

The Old School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Jane Davenport

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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 Old School Playgroup is a long-established, privately run playgroup which was re-registered in 2009 under new ownership. It operates from two adjoining rooms and a hall in the Harold Wood Neighbourhood Community Centre, which is situated in a residential area of Harold Wood in the London borough of Havering. The playgroup is open each weekday from 9.15am to 11.45am during school term time only. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area. The group supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group is registered to provide care for a maximum of 40 children from two years to the end of the early years age group and there are currently 43 children on roll. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register. The playgroup employs 11 staff, including the manager, eight of whom hold level three early years qualifications and three of whom are working towards a level two early years qualification. The playgroup works in partnership with a team of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) workers who support early years settings in the borough.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are safe and well cared for by a team of staff who are suitable and well qualified. Children enjoy their play and make good progress in their learning and development as activities are meaningful and exciting and based on their interests. A strong partnership with parents and others involved with the children's learning is significant in keeping the staff informed of their needs. There is a good selection of toys and resources for children to choose from which has an impact on their learning through play. There is a firm commitment by the manager and staff to regularly improve their practice through self-evaluation and in using a local authority scheme as well as attending ongoing training.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- follow up the steps taken to ensure that additional members of staff have a current paediatric first aid certificate in place
- further develop use of the outdoor area to ensure children have opportunities to play in the fresh air on a more regular basis
- develop the current system of planning and assessments to ensure that the learning intentions and next steps for individual children's learning are clearly identified

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are well protected from harm and neglect. All staff are clear about the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and know the correct procedures to follow should they have a concern about any of the children in their care. This is supported by well written policies that are shared with parents from the outset. Secure risk assessments are in place to ensure children are safe in the playgroup, in the outdoor area and on outings. Management follow effective recruitment and vetting procedures so adults who work with the children are suitable to do so. Although the manager is the only member of staff at present who holds a current paediatric first aid certificate, one other staff member has a basic first aid qualification and strenuous efforts have been made to arrange for other staff to update their training in this area. Accidents are appropriately dealt with and recorded and written consent for emergency medical treatment is in place.

The playgroup offers a bright and secure environment. Indoors, it is well resourced with a good range of age appropriate toys and activities. Children are able to freely choose what they want to play with and resources, such as role play equipment, books, puzzles and small world play, provide positive images of cultural diversity and disability, so children learn to respect and celebrate differences. The outside area is less inviting and, although it can be used in all weathers, the layout of the play spaces means that children cannot use them freely or without high levels of staff supervision. Staff are deployed effectively during sessions in order to provide maximum support for the children; they are clear of their roles and work very flexibly and cohesively together.

The manager is a clear and committed role model who leads the team effectively. Consequently, all staff are motivated, enthusiastic and driven to maintain continuous improvement, which benefits the children. There are regular staff meetings, and practitioners feel confident in openly offering their ideas and suggestions. The whole of the staff team is involved in the self-evaluation process and the manager has also welcomed the input given by the local authority QTS workers. This has helped her to identify areas of the provision that would benefit from improvement or development, for example, developing the planning to encourage staff to take more ownership.

Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents all receive a welcome pack when their child first starts to attend, which contains policies, procedures and other useful information. They are regularly asked for their opinions of the provision and are provided with parent questionnaires to facilitate this. Parents state that their children love coming to the playgroup, the staff are very caring, a good range of activities is provided and parents are satisfied that they are kept very well informed regarding their children's progress. Staff have formed links with other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in order to compare progress, share observations and provide continuity of care for children.

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

Children are happy, settled and secure as they play and learn in a friendly and welcoming environment where they are valued as individuals. Children quickly find their names to self-register, and then enthusiastically choose a favourite activity. Staff sensitively support those who are initially less sure of parting from their parents. Children are generally confident and demonstrate high levels of self-esteem. They make very good relationships with staff and each other. They develop a strong sense of belonging to a community as they see photos of themselves displayed and confidently take part in small group discussions about their home and family life. Children generally behave very well because they know what is expected of them through familiar routines and clear explanations. They are encouraged to display good manners and help pack away equipment, which helps them to make a positive contribution and develop good skills for the future. Children receive regular praise and encouragement for effort and achievement, which helps boost their self-confidence.

Children who have English as an additional language are supported well, for example, through sensitive liaison with parents and the use of flash cards and MAKATON signing. A varied range of equipment and resources in the role play area stimulates children's imagination very well and they learn about the world around them as they use cameras, telephones, walkie-talkies and magnifying glasses. Children learn to respect and celebrate diversity when they participate in activities featuring Eid, Diwali, Christmas and Chinese New Year. At circle time they discuss the weather and are encouraged to introduce the person sitting next to them and to acknowledge similarities and differences, for example, who has brown hair and who has yellow hair. This is an effective way of promoting their personal, social and emotional development.

The good health and well-being of the children is fostered well. Encouraging their independence is given high priority and they know when they need to wash their hands and the reasons for this. They use tissues independently to wipe their noses and dispose of them hygienically in the bin provided. Children are actively involved in preparing their own snacks and helping themselves to drinks. A fruit monitor assists a staff member in cutting up the apples, pears, bananas and tangerines for morning snack and many other children are involved in making the toast for breakfast. Numerous learning opportunities are utilised at this activity. For example, the children ponder on how long the toast will take and count to ten and beyond until it pops out of the toaster. They also note the effect that applying heat to the bread has and that, whereas the bread goes in white and cold, it comes out brown and hot.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy is well supported during activities that promote awareness of shapes, sizes and numbers. For example, children recognise with ease shapes such as triangles, squares and rectangles and extend this by fitting the flat shapes together to make a house, a rocket and a large diamond shape. At the toast making activity they undertake simple addition and subtraction problems, calculating that if three children are waiting for their toast and there are

three slices, they need one more slice so that there is one each. Children's skills with communication, language and literacy are also consistently explored. They recognise their names on the envelopes as they sort the Christmas post, participate in various mark making activities and respond thoughtfully to the open-ended questions the staff ask them.

Children are making good progress in their learning and development. Staff implement the EYFS framework effectively, making observations and assessment of children's progress. However, the current system is not altogether reader friendly as it requires substantial cross referencing and does not clearly state learning intentions or how next steps in children's learning will be achieved.

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

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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