

# Little Owl Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique Reference Number** 221890

**Inspection date** 26 September 2007

**Inspector** Jean Goodrick

**Setting Address** Dry Drayton Primary School, Park Street, Dry Drayton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB23 8DA

**Telephone number** 07712 893652 School 01954 780618

**E-mail**

**Registered person** Little Owl Pre-school Playgroup

**Type of inspection** Integrated

**Type of care** Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Owl Pre-school has been registered since 1995 and operates from an annexe to Dry Drayton Primary School which is situated in the village of Dry Drayton on the outskirts of Cambridge. The pre-school is registered to accept up to 24 children at any one time.

The group opens Monday to Friday during term times. Sessions are from 09.00 to 12.00 every weekday and from 12.45 to 15.15 every weekday except Wednesday. Children may also attend a lunch club which varies according to demand. Children attend for a variety of sessions and they come from the local and the wider area. There are currently 22 children on roll including 11 funded children. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The group employs five staff, one of whom gives one to one support and one of whom works on a very part-time basis. Of the three members of staff who work regularly with the children two have relevant qualifications and one of these is a qualified primary school teacher. The group is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA) and receives support from Cambridgeshire children's services.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are involved in a good range of activities to promote their physical development. They regularly play outside and there is a free flow between indoor and outdoor activities so that children make their own choices. They have opportunities to practise skills in climbing, balancing, playing ball games and riding bikes. Children develop their fine motor skills well as they use a range of small tools and equipment such as paint brushes, chalks and cooking utensils. They show good control using the computer mouse.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through daily routines and they are developing independence in using the facilities provided. For example, children wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating their snack. Children benefit from the effective measures followed by staff to minimise the risk of cross-infection, such as the provision of paper towels and disposable tissues, and tables are cleaned before snacks. Required records are kept up to date so that children receive good continuity of care. Most staff have current first aid certificates so that they are confident to take action for the welfare of the children.

Snack time is a social occasion throughout the session when small groups of children sit together learning social skills such as saying 'please' and 'thank you'. Children are supported in developing independence as, for example, they pour their own drinks with a choice of milk or water. They have healthy choices in their snacks such as bananas, apples and strawberries. The pre-school has a healthy eating policy so that fizzy drinks are discouraged for children's packed lunches. Drinking water is available throughout the session so that children are well hydrated. Younger children receive plenty of cuddles and emotional support as they learn to deal with frustrations and upsets and they are helped to understand and express their feelings.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children move around freely in the bright colourful environment. The main entrance to the pre-school is welcoming with posters and displays for parents and visitors to read. Space is used effectively to provide a good range of age-appropriate activities. Resources and equipment are well maintained and checked regularly for hygiene and safety. Children have easy access to resources in low-level drawers and shelves so that they can follow their own interests and develop their play.

Children benefit from high levels of supervision by the staff to make sure they are safe. For example, staff closely supervise the external door during arrival and collection times. Children learn about keeping themselves safe as, for instance, they have regular fire drills so that they know what to do in an emergency. Daily risk assessments are carried out conscientiously to identify potential risks to children both indoors and outside. Relevant information is taken on outings so that children's welfare is a priority.

Children are well protected as staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and this is supported by relevant training. Parents have access to the pre-school's policies and procedures which are in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the warm and welcoming environment created by staff. They have positive relationships with adults and each other. Staff are friendly and caring and interact with warmth and humour. They are sensitive to children's individual needs and offer plenty of support and reassurance so that less confident children are able to settle. This helps children to feel secure.

Staff plan and prepare a broad range of practical play opportunities so that children make progress in all areas of their development. A wide age range of children attend the group and staff are aware of the need to ensure that all their needs are met. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child development and use the 'Birth to three matters' framework as a reference tool. They are effectively deployed with individual children and small groups so that children are well supported. Children are also encouraged to follow their own interests and ideas and select their own resources independently so that they develop self confidence. Staff spend time talking and listening respectfully to the children so that children's self-esteem is well promoted.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The pre-school leader who runs the morning sessions for funded children has a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage. However, other staff show a limited understanding of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals which sometimes impacts on the learning opportunities provided for children. Children are not always encouraged to extend their thinking and develop their ideas. Assessment records are in place for each child and plans, such as key activities, reflect different abilities. Older children benefit from extended activities during a separate session in the week although they do not receive sufficient challenge consistently across other sessions.

Children display good levels of confidence and are eager to participate in new activities as, for example, they search for different shapes in the garden. They have access to a suitable range of resources to support their learning, confidently finding what they need to develop their activities. Excellent use is made of 'Pinky' the bear who is taken home by individual children and brought back to the group with news of what he has done. Children listen avidly as they hear of his adventures at their homes. They receive sensitive support as they express their feelings and learn to respect the needs of others.

