

# St John's Green Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 402071  
**Inspection date** 15/12/2009  
**Inspector** Robert Greatrex

**Setting address** St Johns Green Primary School, St Johns Green,  
Colchester, Essex, CO2 7HE

**Telephone number** 01206500047

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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

St John's Green Playgroup opened in 1981 and is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 18 children from two to five years of age. All of the 30 children currently on roll receive funding for nursery education. It is run by a committee of parents and operates from a room within St John's Green Primary School, in Colchester. The pre-school can support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. The pre-school opens from 8.45am until 11.45am five days a week during school term times. The accommodation is suitable to cater for children and adults with disabilities. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Four staff work with the children. Two of these staff have early years qualifications, and two are about to begin appropriate training. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Personal and social development is exceptional so children learn important skills that thoroughly prepare them for school. Inclusion is very good because each child's needs are met fully and all enjoy productive learning and positive experiences. Under the manager's outstanding leadership and the committee's efficient management, the strong staff team work effectively to promote children's welfare and development to a very high level. Self-evaluation is good so the pre-school has good capacity to improve further.

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

To fully meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- inform Ofsted of changes to committee members (Suitable People) 12/01/2010

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

- provide more regular opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning and development, including a clearer understanding of how well their children are progressing over time in the different areas of learning

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

Care for the children is seen as paramount at St John's Green Playgroup. As one

parent stated, 'As soon as I entered for the first time I felt the warmth staff have for children and parents'. Parents comment that staff know their children very well, and so have confidence in how well they are looked after.

All staff enjoy positive relationships with all children but the key worker scheme is particularly effective in forging a bond between children and a specific adult. Parents, too, state that they gain from having a point of contact and say that their children 'talk of their key person like one of the family'.

The pre-school runs smoothly because everyone understands the clear policies and thorough and comprehensive procedures. Safeguarding is outstanding because it is a high priority and all staff are fully checked. The committee value staff training and intend giving it a higher profile and funding so staff can extend their skills further. The manager has a thorough and accurate understanding of the pre-school's strengths and areas for development which she uses effectively. Her extensive experience and expertise is used superbly to guide the work of the pre-school. However, although staff have input into the evaluation to determine future plans, that of the committee and parents is less. The effectiveness of evaluation overall is therefore good. Resources are used well.

Some assessment systems, such as the formal observations, give useful next steps in children's development so what they do next is closely matched to their recent achievements. Building on this, observations form the basis of planning, and this is seen as useful. When their children move to school, parents receive comprehensive summaries listing detailed achievements in all areas of learning. Feedback to parents otherwise is far more informal. Although parents spoken to felt the daily contact with their children's key person was helpful, they did not have a clear idea of how well their children are progressing over time and in the different areas of learning. Nor do they have regular opportunities to contribute to a fuller picture of the whole child's development.

The effectiveness with which equality and diversity are promoted is good because the needs of the children are met effectively within an ethos where staff make the most of opportunities to help children understand our society. Links with other agencies are good so children benefit. Links with the school that shares the site are superb. Staff work closely together so that children's needs are known and fully understood; transfer is consequently smooth. Staff feel local authority support has helped improve planning, which includes joint visits and shared visitors so children work closely together. Pre-school children regularly visit their next classroom so that transfer is seen as a natural progression. Older school pupils visit the pre-school and share favourite stories with the children. Real friendships are created, raising the self-esteem of both groups. Links with other schools are less extensive but good overall.

Communication with parents is good. Information when children begin is comprehensive so parents have a clear understanding. One parent visiting with her child explained how the open-door policy gives each child all the time needed to experience the pre-school prior to joining, and parents can feel fully involved in this important step. Parents are given good day-to-day information about their

children's progress but they are less involved in supporting learning and development over time because they are less informed.

Indoor accommodation is satisfactory. While one or two important recent improvements, such as a sink, benefit the pre-school, and staff do all they can to overcome difficulties, the approach was best summed up by a parent as 'make-do-and-mend'. Clear, sensible strategies are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children. This is particularly so with toileting, which is a journey for all children, requiring constant staff supervision. This is unfortunate, particularly given children's otherwise very high levels of personal development and independence. Furthermore, while the toilet is accessible to children and parents with disabilities, it involves a tortuous route. While staff do what they can to meet the last inspection recommendation to make low-level storage more inviting to children, too little space continues to restrict access.

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

Children are outgoing and friendly because they have confidence in the support and encouragement of staff to keep them safe at all times. Most settle very quickly at the start of the day and are immediately engrossed in an activity that absorbs them. On the rare occasion this does not happen, good staffing levels enables these children to be given time with an adult so they settle. The bond with the key person is particularly effective because it is strong.

Children are curious and interested in finding out about the world around them because staff help to instil a thirst for knowledge. They play imaginatively, and persevere with interesting tasks. They are interested in learning because they are challenged to extend themselves. They are very responsive to staff questions which extend their development. The experienced staff know when to step in and help children and when to step back and let them explore and experience for themselves. Younger children learn much from their elders. The varied learning activities provide very good opportunities, such as the 'book bags' that stimulate children's talk. All children, including the more able, receive phonic teaching and encouragement to talk more, fully meeting a recommendation of the last inspection. Routines are well taught so children know what to do and how to do it independently. The effects of the limited space are largely negated because staff are very well organised and children very co-operative, for example they willingly help to tidy up.

Children's skills for the future area outstanding. They learn to think for themselves and so become active and independent, using their own initiative very successfully. They become very inquisitive because the activities are very relevant to their everyday lives. For example, they visit the library and snack time is used to develop skills for their future lives; they check and write lists of what they need, visit shops, select and pay for purchases. Back in the pre-school, they help prepare and clear away. Children are beginning to discuss what they eat, and why. Parents say that children regularly try new and different foods. Snack time is a very

pleasant experience that children enjoy greatly. The snack table is used previously for an activity, so staff clean it thoroughly and teach children about hygiene. One parent said that her child regularly reminded the rest of the family to wash their hands before eating. The improvement recommended at the last inspection, to offer water as an extra drink, has been implemented.

Children generally strive to meet staff's high expectations of their behaviour so sessions are very positive for all. Staff are alert and quick to respond to rare inappropriate behaviour, quietly and calmly explaining what children should do and firmly insisting they do the right thing now. Children usually play very well together, particularly with close friends. Given the relatively small room, they contribute positively to the calm and orderly atmosphere. Staff quite rightly recognise indoor space is limited so they utilise the outside well to offer a full range of activities.

Activities are as interesting outside as they are in, because the outside area offers a great variety of interesting opportunities and staff offer an excellent range of activities that enthral children. Whether using the bicycles robustly, or enjoying a quiet game in the 'rainbow house', children are interested and engaged. They are enthusiastic to feed the birds in the wonderful garden offering numerous stimulating experiences, and fascinated by the ponds one frozen, one not. They thoughtfully answer staff's questions as to why this might be and show good ability to apply what they already know sensibly.

## 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>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### 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	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	1
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

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	1
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	1

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