

Cygnets Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Anne Gunston
Setting address	Village Hall, High Street, Barton Stacey, Winchester, Hampshire, SO21 3RU
Telephone number	07902 632241
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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

Cygnets Playgroup registered in 1993. It operates from the village hall in Barton Stacey, near Winchester. Children walk to the nearby recreation ground for outside play. The playgroup serves the children of the village and the surrounding area. It is a community group and is managed by a committee of volunteers. It is registered on the Early Years Register to care for 18 children in the early years age range; it is the group's practice to accept children once they reach two years and nine months. There are currently 24 children in this age range on roll. The playgroup supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The playgroup is open during term time, children may attend from 9am until 12pm Monday to Friday; on Wednesdays and Thursdays children may stay for a lunch club until 12.55 pm. There are three members of staff who hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The playgroup is an inclusive setting, which welcomes all children and families. The staff team work very closely with parents and have effective relationships with other settings that children attend. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a secure understanding of their individual needs. The committee and staff share collective responsibility for monitoring all aspects of playgroup operation; they act decisively to bring about improvements for the benefit of the children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- introduce labelling of designated learning areas in the playgroup to encourage children to make increased and appropriate use of each, with particular reference to the book and writing areas.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The playgroup has many effective systems in place that safeguard children. Staff complete thorough checks of the premises as they set up each day, which include creating a designated walkway to the park area adjacent to the group. The staff make sure that fire exits are always clear and check smoke alarms daily. Children take part in regular fire drills and staff keep records to monitor that each child gets the support they need to evacuate the premises quickly. The staff team realise the importance of risk assessment and use the written record well to promote every child's welfare. They review their records and adapt their practice to take account of changes, such as children attending who may have an allergic reaction to some

foods. There are good recruitment procedures in place, which ensure that all adults who work with children are vetted and suitable. New staff or students on placement receive induction into the playgroup's policies and operating practice. There is an appraisal system and staff receive ongoing support from the supervisor and committee members; they attend training willingly and show a great deal of commitment to the children as individuals and the playgroup as a whole. The staff team are well qualified; all have valid first aid qualifications and have attended training related to child protection issues. The playgroup supervisor takes overall responsibility for this and is completely aware of the procedures to follow should any staff member have concerns about a child in their care.

The playgroup committee and staff have ambitious plans and are committed to continual improvement. All recommendations made at the last inspection have been dealt with in full. For example, the staff make broad flexible plans for activities and adapt these to incorporate children's interests. They identify possible lines of development for each child, so all are able to learn at a pace and in a manner which suits them as individuals. Staff make sure that activities are inclusive and can be enjoyed by all children. They adapt and provide children with levels of support which are consistently appropriate, taking account of the child's age, gender or special educational needs. Morale amongst the staff team is high because they are able to influence how the playgroup operates. Staff work together on practical development plans, which relate to increasing the range of resources, activities and level of support they are able to offer children. The committee support the staff in implementing these plans; they value the dedication and skills of the staff team. In the long term, the provision of an enclosed area adjoining the hall will provide children with the opportunity to play safely outdoors at a time of their choosing. In the short term, the staff plan to make increased use of resources such as beanbags, cones or the parachute game and hoops to offer children greater opportunities for exercise and fun.

The staff team make the environment as welcoming as possible for children and display their work, colourful posters and resources at low level. They ensure that a good selection of activities are ready in time for children's arrival. Resources in areas such as the book corner, role play area and writing materials are kept in the same place enabling children to be familiar with their learning environment. However, there is no labelling of these resources to direct children to specific areas. Children sometimes fail to take the opportunity of writing their name on a piece of work and do not always show care or appreciation of the books. Children do gain full benefit from daily use of the park adjacent to the playgroup. This wonderful learning environment contains a challenging range of equipment to promote energetic, physical activity. There is plenty of open space to run and many opportunities for children to explore the natural world.

