

# Little Pickles Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101817
<b>Inspection date</b>	29 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Angela Cole
<b>Setting Address</b>	Little Pickles Playgroup, Bradfords Lane, Newent, Gloucestershire, GL18 1QT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01531 828076
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Little Pickles Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Pickles Playgroup is managed by a committee made up of parents of children at the group and members of the local community. It opened in 1999 and is located in the grounds of Picklenash Junior School in Newent, Gloucestershire. The group uses a playroom, integral toilets and an enclosed, outdoor play area. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The group is open during school terms on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 09.00 to 12.00 and on Friday from 09.00 to 14.00. Tuesday and Thursday afternoons are 'Springboard' sessions for two-year-olds with their parents. 'Picketots' sessions on Wednesday afternoons are for parents and young children of any age.

There are currently 18 children aged from two years nine months to under five years on roll. Of these, 17 children receive funding for early education. Children come from within the town or from the surrounding area. The staff have experience of caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Seven part-time staff work with the children. Of these, one has teaching status and four have appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a further

qualification. The playgroup has close associations with the adjacent Newent Early Years Centre and with the owner of the building, Glebe Infants School, that most children later attend.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children gain an effective understanding of good practice with regard to health as they recognise changes when they become hot or tired during physical play. They notice staff's good procedures for cleanliness and help to keep the premises clean by sweeping. Photographic instructions and children telling others that, 'They'll get germs,' help to promote hand washing so children learn to do so on their own. Children are well cared for if they are ill or require medication. However, not all first aid items are in date and some accidents are not signed so that children may not receive appropriate care that is consistent with that at home.

The children pour their own choice of milk or water at snack time, have free access to drinking water and enjoy extra drinks after physical play so they do not become dehydrated. Their individual dietary needs are well met and menus are posted so parents are aware of what the children have eaten. They begin to learn about the importance of healthy eating through related topics and balanced snacks that include fruits, such as apples and raisins. Parents contribute significantly to children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle by including nutritious choices in their packed lunches.

Children have daily opportunities for exercise and fresh air so they make excellent progress in their physical development. They move freely to music and climb or balance on varied equipment, including logs and a challenging climbing frame on which they devise their own movements. They energetically dig with large spades and build with exciting materials, such as tyres and huge boxes. They efficiently handle and arrange smaller equipment, including cones to design their own cycling tracks. Children become skilful using small tools, such as brushes and scissors.

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

The provision is good.

The children are safe and secure in premises that are bright, well maintained and welcoming with many displays of their work. Good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas so they have ample space, for example, to extend their imaginative play moving objects around in a trailer. Toilet facilities meet children's requirements and they can independently visit these safely. Children play with a wide range of resources that is entirely suitable for the age range attending and supports their development. They reach and choose toys and equipment for themselves as staff have arranged low-level, shallow storage in all areas. For example, they make good use of the display of craft and collage materials to make their own designs, including a 'rocket'.

Children are safe as staff implement health and safety procedures through detailed checklists and regularly revised risk assessments. Adults are well deployed to maintain high ratios and to ensure that children are always closely supervised. Staff are vigilant at all times, especially as children arrive and leave, so access to the group is closely monitored. Children effectively learn to keep themselves safe as staff always explain the reason for the reminder about safety. For example, they learn to hold a tape up as they might trip while running with it, and realise their fingers might be caught if left between the tables. Children begin to take some small risks in

controlled circumstances, for example, as they roll tyres and manoeuvre wheeled toys down a shallow slope.

The children's welfare is given high priority. Each staff member's clear understanding of first aid and child protection issues effectively safeguards them. This is underpinned by comprehensive policies and procedures to support staff to take appropriate action in the event of any concern.

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

The provision is outstanding.

All children form strong attachments, gain confidence and enjoy themselves as they play together. The routine is carefully considered to be sensitive to children's care needs and to offer them choices of active and quieter play, both indoors and outdoors. The children meet briefly in small, keyworker groups where they are immediately interested in the displays of topical objects, such as stars. They spontaneously plan where they will start playing and then have long, free times to carry out their ideas. The range and balance of activities, and the targeting of keyworkers, helps children to make outstanding progress in all areas of their development. Staff use their excellent knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' and Foundation Stage frameworks so that daily planning is focused around the needs and interests of the children. For example, an adult skilfully supports children's early writing skills when they follow her example and 'write' notes as they 'observe' others playing.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have a profound understanding about the Foundation Stage and of how young ones learn so that children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. They develop very high levels of confidence to approach others, for example, asking them to join in imaginative play as workmen with a tool box. Children skilfully use language to express their play needs and preferences, including asking for 'some rolling pins so we can do some rolling out,' and choosing the story page they like best. They frequently learn new words to extend their use of grammar, to take an active part in telling favourite stories and to negotiate roles, such as 'You can be the baby if I can be the mummy.' Children listen carefully in the quiet, purposeful atmosphere, for example, to suggest words that rhyme and begin with the same sound. They have a wealth of opportunities for mark making, including an 'office', and children respond from a young age to name their own work.

