



Caterpillars Pre-School

Marks Tey

Parents Handbook

2025-26

9.1a About Our Childcare and Early Education

Welcome to Caterpillars Preschool (Marks Tey) and thank you for registering your child with us. We know how important your child is and aim to deliver the highest quality of care and education to help them to achieve their best.

This document aims to provide you with an introduction to Caterpillars Preschool , our routines, our approach to supporting your child’s learning and development and how we aim to work together with you to best meet your child’s individual needs. This should be read alongside our Childcare Terms and Conditions for a full description of our services.

General Information

Address	Caterpillars Preschool Marks Tey, St Andrews School CofE Primary Academy, Mandeville Road, Marks Tey, Colchester, CO6 1HL
Telephone number	07981 169883
We don’t have a fixed line into the pre-school. If you call during setting opening hours, please leave a message or send a text and someone will return you call as soon as possible.	
Email	markstey@caterpillarspreschool.org
Website	www.caterpillarspreschool.org
Facebook	Search for Caterpillars Pre-school in Marks Tey and click on Like

Caterpillars Opening Times

We are open for	38 weeks each year
We are open for	4 days a week (Monday to Thursday)
Our opening times are	9:00am-2:45pm

We provide care and education for young children between the ages of 2 -5 years

Our setting aims to:

- provide high quality care and education for children
- work in partnership with parents to help children to learn and develop
- add to the life and well-being of the local community
- offer children and their parents a service that promotes equality and values diversity

Parents

You are regarded as members of our setting who have full participatory rights. These include a right to be:

- valued and respected
- kept informed
- consulted
- involved
- included at all levels

Children's Development and Learning

We aim to ensure that each child:

- is in a safe and stimulating environment
- is given generous care and attention, because of our ratio of qualified staff to children, as well as volunteer helpers
- has the chance to join in with other children and adults to live, play, work and learn together
- is helped to take forward her/his learning and development by being helped to build on what they already knows and can do
- has a personal key person who makes sure each child makes satisfying progress
- is in a setting that sees parents as partners in helping each child to learn and develop
- is in a setting in which parents help to shape the service it offers

The Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the development and learning of children from birth to five years is guided by the Early Years Foundation Stage. Our provision reflects the four overarching principles of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE 2021):

- *A Unique Child*

Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

- *Positive Relationships*

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

- *Enabling Environments*

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners, parents and/or carers.

- *Learning and Development*

- Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

How We Provide for Learning and Development

Children start to learn about the world around them from the moment they are born. The care and education offered by our setting helps children to continue to do this by providing all the children with interesting activities that are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

The Areas of Learning and Development comprise:

- *Prime Areas*

- Personal, social and emotional development.
- Physical development.
- Communication and language.

- *Specific Areas*

- Literacy.
- Mathematics.
- Understanding the world.
- Expressive arts and design.

For each area, the level of progress that children are expected to have attained by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is defined by the Early Learning Goals. These goals state what it is expected that children will know, and be able to do, by the end of the reception year of their education.

We refer to non-statutory curriculum guidance to support our professional judgment as we assess each child's progress and level of development as they progress towards the Early Learning Goals. We have regard to these when we assess children and plan for their learning by creating a curriculum that is ambitious and meets every child's needs. Our educational programmes support children to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need for:

Personal, social and emotional development

- self-regulation
- managing self
- building relationships

Physical development

- gross motor skills
- fine motor skills

Communication and language

- listening, attention and understanding
- speaking

Literacy

- comprehension
- word reading
- writing

Mathematics

- number
- numerical patterns

Understanding the world

- past and present
- people, culture and communities
- the natural world

Expressive arts and design

- creating with materials

- being imaginative and expressive

Our Approach to Learning and Development and Assessment

Learning through play

Being active and playing supports young children's learning and development through doing and talking. This is how children learn to think about and understand the world around them. We use the EYFS statutory education programmes to plan and provide opportunities which will help children to make progress in all areas of learning. This programme is made up of a mixture of activities that children plan and organise for themselves and activities planned and led by practitioners.

