

# Little Hallingbury Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	203560
<b>Inspection date</b>	04 December 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sandra Daniels
<b>Setting Address</b>	Village Hall, Lower Road, Little Hallingbury, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM22 7RD
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<b>Registered person</b>	Ann Luke
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional 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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Hallingbury Playgroup opened in 1974. It operates from one main hall and a smaller side room in the village hall in the centre of Little Hallingbury. The group serves the local and wider areas.

There are currently 39 children from two years to five years on roll. This includes 24 funded three and four-year-old children. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Currently, there are a small number of children attending who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term time. Sessions are from 09.00 until 12.15 from Monday to Friday.

There are eight members of staff working with the children with additional staff for cover. There are six members of staff who have early years qualifications to NVQ Level Two or Three, and two members of staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA).

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children stay very healthy because practitioners follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, for which policies and procedures are in place. For example, staff wear protective clothing when changing younger children's nappies and tables are cleaned with anti-bacterial spray before and after each snack session. Staff encourage parents to ensure their children have appropriate clothing for the weather should they go outside to play. Each child also has a spare set of their own clothes so they can be comfortable should they need to be changed. Practitioners talk to children about appropriate clothing for varying weather conditions so that children know it is important to keep warm in the winter. All of the staff team are either qualified to administer first aid or awaiting training and all are confident in their ability to respond well to minor accidents. Detailed information is recorded about children's medical needs and dietary requirements to ensure that staff are equipped and able to meet children's individual needs.

Children are cared for in an environment that is clean and bright. They begin to learn the importance of good hygiene through the daily routine and they learn about the importance of minimising the spread of germs through regular hand washing. Children know why and when they should wash their hands, for example, children say they need to 'get rid of germs' as they wash their hands after using the toilet. In addition, the use of liquid soap and a warm air dryer contributes to minimising the risk of cross-infection. Children develop independence as they confidently take themselves to the toilet to attend to their personal needs. Thematic planning encourages children to learn further about healthy lifestyles as they look at different vegetables, investigating both known and new ones. Children make posters of fruits and vegetables and discuss their favourites.

Children learn about healthy eating because snack time is well organised and affords children good opportunities to enjoy a variety of healthy snacks and fruit that is good for them. In addition, children are able to enjoy fresh milk or water with their snack, contributing to their good health. Staff ensure that snack foods cover the main food groups and are varied and interesting for children. Information relating to children's dietary requirements, preferences and allergies is collated. As a result, children's good health is safeguarded. A sick child policy and clear accident procedures means that they can act in the best interests of children in the event of a medical emergency or an accident.

Children receive very good opportunities to participate in activities to promote their large muscle movements both inside and outdoors; this includes riding bikes, ball games, running freely, climbing apparatus and music and movement. As a result, children develop a healthy attitude to exercise and they are beginning to learn about changes that occur in their bodies as they embark on vigorous physical play.

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

The provision is good.

The pre-school provides a welcoming environment for children, parents and visitors. Clear information is placed on notice boards and children's creations are displayed on the walls helping to give them a sense of belonging and achievement. Children and parents are greeted warmly by staff. They freely access the wide range of attractive, well-maintained play equipment

and resources. A range of child-height furniture enables children to extend their play and learning in safety and comfort. The very good organisation of the play space along with thorough daily checks of all child-accessible areas ensures the environment remains safe for children. Toys and resources are regularly checked and cleaned so they remain in good condition for the children to use. Staff support children very well, encouraging them to tidy away when they have finished playing, thereby keeping the play space free from tripping hazards and helping children to learn about the importance of doing things for themselves.

Children's arrivals and departures are managed extremely safely. Members of staff stand at the external and internal doors, as parents come right into the hall to bring and collect their children, to ensure that no child can leave unsupervised. During sessions the external doors remain locked and access is via a door-bell only. Visitors sign in and out and children and staff are accurately registered so that practitioners know exactly who is in the building at any given time. Staff carry out daily health and safety checks on the premises and equipment to ensure children's safety and security at all times.

Children learn about keeping themselves safe as staff give them gentle reminders, for example, about not running indoors unless they are taking part in a planned physical activity. Children practise regular fire evacuation procedures with staff, learning how to behave responsibly in an emergency situation. Children are kept very safe on outings as practitioners conduct risk assessments to ensure that safe adult to child ratios are maintained. Staff are highly vigilant in their supervision of children. Children are given independence and freedom and are able to take small risks in this safe environment. For example, older children take themselves to the bathroom independently and are competent in the management of their own personal care. Practitioners are deployed effectively around the setting, ensuring there is always an adult nearby to anticipate potential accidents and prevent them from happening.

Children are cared for by adults who are vetted and have relevant experience, knowledge and skills. Children are very well safeguarded as all practitioners fully understand their role in the protection of children. They update their knowledge frequently and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary.

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

The provision is good.

