

# Polstead Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133989
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Milton
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Margarets Institute, Polstead Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX2 6TN
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<b>Registered person</b>	Polstead Playgroup
<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 good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Polstead Playgroup first became registered more than 25 years ago and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents and carers. The playgroup operates from a shared community building off Woodstock Road, approximately one mile from the centre of Oxford. Children attend the playgroup from all areas of Oxfordshire. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 42 children from two to five years on roll and of these, 27 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports a small number of children for whom English is an additional language. The playgroup runs from 09:00 until 12:00 five days a week during school term times and has sole use of part of the building while the sessions run.

The playgroup employs five staff all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The playgroup receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are gaining an excellent awareness of good hygiene in this clean setting. They know when asked why they need to wash their hands before eating to 'get rid of the germs'. The staff maintain very good hygiene routines when changing nappies to prevent the risk of cross infection. Children play and eat in clean areas which staff consistently monitor. Children who have special health needs are extremely well cared for by the diligent staff who work very closely with parents so that high levels of care are on offer. Staff ensure they have the training, written policies and medical supplies to attend to children in the case of accident or emergency.

Children delight in snack times which are sociable occasions. They are developing an excellent awareness of their own needs as they visit the bathroom or help themselves to the fresh drinking water always on display within their reach. The children eat an imaginative range of healthy snacks which include items like fresh pineapple, melon or avocado. After refreshing their energy levels the children are keen to play outside in the garden area. This presents them with a comprehensive selection of activities to play with whilst benefiting from the fresh air. Although the outdoor area may be rather small the staff compensate for this successfully by enabling children to have alternative activities everyday indoors. Children delight in climbing, sliding, crawling and balancing which they do with confidence and control.

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

The provision is good.

Children's safety is of high priority to the staff who are well organised and work together to create a safe and pleasant environment for play and learning. Children have ample space to play and move around independently. They enjoy the cosy and comfortable quiet room which is attractively set out with child-sized sofas and a wide range of stimulating books. Parents really appreciate this area too for sharing a quiet story whilst settling their child on arrival in the morning. Staff set out a wide range of interesting activities for the children each day and the storage areas are neat and well organised. Children play with equipment of good quality and staff make careful choices for new additions to the setting, for example using a grant to provide a colourful safety surface under the climbing frame outdoors. Children are encouraged to be independent since staff present many daily activities on low trolleys so that children may select items for themselves. Staff display group collages for all to enjoy though sometimes children lack an area to display their own work or to see word labels at their height.

Children play safely benefiting from the careful procedures in place by the staff team. Good use is made of safety equipment like stair gates or hooks on doors to prevent trapped fingers. Staff rely on visually conducting risk assessment indoors which identifies the main hazards. New written check lists for outdoors provide helpful daily reminders to staff for checking areas before children access them. Staff monitor the door at the start and end of sessions and they record if someone different is collecting a child to further back up their good safety systems. Children take part in fire evacuation procedures which staff sensibly plan on different days in the week so all children go through the experience.

The staff caring for the children are vigilant about safeguarding their welfare. They ensure only adults who undergo checks work in unsupervised contact with children. The children play in a

setting where the staff have undertaken recent child protection training and a newly updated policy for this important area is thorough.

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

The provision is good.

Children have a happy start at playgroup since the staff provide comfort and reassurance. The tempting array of activities soon engage the children in play when they arrive in the morning and they spend the free play time occupied and busy. Staff are attentive to the children's needs and provide good support to their play, becoming involved in role play scenarios for example, and having 'conversations' on the telephones.

Children under three years of age have a good introduction to a wide range of sensory activities and many are eager to explore water, sand and play dough. The painting easel is particularly popular on some mornings as children express their ideas. The younger ones have their own group times for lively action songs and an activity well matched to their shorter concentration skills. Staff are fully aware of the different needs of this younger age group.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff have a firm understanding of the Foundation Stage and they put this knowledge to good use in the effective planning of the educational curriculum. Plans have sufficient detail to enable staff to ensure they cover all six areas of learning though there is flexibility too that enables children to contribute their wishes. Staff adjust a planned group time for example to take into account the request for a popular story book.

Children are developing good relationships with the staff and their peers. The children often play together co-operatively and to be sociable. They behave well at playgroup and are learning the difference between right and wrong actions. The children are developing independence since staff provide them with opportunities such as pouring their drinks and making choices about what to play. Children show wonder when a dragonfly is passed around in a box at circle time, questioning 'Can I touch it?' and 'Is it real?' Children listen well at group times and their speaking skills are developing with staff making good use of questioning skills to encourage thinking. Children enjoy looking at books and developing their early mark making in a range of play situations. Children recognise their own names as they register themselves in at the start of the session.

