

Inspection of Sparrows Playgroup

St. Peter & St. Paul, High Street, West Mersea, COLCHESTER CO5 8QD

Inspection date: 6 June 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	Requires improvement
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are welcomed by enthusiastic, happy staff who are genuinely pleased to see them. They confidently leave their parents and demonstrate an eagerness to explore the activities staff provide. The new management team have only been in place for a short while but have made positive changes to enhance children's learning experiences. The curriculum offers a broad range of opportunities that cover all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. It is designed around children's interest, and builds on what they already know. Staff carefully consider the intentions for learning as they prepare activities that inspire children to investigate and 'have a go'.

There is a strong focus on supporting children's speech and language and emotional development. The outdoor curriculum provides children with many opportunities to learn and manage risks safely, supported by staff. For example, young children learn to sit on their bottom as they negotiate a grassy bank. Children understand the rules to keep safe. They challenge themselves as they make attempts to run down the hill and are appropriately guided by staff. Staff are respectful of children's individuality and what is important to them. They are attentive and speak kindly to the children. Staff promote the skills children need to be independent learners and prepare them ready for the transition to school. Children have formed close and trusting bonds with staff and understand the expectations and overall, children behave well.

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

- The management team, committee and staff have worked hard since the last inspection to implement the changes. They have positively engaged with local authority advisers, and completed appropriate training to enhance their knowledge and understanding of how children learn to improve outcomes for children.
- Staff understand the importance of effective partnership with parents and the positive impact this has on children's well-being and learning. The management team have established effective and professional partnerships. A variety of opportunities are being introduced for staff and parents to discuss children's ongoing progress. However, they have not found more successful ways to help parents share what they know about their children can do at home.
- Parents speak positively about changes to the playgroup since the last inspection. They say their children have made significant progress in recent months. Parents welcome the opportunities for communication and feel they are now fully informed, regarding their children's day and development.
- Staff speak very positively about their roles. They say they feel motivated, valued and supported and that their welfare is considered. Staff welcome and

are enthusiastic about training opportunities and the good support now in place from the management team.

- Children delight in their time outdoors. They relish opportunities to run, chase bubbles and use ribbons, watching them float in the wind. Children play well in small groups and negotiate together as they use large construction. They wear hard hats and goggles in their play. Children discuss simple mathematics as they use tape measures to measure staff members. They giggle as they compare who is the largest or smallest.
- Children engage in conversations and are confident speakers. They ask lots of questions. Children mix compost, pine cones and twigs, and explain to visitors that they are making 'Gruffalo' pie. They excitedly talk about the bugs and insects they find as they dig the mud.
- Staff are skilful in their interactions and understand children need time to play alone, but are supportive and on hand when they need help, encouraging them children to think and solve problems.
- Children show sustained concentration as they listen to favourite stories at group time. They sit and interact, predicting what might happen next. Children enjoy stories under the trees in the garden, and have a variety of books within a cosy and comfortable book area. However, staff do not consistently encourage children to take care of books when they have finished using them, often leaving them on the floor.
- Children independently select toys and initiate their own games. They enjoy well-planned adult-led activities. Children learn about 'world ocean day' and how to take care of the environment. They sort 'rubbish' that would harm ocean creatures and fish from a large tray. Younger children enjoy the sensory experiences of shaving foam and water that replicates the sea. Some routines, such as snack time, interrupt children's play and staff do not always recognise that children are not ready to leave their chosen activity.

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:

- continue to strengthen opportunities to work in partnerships with parents and encourage them to routinely share what they know about their children
- improve the routine at snack time so that it does not interrupt children's play
- continue to encourage children's use of books and help them understand how to take care of them.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY429923
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10368920
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	24
Number of children on roll	18
Name of registered person	Sparrows Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP530767
Telephone number	07471 190626
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2024

Information about this early years setting

Sparrows Playgroup registered in 2011. The playgroup employs four members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The playgroup opens Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, during school term time. Sessions are from 9.15am to 11.45am on Monday and Friday, and from 9am to 2.45pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The playgroup 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.
- They discussed how staff organise the environment and plan the curriculum and experiences for children.
- The inspector and 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 about staff's suitability and training.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on 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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