Children aged under three years are involved, busy and occupied with the wide range of opportunities on offer to them within this exciting and extremely stimulating environment. They are developing their confidence very well, and becoming skilful communicators and competent learners from the skilled and enthusiastic interaction from staff. They thoroughly enjoy spending their time using age-appropriate activities which encourage their physical and cognitive development, for example, play dough, free-painting and challenging climbing equipment. Social and emotional development is supported through opportunities to play alongside or with other, older children and concepts such as sharing and turn-taking are reinforced through positive role-modelling and interaction from staff. Staff continue to implement the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework in planning for children's development and learning, particularly in relation to assessment. The group is in the process of introducing a key worker system and will continue to do this in order for the responsibilities for meeting individual children's needs to be shared within the staff team.

The carefully prepared and well-organised environment helps children to settle quickly. Parents are welcome to spend as long as they wish or need to ensure their child is fully settled and

comfortable in this environment. As a result, children are keen to embark on a broad range of interesting activities that encourage and promote all areas of development and stimulate their interests. Staff know the children extremely well, they show kindness towards them and are caring and sensitive in their approach. As a result, children are keen to try new ideas, and make effective use of the toys and resources. Children's self-esteem and confidence is enhanced because the staff praise and encourage them in their play, expressing delight in their achievements. Children interact well, demonstrating kindness and consideration to others as they play collaboratively. They talk and respond with animation and laughter to the staff and their peers. Staff use effective questioning techniques to engage the children and encourage them to talk and explore language. Open questions extend children's thinking and help children to reflect on what they are doing and what will happen next.

#### Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff clearly recognise important factors about how children learn and have an excellent knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Practical, real-life experiences allow children to relate on a personal level to things and provide the best opportunities for them to learn. For example, on a visit to Hatfield Forest, children show curiosity and interest as they examine and investigate objects and living things, showing a positive approach to new experiences.

The curriculum is extremely well planned to promote children's progress towards the early learning goals and to ensure the inclusion of all children. Plans clearly cover all six areas of learning and there is an effective system in place to ensure that each child covers each area equally or according to their needs. Activities have a clear purpose and plans show how children will be grouped, the resources needed, staff deployment and provision to extend or adapt activities and resources as children learn at different rates. Children are encouraged to think and to demonstrate what they know and can do. They are consistently encouraged by practitioners who have high, but realistic, expectations of them. Children make patterns whilst threading coloured beads and use positional language such as over, under and through whilst negotiating the indoor climbing frame.

Practitioners use a very good variety of teaching methods which help children to learn effectively, taking account of their age, capability, additional needs, home language and other relevant factors. For example, children become focussed as they begin to explore nature as they visit the nature reserve in the village school. They learn that plants need sunlight and water in order to grow and take great delight in harvesting them when the time is right. Real and meaningful activities such as this create interest and a motivation to learn in children. Staff help children to acquire new skills that enable them to progress, for example, when demonstrating to a child how to cut with scissors, a practitioner explains she is opening and closing the scissors with her finger and thumb.

Many children are able to recognise familiar words and write their own names. Children make excellent progress in their understanding of letter sounds as they discuss the letters of the week and regularly revise and build on their existing knowledge. During their last term before starting school, children benefit greatly from activities and games through which they develop and expand their knowledge and use of phonics. They receive lots of encouragement to write for various purposes such as making shopping lists or taking telephone messages. Children count in a wide range of daily routines and practical tasks, for example, at registration time. They use and recognise numerals and shapes, regularly discussing them with staff. For example,

many children are able to recognise and name a rectangle and a diamond shape without prompts from staff.

Children make excellent progress in developing control and co-ordination. They confidently and competently use small equipment such as scissors, cutters and pencils with increasing accuracy. They use large equipment such as bikes to develop strength and stamina. Children thoroughly enjoy extensive opportunities to learn about the natural world through planned activities such as observing seasonal changes in the weather and exploring the log pile in the garden. They use magnets with increasing confidence, discovering that they can move an object along the table-top by moving a magnet along the underside of the table. They use the computer with increasing ability and control, gaining an understanding of technology. Children create freely, enjoying an outstanding variety of art and craft activities and messy play. They explore experiment and discover the changes that happen to sand when water is added. Children use their imaginations in role play and enjoy singing and using musical instruments. All children successfully develop their skills through well planned and spontaneous activities and experiences which meet their individual learning needs.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in a truly inclusive environment where staff value individuality and acknowledge the contribution each child makes. Staff have very calm and gentle manners and treat children with total respect. They know the children very well and understand how to get the best from each child. A wide range of resources reflect all people in society. This encourages children to develop a positive attitude towards diversity. Children learn about the wider world as they celebrate a vast range of religious world festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Children clearly feel a strong sense of belonging; both in the group and in the community. They go on many local outings with staff, for example, to the church, village school, shops and local forest areas. Children celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the playgroup with the staff team and also attended a gathering on the village green to celebrate the unveiling of a new village sign. Children were amazed by a visit from the Essex Air Ambulance which landed in the grounds to thank them for a donation made by the playgroup from fundraising events.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive highly effective support from the group's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator who attends relevant training and receives support from the Area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, who visits regularly. Staff monitor children and meet with parents to discuss any concerns; they share observations made and urge them to seek further advice and guidance from health professionals such as their doctor or health visitor. Children receive outstanding support to meet their individual needs, for example, one to one assistance from a dedicated member of staff and help to practise exercises from the speech therapist and specialist teacher.

