and two staff hold a qualification at level 2. The pre-school provides government-funded childcare.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Laura Paternoster

Inspection activities

- Leaders and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the pre-school and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke with leaders about the leadership and management of the pre-school.
- 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 on children's learning.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children.
- Parents shared their views of the pre-school 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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