Children are highly challenged to make excellent progress in relation to their starting points, for example, in mathematical development. They confidently talk about their ages and spontaneously take charge of routines to count each other. Children compare numbers of objects to hand, for example, to find the number of rolling pins set out and calculate how many pieces of tape they have used. They gain in-depth, practical understanding of shape, space and measure, for example, to make circular patterns in dough and to indicate the 'largest', 'middle-sized' and 'teeny' bed for the toy bears. There are no differences in learning between different groups of children, as, for example, each child's creativity is highly fostered. Children make excellent use of time and the resources, for example, to develop their imagination through role and small-world play. They enthusiastically sing favourite songs and learn new ones. They are keen to respond using all their senses, and explore a wide range of media, for example, to feel different textures and say which fruit is sweeter.

Staff effectively plan the learning environment and activities to be highly suited to the children's needs. This is because information gained from assessments is skilfully used to help move children to the next stage in their learning. Planning is increasingly based on children's interests in the group and at home, including provision of large boxes for children to use for their designs. Teaching truly interests children, helping them to become focused, able to resist distractions and persist for some time, for example, as they extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. They persevere to investigate many different objects and materials, including water pumps and an antique telephone. Staff make excellent use of children's spontaneous curiosity, for example, to notice changing patterns of light and shadows made by the Christmas tree. Children have excellent opportunities to widen their knowledge about how different people live. For example, weddings of adults connected with the group are followed up with an Asian 'wedding' acted out by the children and a British 'wedding' of two bears, complete with a cake and decorated car.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The children arrive happy and are warmly welcomed. They play a full part in the group as staff value and respect their individuality and the family context of each child. Close and caring relationships with the staff increase children's sense of trust and help them to gain high self-esteem. They gain a very good sense of belonging as they frequently share significant events at home and confidently join their key groups. They are keen to participate in whole group activities, such as telling and enacting the story of 'The three bears'. They have excellent opportunities to make decisions about their own play and about choices for the group, for example, using high quality song cards. Children learn about diversity in meaningful ways. These include free access to a wide range of resources showing positive images. Children learn to value different families through sharing the adventures of 'Pickles Bear' which spends a week with each child at home.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are highly supported through the informed practice of the adults and their commitment to the development of each child. Staff work closely with parents and with other professionals to ensure personal support matches each child's needs. Children's behaviour is exemplary. All staff skilfully and calmly support younger children to share so they understand the reasons for boundaries and learn to find their own solutions to any differences, such as taking turns to sit on the 'daddy bear's' chair. The children's understanding of right and wrong is effectively increased as they care for the environment, resources and each other. They willingly respond to the quiet, musical signal to tidy away, sweep the patio and help each other to carry larger items, such as a mat. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. An excellent relationship with family members contributes significantly to the children's well-being in the group. Parents are fully informed of the planning for each term as well as their own child's progress. Staff actively seek parents' views about new children's requirements and interests, and on a regular basis throughout their time in the group. Thoughtful, parental feedback shows that families greatly value the care offered by the playgroup. Staff ensure that all parents know how their children are progressing and developing through regular conversation and sharing of the children's written and photographic records. These steps ensure extremely effective continuity of care for the children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children receive good care and outstanding education as a result of conscientious and competent organisational skills. The appointment of new adults is sound, though systems to store proof of staff vetting at the setting, and to check staff's ongoing suitability, are not fully developed. Children benefit from ample, adult and keyworker support at all times. They are highly supported by experienced teams of, overall, well qualified adults who work efficiently together to meet their needs. The playgroup is run most effectively under detailed operating plans to foster the children's safety and welfare. The attractive indoor and outdoor areas are effectively organised so children have a variety of highly equipped play spaces.

Overall, the setting's documentation is accurately maintained, and securely stored with high regard to confidentiality. The committee and staff have recently reviewed the policies, and many are shared in the parents' handbook. Staff accurately record their hours of attendance and the group makes consistent use of a daily diary to back up the completion of the children's register. A log for any complaint is set up to include the necessary information. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff are guided by knowledgeable, active committee members who inspire, encourage and value their contributions. Regular appraisals offer staff opportunities to foster their own professional development and well as to further improve the provision for children. Training and staff's willingness to act on current trends ensure that their day-to-day teaching is up-to-date and well informed. Children are highly motivated to make progress and the leaders accurately monitor their learning to support their achievements. The setting is highly committed to promoting an inclusive environment in which every child matters.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The previous care inspection recommended the playgroup to improve provision for outdoor play, medical records, availability of drinking water and children's regard for diversity. Staff now ensure children use varied equipment to meet their physical needs when playing outdoors. The written record of medication given to children is signed by parents to ensure consistency of their care. Fresh drinking water is available to children at all times so they do not become thirsty. Children now benefit from an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote anti-discriminatory practice regarding disability and this helps them to value other people.

The previous nursery education inspection required the group to improve children's participation and concentration, develop children's use of writing for a purpose, extend planning in physical and creative development and develop the partnership with parents. Staff now actively promote children's participation and concentration, particularly in group activities, to develop their speaking skills. Staff skilfully support children to extend their use of writing as a means of recording, for example, their names. Staff have further extended planning of indoor and outdoor activities to regularly provide small and large physical equipment and enable children to freely explore different sounds, for example, using musical instruments. There are now regular opportunities for parents to be informed about their child's achievements and progress. The implementation of these improvements has had a marked, positive impact on the children's learning.

## 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 the 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):

- make sure that items of first aid comply with Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations and that parents sign the record of children's accidents
- ensure there are effective procedures for checking the on-going suitability of staff to work with children, and that all records relating to day care activities are readily accessible on the premises and available for inspection at all times.

### 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)