A strong partnership exists between playgroup staff, children's parents and other settings which children attend. Staff share records and welcome key workers allocated to the children in to observe their setting, which ensures children receive continuity of care and learning. Parents of children who attend the playgroup are very involved in decision making because they are able to become committee members. Changes are made at the playgroup because of requests from parents, such as the introduction of lunch sessions to prepare children for the transition to

school. The playgroup committee and staff regularly ask parents' opinions by way of questionnaires and incorporate these if they are the majority view. Parents receive a colourful, comprehensive prospectus on enquiry about a place for their child. This document includes information on the Early Years Foundation Stage, so parents become aware of how activities contribute towards children's learning. The playgroup policies are always available to parents on request; there are systems in place to monitor that the policies are relevant and comply with current legislation. The staff send out regular newsletters and, if a policy has changed, they ask parents to read this and sign to say they have noted the changes. This is an excellent method of ensuring parents are fully aware of the playgroup's operating procedures. Parents speak highly of the playgroup staff; they comment that they are always welcoming and sensitive to children's needs. The flexible settling-in procedures mean that children are secure and keen to attend. Parents value the detail contained in their child's assessment records, which they can take home twice during each term. There are always opportunities to speak to staff on a daily basis; parents are welcomed into the playgroup each morning. They can also book an appointment to meet with the supervisor or their child's key worker if necessary. This is a real community playgroup where parents take part in fund-raising events throughout the year. The additional monies raised are used well by the committee and staff in provision of additional resources, such as the laptop and some items of outdoor play equipment.

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

Children enjoy a wide variety of activities in the playgroup, they settle down to investigate the resources or find friends immediately on arrival. Children find their names and self-register. During the group time at the beginning of the morning, children listen attentively to staff and each other. Staff are skilled in making sure all children are included, for example, by pointing out where dressing up clothes are for those who have not come in their favourite outfit that day. The staff team interact very well with the children, they make suggestions to guide them towards activities but do not insist or take the lead inappropriately. They always allow children to interpret an activity and make decisions about how they wish it to progress. For example, children decide to collect stones as 'treasure' while outdoors; staff make this a worthwhile experience by asking children to think how many there are and they should only take two at a time. They find separate bags for each child's treasure, showing how much they value children's contributions. Children are using numbers confidently because staff use any opportunity to introduce this, such as when counting the legs of the spiders they make in arts and crafts activities. Children have a great deal of fun but staff expect them to take responsibility for the resources and be as independent as possible in caring for themselves. Children dress themselves in coats, hats and boots ready for outdoors. The staff support younger children and give one-to-one attention to new children who may be unfamiliar with the routine. More accomplished children, who dress quickly, make good use of their time by chalking around the sun's shadow on the floor, noting the time. On return from outdoors they remember to relocate the shadow and rub out the original markings. Staff provide many such stimulating activities throughout the session, which prompt children to be inquisitive and

investigate anything they see. Children are particularly proud to show visitors the snails hibernating in a crack of a tree trunk, recalling when they first saw them. They recognise the everyday changes that happen in the wider world, such as ice disappearing from the puddles and recall that it was there yesterday.

Children are very secure and comfortable in the care of playgroup staff who give practical guidance on how they should think about safety as they play. Staff remind children of the need to walk, not run. Children really understand the need for caution when they go to the park, they know they have to stop and listen for cars. Children often turn to staff and ask 'can you help me keep safe' when they need a hand to hold while crossing the balance beam or attempting the rope swing. They show a sense of trust in the staff team, who introduce visitors to the group, which is reassuring for the children. Children are self-confident individuals who make the most of their time at playgroup. Children's daily routine includes physical activity at the park or within the indoor environment. They enjoy very healthy snacks of crackers, cucumber and cheese and a selection of fruit; they can help themselves to drinks of milk and staff leave a water jug out for children throughout the session. Children understand the need for good hygiene practice and know to wash hands, generally without prompting from staff.

Children are behaving very well and show excellent levels of thought and care for others. Children often hug each other and turn to ask another child 'can you help me do this please'. Staff create a calm environment where they reason and explain their expectations to children. They have introduced practical ways for children to take turns; for example, children find their name label and use this to book their time on the laptop. They can identify who is next and willingly move over to free up the chair. Children help to pack away toys and lift cumbersome items together, staff do not need to issue instruction but put on a piece of music; children are very familiar with this routine. All children are very well prepared for the future. The playgroup staff consistently expect children to think through situations and work out problems for themselves. Children are confident communicators who show initiative and take the lead with friends or in their interaction with adults. Children have a sense of belonging to their community and really appreciate the rural natural environment they live in. Staff invite visitors, such as police and fire officers, so children learn to value how important these are as 'people who help'. Children appreciate that information technology is part of their world and show very good skills in use of computer equipment. Staff also introduce children to a wide range of other cultures and religions. Polish and Scottish staff within the team share their experiences; children take part in food tasting activities related to other countries. They use a good range of resources, such as the book *Handa's Surprise*, to wonder about the weather, foods and traditions of people in other parts of the world.

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	1
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	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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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