Each day the children attend there are a wide range of mathematical activities on offer. They are becoming familiar with numerals which they see in many situations, such as numbered cushions or pebbles with spots in the sand tray. This helps the children to gain confidence with early number skills whilst enjoying their play. They sort by colour or size and explore shape and position with toys like toy animals or a train track. Staff are on hand to extend their learning. Topic work introduces the children to a wide range of experiences with a good emphasis on the natural world and on different cultures. Children explore using equipment like scissors, binoculars and magnifying glasses along with the popular choice of the computer. As children use these tools they are gaining good co-ordination and manipulative skills.

Staff let children express their own imaginations in story making and art work. They explore colour and try different techniques of making patterns, for example with marbles and paint. Children play together when making up stories such as using soft play cubes to act out a train

journey. Staff sensibly extend this by suggesting different roles or by offering props like train tickets.

The staff monitor the children's development and keep dated records to show their good progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Photographs and some written observations add to the range of information. Staff are aware of the need to keep improving this area of their teaching as some records have gaps. The staff are beginning to record actions to help children progress though there is not a very strong link as yet to planning the next steps of each child's learning.

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

The provision is good.

The friendly and welcoming atmosphere created by the staff encourages families to be involved. Parents and carers feel at ease stopping with their children for a short time whilst they settle in and this helps to reassure children. Children develop their sense of belonging to the playgroup as they see their name labels and find their tray to store possessions. Children are developing good levels of respect for others. They are learning to use simple sign language to help them communicate with each other whatever their levels of spoken English. Children celebrate a wide range of cultural events through the year with many interesting displays on topics like 'foods from the rain forest' or 'African art'. This helps to widen their experiences beyond their own lives and promotes diversity in a very positive way. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is fostered appropriately.

There are no children attending the playgroup at present who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Staff are well prepared to welcome children to the group by their attendance at training courses and through their previous experiences of supporting families. Staff manage children's behaviour well by offering children consistent guidance. Children are learning to share, take turns and to follow simple directions from the adults. They are co-operative and eager to help and staff defuse situations quickly before they escalate. Children are familiar with using sand timers to monitor their use of favourite bicycles or the computer.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Families play an active role in the life of the playgroup by serving on the voluntary committee or when they attend sessions as extra adult helpers. Parents receive encouragement to be involved in their children's learning with ideas on an activity sheet for home learning or by sharing books on loan from the group. The staff provide parents with a wide range of useful information including details of the topics and planning sheets of the educational curriculum. Parents readily share their satisfaction with the standards of care their children receive from the dedicated team of staff.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

This is a well organised playgroup where children receive good support to their development. The team of staff work very well together, clear of their roles and responsibilities and ensuring the morning sessions run smoothly. The leadership and management are good. The team benefits from the guidance of the highly qualified and experienced supervisor. All members of staff appreciate the opportunities to contribute at staff meetings and to include their own ideas in the weekly planning of activities. Professional development of individuals has a high priority. Staff regularly evaluate activities and their own working practices so that they identify ways to improve the provision for the children.

The committee and the staff work effectively together and they review the policies and procedures. Robust systems are in place for the recruitment and checking of new adults associated with the setting and all regulatory documentation is in place. Paperwork is stored securely and neatly so that all documents are to hand when staff need them. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

At the last inspection of care the staff were set one action and four recommendations which all have been addressed. With regard to documentation the staff now have a policy for the procedure to follow if a child is lost or not collected from playgroup. Staff inform Ofsted of changes to the structure of their committee as required by regulation. Staff now ensure the daily record of attendance notes actual times when children are present and the fire exits remain free from obstructions at all times. Lastly the child protection policy for the group is made available to all families attending the setting. The impact on the children of these improvements is to raise the standards of care linked to keeping them safe.

At the last inspection of nursery education the staff were asked to provide children with more opportunities to use musical instruments. An action plan was put into place to ensure steps have been taken to improve this area. The children now have a new selection of instruments to play with and a music and movement session forms part of the daily routine. Staff are keen to bring in outside professionals and talented parents to share musical skills with the children. Staff were also required to update children's profiles regularly. This is still a work in progress as staff adapt their methods of recording children's development in a way that works for the team though they do monitor the children's progress regularly as required.

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

Since 1 April 2004 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**

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### **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):

- consider providing an area for children to display their own art work and to be able to see word labels at their height

## **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 methods of recording children's progress and use the information to plan their next steps in learning

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