Most children are confident communicators, initiating conversations with adults and speaking to a familiar audience. For example, they talk to the inspector, asking for help with dressing up clothes, and inviting her to join in their imaginary games. At circle time children contribute to discussions and listen to each other and they show pride in their achievements. Children handle books with great care and enjoy stories such as 'The Piggy Wiggy' joining in and predicting what will happen next. They regularly choose books to take home in the 'library' system. They recognise their names at registration and snack time. Children have some opportunities to develop early writing skills and write for a variety of purposes, but there are limited opportunities to link sounds to letters.

Children recognise numbers and count confidently as they sort the elephants into groups putting the same colours together and talking about the different sizes. However, problem solving and early calculation skills are not consistently supported in everyday practical activities

and routines. Children develop an understanding of nature, patterns and change as they talk about the weather and days of the week and they have some opportunities to observe and investigate. They enjoy cookery activities and observe the changes, for example, as the bread dough rises. Good use is made of the computer and children also enjoy taking photos. Parents are invited into the pre-school so that children learn about the wider world and people who help them such as the ambulance crew. They learn about festivals such as Hannukkah and Divali and they build and construct using a satisfactory variety of resources.

Children use their imagination in the role play area as, for example, they use the doctor's kit or buy things from the shop. They enjoy making collages using an exciting range of materials such as the straight and 'wiggly' spaghetti. Children express themselves using a variety of media and materials and they join in the music sessions with great exuberance.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are valued as individuals. Staff get to know children and families well and parents appreciate the 'family' atmosphere so that children have a good sense of belonging. Consideration is given to children's individual needs and staff ensure that all children have opportunities to take part in the activities. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. The staff attend training to continue to update their knowledge and understanding. Staff identify when children need additional support and work alongside parents and other professionals to ensure that children's needs are met.

Children learn about festivals and talk about events in their own lives. They have a good range of resources and activities which help them to respect cultural and linguistic differences. Children are well behaved and well supported as they learn about the expectations of behaviour. They eagerly join in tidying up and enjoy helping each other. Children are learning to share and take turns as, for instance, they play on the slide. Staff provide good role models and children benefit from their regular praise and encouragement. This helps to build their self-esteem and promote good behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are involved in all areas of the pre-school and join with the staff in projects such as improving the surface in the outdoor play area. Staff seek parents' views about their children's needs, interests and achievements before the child starts at the pre-school and there is a flexible settling in process for the benefit of the children. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage and pre-school activities and topics are displayed on the notice board at the entrance so that they can support their children's learning at home. Key workers share information informally with parents on a regular basis so that children's individual needs can be well met.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children enjoy a friendly and welcoming environment. Staff make effective use of time, space and resources to ensure that children participate in a good range of age-appropriate activities with time to be active and to rest. Children are able to move around freely and safely in the well prepared environment. Staff are deployed effectively so that children receive individual support and encouragement. Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated and this contributes to children's welfare. Confidentiality is respected and records are kept up to date so that children receive good continuity of care. The pre-school has an effective employment

procedure and children are never left with anyone who has not been vetted. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Children are cared for by a team of established and new staff. Staff have regular meetings to share information and discuss planning of activities. A system of appraisals has been introduced and staff have good opportunities to attend training to improve their practice for the benefit of the children. However, monitoring and evaluation of the provision of nursery education needs to be strengthened to ensure consistency and to ensure the needs of older and more able children are met. The committee organise fund-raising events which contributes towards the improvement of the provision and equipment used by the children. The pre-school enjoy close links with the school on the same site which helps children's transition as they move on to the school.

Overall children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection it was agreed that: the public liability certificate would be displayed; children's use of the computer would comply with recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive; activities and resources to promote respect for different cultures would be improved and behaviour management would take into account children's age and stage of development. Safety measures have now been improved so that the public liability certificate is clearly displayed and the appropriate furniture for safe use of the computer is being used by the children. Resources and activities which promote respect for different cultures have been improved as staff respond to children's interests, for example, when they learn the words for colours in different languages. Good use is made of stories such as 'The Rainbow Fish' to help children to understand and respect their differences and similarities. Staff have attended training on behaviour management and children receive plenty of individual praise and encouragement. Staff also think about situations which provide difficulties for individual children, such as circle time, and provide alternative activities until children are ready to sit and listen for longer periods of time.

At the last nursery education inspection it was agreed that the staff would provide further opportunities for all children to develop their writing skills so they can practise writing for a purpose, such as writing names on artwork and through a range of meaningful experiences. Staff have improved the opportunities for children to develop their writing skills by providing writing materials in the role play area for use in imaginative games such as a telephone pad and by encouraging children to select resources for themselves such as mark-making with chalks in the outdoor play area. Activities are available for children to develop control and co-ordination as, for example, they use stencils and templates. However, older and more able children are not consistently encouraged to write their names on their artwork.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted

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### WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

#### The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- continue to ensure that resources and activities meet the developmental needs of the younger children using, for example, the 'Birth to three matters' framework as a reference tool

#### The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- continue to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones towards the early learning goals to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and children's learning
- continue to develop the system for monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education so that children are consistently challenged and have access to rich learning experiences.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)