Characteristics of effective learning

We understand that all children engage with other people and their environment through the characteristics of effective learning that are described in the Early Years Foundation Stage as:

- playing and exploring - engagement
- active learning - motivation
- creating and thinking critically - thinking

We aim to provide for the characteristics of effective learning by observing how a child engages with learning and being clear about what we can do and provide to support each child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

Assessment

We assess how young children are learning and developing by observing them. We use information that we gain from observations of the children, to understand their progress and where this may be leading them. We believe that parents know their children best and we will ask you to contribute to assessment by sharing information about what your child likes to do at home and how you, as parents, are supporting development.

We may make periodic assessment summaries of children's achievement based on our on-going observations. These help us to build a picture of a child's progress during their time with us and form part of children's records of achievement/learning journeys. We undertake these assessment summaries at regular intervals, as well as at times of transition, such as when a child moves into a different group or when they go on to school.

The progress check at age two

The Early Years Foundation Stage requires that we supply parents and carers with a short-written summary of their child's development in the three prime areas of learning and development - personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language. We use the check using information from on-going observations carried out as part of our everyday practice, taking account of the views and contributions of parents and other professionals.

Working Together For Your Children

We maintain the ratio of adults to children in the setting that is set by the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements. We also have volunteer parent helpers, where possible, to complement these ratios. This helps us to:

- give time and attention to each child
- talk with the children about their interests and activities
- help children to experience and benefit from the activities we provide
- allow the children to explore and be adventurous in safety

The staff who work at our setting are:

Name	Job Title	Qualifications and Experience
Becky	Setting Manager, Designated Safeguarding Lead	Level 3 CACHE Diploma in Childcare & Education Other Qualifications ; Level 3 SENCO Paediatric First Aid Safeguarding Lead Level 2 Food Hygiene
Helen	Deputy Manager Designated Safeguarding Lead (2 nd)	Level 3 Diploma in Childcare Other Qualifications ; Paediatric First Aid Safeguarding Level 2 Food Hygiene
Teresa	Senior Early Years Practitioner	NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Childcare Other Qualifications ; Paediatric First Aid Safeguarding Level 2 Food Hygiene
Charlotte	Senior Early Years Practitioner	Level 3 Diploma in Childcare Other Qualifications ; Paediatric First Aid

		Safeguarding Level 2 Food Hygiene
Petra	Senior Early Years Practitioner	Batchelor of Arts degree in Early Years Level 3 SENCO Other Qualifications ; Paediatric First Aid Safeguarding Level 2 Food Hygiene
Alison	Early Years Practitioner	Level 3 CACHE Diploma in Childcare Other Qualifications; Paediatric First Aid Safeguarding Level 2 Food Hygiene

How Parents Take Part in the Setting

Caterpillars recognises parents as the first and most important educators of their children. All our staff see themselves as partners with parents in providing care and education for their children. There are many ways in which parents take part in making our setting a welcoming and stimulating place for children and parents, such as:

- exchanging knowledge about their children's needs, activities, interests and progress with our staff
- contributing to the progress check at age two
- helping at sessions of the setting
- sharing their own special interests with the children
- helping to provide and look after the equipment and materials used in the children's play activities
- being part of the management of the setting, where appropriate
- taking part in events and informal discussions about the activities and curriculum being provided
- joining in community activities, in which the setting takes part
- building friendships with other parents in the setting

Joining In

Helping at the session enables parents to see what the day-to-day life of our setting is like and to join in helping the children to get the best out of their activities.

Parents can also offer to take part in a session by sharing their own interests and skills with the children. We welcome parents to drop into the setting to see it at work or to speak with the staff.

Key Person and Your Child

Our setting uses a key person approach. This means that each member of staff has a group of children for whom they are particularly responsible. Your child's key person will be the person who works with you to make sure that the childcare that we provide is right for your child's particular needs and interests. When your child first starts at the setting, they will help your child to settle and throughout your child's time at the setting, they will help your child to benefit from our activities.

The Setting's Timetable and Routines

Our setting believes that care and education are equally important in the experience which we offer children. The routines and activities that make up the day in our setting are provided in ways that:

- help each child to feel that they are a valued member of the setting
- ensure the safety of each child
- help children to gain from the social experience of being part of a group
- provide children with opportunities to learn and help them to value learning

The Session

We organise our sessions so that the children can choose from, and work at, a range of activities and, in doing so, build up their ability to select and work through a task to its completion. The children are also helped and encouraged to take part in adult-led small and large group activities, which introduce them to new experiences and help them to gain new skills, as well as helping them to learn to work with others.

