

# Little U Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY346373
<b>Inspection date</b>	09 July 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Diane Ashplant
<b>Setting Address</b>	34 Whitchurch Lane, Shirley, SOLIHULL, West Midlands, B90 1PB
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<b>Registered person</b>	Nicola Michelle Brown
<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 satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little U Playgroup opened in 2005 and has been under the current owner since 2007. It operates from the village hall in Dickens Heath, near Solihull. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is open three days a week term time only and sessions are from 09.45 to 12.15 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. A separate breakfast and lunch club is offered from 09.15 to 09.45 and from 12.15 to 13.00 respectively. Children have access to the adjacent children's play area on the village green.

There are currently 30 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early years education. The playgroup serves children from the local and surrounding areas who attend for a variety of sessions.

There are five members of staff who work with the children, of whom nearly all hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is well promoted through different opportunities for physical play both inside and out such as using the parachute or enjoying short gym sessions with a trained member of staff. The hall offers a large space for children to move around in and they also use the adjacent village playground where there is a range of equipment such as swings and slides. Staff carry out regular cleaning routines to ensure children are cared for in a hygienic environment and children themselves are learning about personal hygiene through the daily routine, for example, washing hands before snack time. Children are protected in the event of an accident or illness as several staff hold current first aid certificates and there are well-maintained procedures for recording these incidents. Staff have a good understanding of infectious diseases and share any relevant information with parents to further protect children from infection.

Staff understand the importance of a balanced diet in promoting health and therefore offer children healthy snacks each day such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Children are also able to have breakfast and lunch where they enjoy a social gathering around the table and learn about the benefits of different foods. Children taste foods from around the world and further develop their understanding through activities such as designing a healthy eating plate and helping to prepare foods such as fruit kebabs themselves. All dietary needs are carefully recorded on individual forms and any food preparation is appropriately carried out. Children choose from a selection of different drinks and water is accessible at all times. This ensures they are kept hydrated.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children move freely around the large hall space where staff are alert to possible hazards and have taken action in most cases to minimise these. The hall is shared with other users and therefore staff particularly understand the importance of regular checks to ensure it is safe for children to use. Likewise the outdoor play area which is open to the public. A written risk assessment is in place and daily checks generally highlight any potential risks to children. However, exposed socket covers in the reception area and items stored on the top of cupboards which could fall means that children's safety is compromised. The children are learning about keeping themselves safe as they respond to the gentle reminders from staff to sit properly on chairs and have discussions with staff preparing snacks about the safe handling of sharp knives. Activities around such topics as road safety which enable children to practise with appropriate resources further increase their understanding. There are suitable procedures in place for evacuation in the event of a fire and staff are fully aware of always checking the identity of unknown collectors. All toys and equipment are chosen with regard to safety and suitability and regularly checked to ensure their condition. Some of these are accessible which promote independent selection by the children themselves.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by the staff's clear understanding of their role and responsibility as regards child protection and how to pass on significant concerns appropriately. There is a full policy which is shared with parents and this includes current guidance. Several staff have just attended a safeguarding course to update their knowledge.

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

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the playgroup and enter with confidence to choose an activity from the range that has been set out. Staff work hard to create an inviting environment which covers all areas of development and encourages children to engage and have fun. Staff spend time together before children arrive to discuss and consolidate the programme of the day and their responsibilities within this. They have successfully divided the large room into separate key worker areas which children identify as their own space as they place coats and bags on their named chair and some seek out their own name card for registration. This gives them a sense of security and helps them to settle well. The daily programme is carefully planned to provide a good balance of play and learning opportunities. Staff engage and support children well at their chosen activity, encouraging their interest with questions and prompts or sitting down with them to enjoy looking at books together or trying on different clothes in the role play area. Children have some opportunities to select alternative resources and generally respond well to the routine. Staff use conversation very effectively to stimulate and engage children at snack time or around the activity tables and clearly enjoy sharing time with them. There are also opportunities for small groups to participate in the gym session or play with games in the entrance area. All children's progress is monitored well and activities are carefully evaluated to ensure they are achieving suitable outcomes for children. Staff know individual children well and effectively use the programme to help children engage and enjoy which encourages them in the next steps of their development, both socially and educationally.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff who work with the children have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and the strategies to use for interesting and engaging children. There is a well planned curriculum which links with the early learning goals and provides a balanced daily programme covering all areas of learning. Staff have created an attractive and inviting learning environment and use individual areas and key worker groups well to help children feel secure and valued. Staff interact and respond well, encouraging children's interest and development through effective questioning and the use of themed activities which provide links which help re-enforce children's learning. Children are learning to respond to the routine and benefit from the free play time and also the smaller group activities. Staff know the children well and are able to be flexible within the routine as they try and support and include all children. However, the organisation of the day with the range of different ages does not always provide sufficient challenges for the more able children and allows others to be distracted which impacts on their learning.

There are good systems in place for evaluating the daily programme and the focused activities to ensure these are effectively engaging and moving children on. Staff know children well and use the key worker system to further support this. They regularly monitor their progress using spontaneous observations, photographs and a range of dated work and staff comments. These are linked to the stepping stones and help form each child's development folder and termly reports and identify any next steps in children's learning.