Children learn to understand responsible behaviour. They follow the very good examples set for them by staff and learn to share and take turns as they play together in harmony. Children respond very well to practitioners' calm and consistently positive approach. Rather than being told not to do something, children actually learn about responsible behaviour as staff suggest alternative methods of dealing with things. Older children are encouraged to negotiate and resolve their own conflicts and they are given time to do this by staff who know they do not always have to intervene too soon. Children are polite and develop an awareness of, and consideration for, the feelings of others. For example, when a child becomes upset, another child takes her to a member of staff. Children develop secure and trusting relationships with

the adults who care for them. They make strong friendships which often extend outside the playgroup. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There are excellent strategies in place for staff to build exceptional relationships with parents and carers which contributes significantly to children's well-being. Staff provide extensive information to parents both on entry and throughout their time at the setting through newsletters, a detailed notice board and a comprehensive range of policies and procedures relating to all aspects of the provision. All necessary records and parental consents are in place which means staff offer children appropriate care. Practitioners seek parents' views through questionnaires. They use this information to respond effectively to improve the service on offer and discover children's interests at home, for example, their favourite activities and toys. Parents spoken to during the inspection particularly like the fun atmosphere, find the staff extremely approachable and dedicated to their work, and think the feedback meetings are extremely useful. Parents evenings and open days contribute significantly to the family ethos of this nursery.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. There are robust procedures in place to ensure that children are cared for consistently and in accordance with their parent's wishes. This is enhanced by daily verbal feedback to ensure that parents are informed about what their children have been doing whilst attending. Consistent verbal feedback and availability of written plans helps to ensure that parents of three and four-year-olds know about what their children have been doing whilst attending. In addition, they are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning through being informed of themed activities, helping out in the session and being kept fully informed about their child's achievements through regular meetings with key staff. Parents evenings have proved to be very popular and the setting continues to develop ways of involving parents in their children's learning and enabling them to pass on what they know about their children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Overall children's needs are met. Ever keen to review and improve practice, staff have attended many relevant training courses to ensure they are totally up to date with legislation and regulations. Policies and procedures are constantly under review and amended as necessary. The setting is always receptive to, and enthusiastic about, using innovative ideas and systems to improve outcomes for children. Very good organisation of the premises, both indoors and outside, maximises learning opportunities for children. Staff are clearly dedicated to their work with children and are extremely well deployed so that children receive exceptional levels of support. All documentation meets the requirements of the National Standards, is confidentially maintained and, where appropriate, shared with parents and carers.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are very well protected and cared for by staff with an expert knowledge and understanding of child development. There is an induction process to further ensure that practitioners are of the quality and high standard required by the manager. Staff receive regular appraisals, and review and assess their own practice and performance in an open and honest manner. Children and families benefit enormously from the care and support they receive from this highly motivated, well qualified, knowledgeable and caring staff team. Many practitioners have worked in the group for several years. They bring a wealth of different skills and interests which compliment each other as they work together as one.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The provision is clearly led and managed for the benefit of the children. There is a clear vision for this provision and the quality of care and nursery education that it provides, which steers the work of the setting. Senior staff have created a highly effective and improving setting where children are safe, feel good about themselves and make excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Looking beyond what the policies and procedures are intended to achieve, it is very clear that they have an extremely positive impact on children's well-being and learning.

The professional development of staff is managed so that teaching and learning can be improved. All practitioners are qualified and experienced and actively seek out training opportunities. New knowledge and information is disseminated throughout the team effectively. The setting assesses its own strengths and areas for development and continually reviews the effectiveness of activities and systems. The senior staff know what is going on throughout the setting and all practitioners know children's individual needs particularly well. Successful teaching strategies are shared to maintain the high expectations that are in place for both staff and children. This is clearly an environment in which children are cared for exceptionally well as they learn and develop through exciting play experiences.

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

At the last inspection the provider agreed to devise a system to ensure that all parents are able to identify who the playgroup staff are. Partnership with parents and effective communication has developed and improved as each member of staff has their photograph displayed on a notice board for parents and visitors to see. The provider also agreed to review the organisation of the end of session whole group activity to ensure that the clearing away of furniture and equipment does not impact on the children. Children enjoy helping with some of the tidying up activities, increasing their sense of belonging and self-esteem. When most of the toys and equipment is packed up, some staff take the children either into another room or down to the end of the hall for a story or physical activity whilst other staff complete the tidying up process.

### **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.

## **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 outstanding.

## 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 develop the key worker system in order for the responsibilities for meeting individual children's needs to be shared within the staff team.

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

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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)