Outdoor activities contribute to all areas of learning and development, including their health and their knowledge of the world around them. The children have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to take part in outdoor child-chosen and adult-led activities, as well as those provided in the indoor classroom(s).

Snacks and Meals

Snack time is an important part of the Caterpillars morning sessions. As well as being a social activity for the children to sit together and eat, it also enables the children to get involved in the preparation, cutting, spreading etc which helps develop their independence and fine motor skills as well as providing opportunities to try a variety of foods in a shared experience with their friends.

Caterpillars will provide your child with a healthy daily snack. The snacks will be varied and we also link the food choices in with any festivals or celebrations we are learning about throughout the year.

Please tell us about your child's dietary needs, particularly any known allergies or food intolerance and we will plan accordingly.

Consumables

The cost of the daily snack forms part of the daily consumables charge of £3.00 per morning session your child attends. The consumables charge also contributes towards covering the cost of other food-based activities we arrange linked to various topics. It also covers nappies for younger children, suncream and a small contribution towards extra-curricular activities such as craft mornings, sports day, end of term parties, and visits from external based companies such as Little City. As a charitable preschool, these contributions are greatly appreciated and enables us to continue to provide the extended service that we do.

The consumables charge is invoiced electronically on a half term basis the same as the invoices for fees. If your child is fully funded, then the charge is requested as a voluntary contribution. If you do not wish to pay the consumables charge then you have the option of providing your child with a snack from home and then you can decide which extra-curricular activities you wish your child to participate in for which there would be additional charges.

Clothing

We provide protective clothing for the children when they play with messy activities. We encourage children to gain the skills that help them to be independent and look after themselves. These include taking themselves to the toilet and taking off, and putting on, outdoor clothes. Clothing that is easy for them to manage will help them to do this.

Caterpillars have a range on embroidered uniform clothing items that can be purchased for you child. Wearing the uniform can help children feel a greater part of Caterpillars and also prevents home clothes from becoming spoiled during messy play. Getting used to wearing Caterpillars uniform can also help with their transition to school. The following items are available for parents to purchase from the setting;

T-shirt - £6.50

Jumper - £12.00

Book Bag - £7.50

Starter Pack – T-shirt, book bag and an information booklet for parents is available for £18 and £30 to include a jumper

Policies

Our staff can explain our policies and procedures to you. Copies of which are available on our website and available in hardcopy in the setting.

Our policies help us to make sure that the service we provide is of high quality and that being a member of the setting is an enjoyable and beneficial experience for each child and their parents.

Our staff and parents work together to adopt the policies and they all have the opportunity to take part in the annual review of the policies. This review helps us to make sure that the policies are enabling our setting to provide a quality service for its members and the local community.

Information We Hold About You and Your Child

We have procedures in place for the recording and sharing of information [data] about you and your child that is compliant with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) as follows:

The data is we collect is:

1. processed fairly, lawfully and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject [you and your family]
2. collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed for other purposes incompatible with those purposes
3. adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which data is processed
4. accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
5. kept in a form that permits identification of data subjects [you and your family] for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data is processed
6. processed in a way that ensures appropriate security of the personal data including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures

When you register your child with us, we will provide you with a privacy notice that gives you further details of how we fulfil our obligations with regard to your data.

Safeguarding Children

Our setting has a duty under the law to help safeguard children against suspected or actual 'significant harm'. Our employment practices ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their role and help to protect children against the likelihood of abuse in our setting and we have a procedure for managing complaints or allegations against a member of staff.

Our way of working with children and their parents ensures that we are aware of any problems that may emerge and can offer support, including referral to appropriate agencies when necessary, to help families in difficulty.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

To make sure that our provision meets the needs of each individual child, we take account of any special educational needs a child may have. We work to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015).

