

# Pre-school of the year



## Winner Attimore Barn Pre-School, Welwyn Garden City, Herts

Attimore Barn Pre-School had been open just six months when it gained an outstanding grade in all areas from Ofsted in its first inspection in July last year – a fact not lost on the judges.

Inspectors said, ‘The pre-school is a vibrant, happy and very welcoming setting where every child and parent is effectively supported. Staff show a genuine enthusiasm for their work and children respond appropriately to this with ad-hoc cuddles.’

Judges commented on the setting’s focus on involving and consulting children in planning and development.

Children have a free choice over activities and resources every day, with a free-flow approach.

There is a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. For example, children used the ‘nature detectives box’ to explore the garden and planting area for bugs.

At the end of a session children are asked to evaluate their day and their interests are fed back into the pre-school’s planning.

Children were also involved in redesigning

the garden by choosing items and areas that they wanted to include.

Co-owners Claire Mason and Tina Covill say, ‘We felt that we almost gave up a year of our lives to set up the new pre-school (lots of tears, moments of self-doubt and no Christmas 2010!) A year down the line, we know this was the best decision we made. The support of our parents, children and staff team is incredible and to see children progressing across all six areas of the curriculum, and confidently moving on to their next setting, is very rewarding.’

**‘A vibrant, happy and welcoming setting where every child is effectively supported. Staff show a genuine enthusiasm for their work’**  
*Inspector*

‘We do not think that now we have achieved an outstanding, our work is complete. If anything, we are working harder to continually update and improve our practice and provision to ensure that the children’s needs are met.’

## Highly commended Clever Clogs Nursery, Belmont, Durham

The pre-school strives to create a ‘home from home’, with children encouraged to bring items from home into the nursery. Parents are given a USB stick, which is regularly updated with pictures of their children, reports and observations on their development. Parents are also able to upload their own pictures, which are put at child-height around the nursery. The children love visiting the neighbouring allotment and bringing back some cucumber or rhubarb to taste.

**Finalists**  
**Chewton Common  
Playgroup**, Christchurch,  
Dorset

**Sudbrook School**,  
Petersham, Surrey

### Criterion

Open to registered settings offering sessional care and education

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