

# The Playbox

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 251691  
**Inspection date** 08/12/2009  
**Inspector** Hazel Meadows

**Setting address** St Johns Church Community Centre, York Road, Sudbury,  
Suffolk, CO10 1ND

**Telephone number** 01787 373 185

**Email**

**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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## Description of the setting

The Playbox pre-school opened in 1995 and is managed by a voluntary committee. It operates from a hall in St. John's Methodist Church Community Centre in Sudbury, Suffolk. The building has level access to an entrance lobby with a ramp to the main hall. There are accessible toilets adjacent to the main playroom. A secure, purpose-built outside play area is available.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens four days a week during school term times. Session times are from 9.15am to 11.45am on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 12.30pm to 3.00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The group is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and there are currently 42 children on roll. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The group employs four staff who all work at each session. More than half of the staff are qualified to NVQ Level 3. One member of staff is working towards Early Years Professional Status. The Playbox pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA). It is registered to accept government funding for three- and four-year-olds and receives support from the Suffolk County Council Early Years Support Team.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely happy and settled and enjoy a superb variety of play and learning experiences at this welcoming, stimulating pre-school. A creative and enthusiastic staff team work harmoniously to care for the children, support their play and enhance their learning. Very positive and trusting partnerships are developed with parents and carers, ensuring children receive consistent support regarding their care, development and learning. Comprehensive documentation and robust procedures are in place to promote children's welfare. Inclusive practice is actively promoted and each child's individuality is embraced and valued. Staff have established an excellent, clear method of effectively monitoring and promoting children's individual progress through the EYFS. Rigorous, ongoing self-evaluation ensures exemplary high quality in all areas and promotes continuous development.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- enhance and extend the development and use of the outdoor area, as a vibrant and stimulating extension to children's play and learning

environment.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Staff are very attentive to the children and vigilant regarding their safety. Comprehensive written risk assessments are undertaken for the premises, the equipment and on outings, to minimise risks to children. There are effective procedures for emergency evacuation in place, which is regularly practised. All staff have a secure awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues and are clear of their responsibilities to protect children. Robust procedures are in place to ensure staff's suitability to work with children and all staff have attended safeguarding children training. The group has a thorough written policy, plus local safeguarding contact details to refer to, and the designated safeguarding officer has attended additional training to ensure any concerns are dealt with effectively. Staff are experienced and all required training is up to date. Staff development is actively encouraged and annual appraisals are completed. Regular staff meetings enable all staff to be involved in the group's development, although reflective self-evaluation is ongoing, which very effectively promotes the group's continuous improvement.

The group promotes excellent inclusive practice, with a positive attitude and approach towards diversity. Staff pro-actively support and embrace children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or children for whom English is an additional language. Their excellent knowledge of child development and of the individual children enables them to identify early any additional needs a child may have. They work very closely with parents, through the competent Special Educational Needs Coordinator, liaising with other childcare or health professionals if required, to ensure each child receives appropriate support at an early stage. Their positive approach is further reflected in the resources and activities available. Comprehensive details are obtained about each child to support their welfare and signed, written consents are in place to ensure children are cared for according to their parents wishes. All records are securely kept and accurately maintained. Written policies are clear and comprehensive and are readily available for parents.

Staff establish very trusting partnerships with parents which is conducive to children's welfare and continuity of care. Parents are encouraged to share valuable information about their child's likes, dislikes and family, plus starting points in their learning, in an 'All About Me' booklet. This helps each child's key person to effectively support them and establishes a foundation for their future learning. Comments received from parents during the inspection are extremely positive. They find staff friendly and approachable and state they receive regular feedback about their child from their key person. Parent evenings offer opportunity for parents and carers to see videos of the pre-school in action and their children at play. They can also talk at depth with their child's key worker and review their child's development records, although parents are welcome to see or contribute to these at any time. Parents are kept very well informed, through frequent discussions with the staff, attractive notice boards, newsletters and letters. Parents become actively involved in the playgroup life as they take on roles within the

management committee and are also welcome to help on the session rota. The pre-school is establishing links with the local schools that children are due to attend, to promote a smooth transition for the children into nursery or full-time school. The group receives support, if required, from the local authority advisory teacher and other professionals who support children with additional needs.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