Our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is Petra Smith. As our SENCO, Petra is responsible for supporting children and the parents/carers of children with Special Education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). If you have concerns regarding SEN or if you wish to talk to someone about your child's development, please speak to your child's key person or Petra.

The Management of Our Setting

Caterpillars Pre-school is a registered charity and as such is managed by a volunteer management committee - whose members are elected by the parents of the children who attend our setting.

As a registered charity, without the parental involvement in the management committee, Caterpillars simply could not continue to operate.

The elections to the committee take place at our Annual General Meeting. The committee make up the registered person with Ofsted and are responsible for overseeing :

- the management of our finances
- employing and managing our staff
- making sure that we have, and work to, policies that help us to provide a high-quality service
- making sure that we work in partnership with parents

The Annual General Meeting is open to the parents of all the children who attend our setting. It is our shared forum for looking back over the previous year's activities and shaping the coming year's plan.

Fees

From September 2025 our current fees are £8.50 per hour for all children for non-funded hours.

Invoices are issued on a half-termly basis. Fees must still be paid if children are absent for a short period of time such as sickness or family holidays. If your child will be absent for a long period of time, talk to Sarah Lawrence who is our Preschool Administrator or to Becky, our setting Manager.

In order for your child to retain their place, fees must be paid in a timely manner (21 days from the date of issue). Late payment of fees will result in additional admin and late payment charges being applied.

Where children are in receipt of nursery education funding for two, three and four year olds, we will submit funding forms for eligible children each term. Where funding is not received, then the above fees apply.

From September 2025, the expansion of the Childcare funding scheme, means more parents could be eligible for up to 30hours funding. To find out if you might be eligible and how to claim, please visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

If you are eligible for the 30 hours extended funding then you must make sure that you provide the setting with your 10 digit code (starting 500 or 501) and 1 parent or carers national insurance number.

You must also make sure that you renew your eligibility in line with your validity dates given at the time of approval. Codes must be rechecked and revalidated by the following deadlines ;

For Autumn term funding – Deadline - 31st August

For Spring term funding – Deadline – 31st December

For Summer term funding – Deadline – 31st March

If codes are not confirmed by these dates, we may not be able to claim funding for your child for the whole of the term and full non-funded fee rates would apply.

Changes to Agreed Sessions and Notice Periods

A 4-week term time notice period is required if you find you no longer require a place at Caterpillars (including for new starters) or need to reduce your child's hours with us. If less than 4 weeks' term time notice is given then fees will remain payable for the remainder of the notice period.

Starting at Our Setting - *The first days*

We want your child to feel happy and safe with us. To make sure that this is the case, our staff will work with you to decide on how to help your child to settle into the setting. Our policy on the role of the key person and Settling-in is available on our website or copy can be obtained from the setting.

We hope that you and your child enjoy being members of our setting and that you both find taking part in our activities interesting and stimulating. Our staff are always ready and willing to talk with you about your ideas, views or to respond to any questions.

Other Useful contacts:

Department for Children, Schools and families	www.education.gov.uk
Ofsted - 0300 123 1231	www.ofsted.gov.uk
Government information	www.gov.uk www.essex.gov.uk/Early Years & Childcare
Information on Downs Syndrome, hearing and visual impairments	www.earlysupport.org.uk
Online Safety	CEOP (Child exploitation Online Protection) www.ceop.police.uk www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents www.nspcc.org.uk www.childnet.com
Net mums	www.netmums.com
Parentline -0808 800 2222	www.parentlineplus.org.uk
Lone Parent's -0800 018 5026	www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
Contact a Family - Support for parent's of disabled children - 0808 8083 555	www.cafamily.org.uk
Dyspraxia Foundation - 01462 454988	www.dyspraxiafoundatuion.org.uk
Association for all speech impaired children (Afasic)	www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk
Social Care – Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations about a staff or volunteer. 0345 603 7627	Essex Safeguarding Children Board www.escb.co.uk

Our vision for your child's time with us at Caterpillars Pre-School



To be
resilient
and
confident

To learn
and
develop

Give
encourage
ment and
guidance

Learn life skills
and
independence

To be safe
and secure

Work in
partnership
with families
and support
home

Give
additional
support if
needed

Teach skills
ready for
their next
stage of
learning