Children have lots of opportunities to express themselves through a range of creative activities such as junk modelling and making patterns in the sand and explore their senses as they are encouraged to feel, smell and taste a range of different items. They thoroughly enjoy imitating adult roles as they play in the home corner or try on a variety of different clothes. Children are learning to identify colours as they look for the rainbow in the sand and enjoy dancing to music

and following action songs. Children learn about shapes and patterns as they engage in a range of construction toys, find matching cards and place together the pieces of a jigsaw. They investigate how different materials sink or float in the water. However, the opportunities for children to use mathematical language within the daily routine are limited. Most children are able to talk with confidence to friends and to staff. They answer questions and respond to simple instructions. Some children show a real love of books as they select their own and concentrate for long periods on this while others enjoy listening to stories in a small group. Children are beginning to make marks as they use notepads while some try and write their name on their pictures. They are learning to recognise their own names as they identify their named chair and then select their own label as they self-register. Most children are developing social skills as they respond to requests to line up to go outside or collect together for circle time where they sing the welcome song. They are learning to share toys and some children play well with the friends, taking turns and supporting each other. Children are learning about the world and their place within it as they look at family photos and share events from home. They enjoy learning about different celebrations such as Pancake Day and Divali and are developing an understanding of the needs of others as they share in activities for Red Nose Day. Children make visits to the local park, library and shops where they choose different fruits for their tasting activities. They learn about the wonders of nature as they make seed cakes to attract the birds and watch as chrysalises change into butterflies. Children are beginning to develop their independence as they enthusiastically volunteer for the role as snack helper or confidently access toys of their choice, many playing happily on their own or with their companions.

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

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed into this setting where staff get to know them well and provide a staggered settling in and lots of discussion with parents. The 'this is me' form enables parents to share individual information about their child so that staff know how to make them feel comfortable. Children are encouraged to respect each other and are developing an understanding of their own individuality as they talk about family events. As they arrive each morning they are encouraged to find their own named chair in their key worker group where they place their coats and bags which gives them a sense of personal space and belonging. Children have opportunities to visit the local community as they go to the library or go shopping at the nearby supermarket and enjoy visits from the fire and police department as they learn about people who help us. Children are beginning to learn about the wider world through culturally-related topics and activities, for example, enjoying noodles and crackers as they celebrate Chinese New Year. They have a wide range of resources to support their play, some of which they can self-select. Staff are aware that some children have more specific needs and understand the importance of working closely with the parents to ensure each child is fully supported, making any adaptations they can in order to include all children. Staff access appropriate support from outside professionals so they all work together in the best interests of the child.

Children are learning to behave well as they respond to the guidelines in place and begin to listen, to share and to play together with friends. Staff are good role models and offer regular praise and encouragement which helps children develop their self-esteem. They effectively channel the more challenging behaviour and help children resolve their own disputes, patiently explaining the consequences of their actions and reminding them to use 'kind hands'. Consequently children learn that certain behaviour is not acceptable if they want to enjoy their time together. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is open and friendly and staff work effectively with them from the start so they feel part of their child's time at playgroup. Parents are allocated a key worker who is available to liaise with them at any time, enabling parents to feel there is someone who knows their child really well. They are provided with a comprehensive range of information through the parent pack, newsletters and informative displays on the notice boards. Parents are welcomed into the setting by staff who are very approachable and talk about their child's day and share the daily report. Staff meet with parents several times during the year to discuss their child's progress and share their child's development folder. Parents are also encouraged to share in social and fund-raising events.

Partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. They receive clear information about the Foundation Stage in their parent pack along with the long term planning which identifies themes, celebrations and different learning objectives. The weekly programme is displayed along with the learning outcomes and specific topics are identified in the newsletters and notes. Parents are invited to provide items from home to support certain topics and they are encouraged to share in the 'snuggle pack' or help children to find items on their nature walk. This encourages the links between home and playgroup so that children's learning is continuous and they both work together to help children reach their potential. Each child has their own detailed development folder which contains many items of work and photos and descriptions of activities enjoyed which parents can see at any time. Staff at the playgroup activity seek and value parents comments and act on their suggestions. Parents and staff meet together three times a year to discuss their children's progress and agree the next steps in their development. This ensures parents are fully involved in their children's learning and together with staff can celebrate their success.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being part of a well-organised provision which provides them with many different and interesting play and learning experiences. The daily programme is well planned and offers a range of activities covering all areas of development and provides a balance of free, group and more adult-led sessions. The playgroup cares for children aged from two to four years and staff are aware of the different needs of the varying age groups and therefore provide flexibility within the routine to accommodate this. Staff form an experienced and committed team and work well together offering a balance of skills and personalities. All staff have completed 'Birth to Three matters' training and there is a good commitment to other relevant training. All appropriate procedures for the selection and recruitment of staff are in place which ensures the suitability of those who work with the children. The staff provide a friendly and approachable team and all have different roles and responsibilities within the daily programme which they discuss informally before the session begins. Staff also meet regularly for staff meetings which means they all feel involved and valued.

All documentation for the safe and efficient management of the group is in place and is well maintained on a daily basis as staff are very confident about the procedures. All records are very well organised and regularly reviewed to ensure they are up-to-date.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Those responsible for the Foundation Stage have a sound knowledge of how children learn and the need to provide a stimulating learning environment. The owner is active within the provision which means she effectively supports and monitors the staff team. There are regular systems in place for the evaluation of the curriculum and children's progress and the views of parents are actively sought

and acted upon. Appraisals for the staff are soon to be introduced to provide a system for developing and reviewing their own practice. Staff work well together and the programme generally supports all children appropriately, although the daily routine does not always provide the most effective challenges for the more able child. The manager and owner work well together and have established links with the local community, the school and the early years services so they all work together to help children enjoy and achieve. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

Not applicable.

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

Since registration 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 satisfactory.

### **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):

- review the steps taken to ensure that hazards posed by exposed socket covers and the storage of items on top of cupboards are minimised.

#### **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):

- make further use of daily routines to extend children's understanding of mathematical language and problem solving
- continue to develop the daily programme and the planning to ensure it fully supports the more and less able children.

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)