The staff work tirelessly to transform an empty church hall into a vibrant, welcoming and engaging play and learning environment for young children. The regular layout, which works well, gives children a sense of security and order and they know just where to find particular items. The exceptional range of activities, are changed at each session to offer children an abundant variety of activities to challenge and interest them. This encourages children to be inquisitive learners and offers a fresh range of activities for children to explore, which greatly benefits children who attend both the morning and afternoon sessions. Children obviously enjoy their play and make significant progress in their learning and development. They happily work independently and use initiative and own ideas, for example, helping themselves to craft materials to create their own models or pictures. Staff play alongside the children to support their play and learning but are skilled to know when to let children discover and try for themselves. Children play purposefully and are fully engaged in their play, concentrating for considerable periods at one activity. The calm and relaxed atmosphere is conducive to children's concentration and they settle well and feel safe and at ease in the setting. Children's behaviour is excellent as they are clear of the smooth flowing routine and understand the reasonable boundaries. They are learning to treat one another with consideration and respect through the positive example of the staff and clear explanations. At whole group times the children are very attentive to adults and one another and several are confident to share their news or sing in front of the group.

Staff introduce new ideas and experiences for children but are very flexible to accommodate children's ideas and to follow their own thoughts and ideas, offering a superb balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Themes are open and progressive, enabling children to see connections and broaden their understanding and experiences. For example, an initial activity of cutting out pictures of different shoes mushroomed into the comparison of and discussions about different footwear, the creation a shoe shop and a parent coming into the pre-school to do a tap-dancing demonstration. Everyday opportunities are utilised well to develop children's numeracy and problem solving skills. Children competently count and make comparisons of the number of adults and children present and several are able to count to ten and beyond. Children are aware that a person would be far too big to fit in the Christmas manger and swiftly calculate whether there are enough chairs for the number of children wishing to play a game. They competently operate the tape recorder to play audio stories and skilfully take photographs of the other children using a digital camera.

Children's love of books is excellently fostered. They learn how to handle books

and are keen to explore them for pleasure. Children have many opportunities for mark-making and to write for a purpose, for example, water painting and chalking outside and writing their names on their pictures. They clearly recognise that text has meaning as they find their name at snack time and know that the words on the day board relate to different activities. A literacy area displays children's pictures with their comments recorded on them. Children are offered an abundant variety of creative experiences such as role play, music and craft activities. Examples of their artwork are displayed around the pre-school, helping them feel valued. They delight in exploring a broad variety of media and textures such as water, play dough and natural materials such as pine cones. They make discoveries using all their senses, for example, smelling a selection of items such as pot pourri, a marmite container and perfume bottle. They learn more about the natural world as they go on outings to local woods and play areas, and the new outdoor area enables them to hunt for mini-beasts in the log pile, to dig and to plant flowers and tomatoes. Although the outdoor area is relatively small, the staff are exploring different ways of utilising its potential and recognise that this is an area for ongoing development.

Children are learning excellent hygiene practice through regular routines and explanations from staff. They wash their hands, some with support, after using the toilet and use hand gel prior to eating their snack. Children's independence is well promoted through the rolling snack as they select their cup, competently pour their own drinks of milk or water and cut up pieces of fruit. Healthy snacks, such as fruit, vegetables and pancakes are offered, promoting children's understanding of healthy eating. Snack time is a sociable and relaxed event with the children enjoying conversation with one another and a member of staff sitting with them. Water is always available, ensuring the children are well hydrated. Children have daily opportunities for fresh air and exercise, promoting a healthy lifestyle. They learn their capabilities and limitations and how to assess risks as they become increasingly confident on the climbing frame. Children learn to keep themselves safe through discussions, stories and reminders from the staff and outings are also used as opportunities to help children understand about road safety and to stay with known adults.

## Annex A: record of inspection judgements

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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