

Hollybush Under Fives Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Martyn Richards

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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

Hollybush Under Fives Playgroup opened in October 1992. It is run by a management committee, and operates from a double mobile classroom in the grounds of Hollybush Primary School in Hertford. It also has access to an outdoor play area. It serves the local community. A maximum of 24 children in the early years age group may attend at any one time and none may be under the age of two. The playgroup opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 9.00am to 12.00pm and from 12.00pm to 3.00pm from Monday to Friday. Some children have lunch at the start of the afternoon session. There are currently 21 children on roll, most of them below the age of four. Seven were present on the morning of the inspection. The playgroup receives funding for early education in respect of some children. Children may attend for a variety of sessions during the week. The playgroup supports children who speak English as an additional language and welcomes children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for whom it has suitable access and resources. It has close links with its host primary school, to which most of its children transfer. The five members of staff working with the children all have early years qualifications at least to NVQ Level Three. The playgroup is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance. It is on the Early Years Register.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

This is because the playgroup has a welcoming and inclusive ethos, in which all children feel secure and valued. It works very closely with parents in identifying the individual needs of its children and providing enjoyable learning opportunities to meet them. Staff are keen to make the playgroup even better and they implement the advice and support they receive through the local authority well. They have a good capacity to continue to improve the playgroup in the future.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure that records are kept on site and available for inspection (organisation) 01/04/2010

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

- make the pre-school's complaints procedure more precise concerning the action to be taken in the event of a complaint against the manager or a member of staff
- provide a better range of manipulative apparatus and toys to enhance the learning of the youngest children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff rightly give the highest priority to making sure the children are safe. Careful checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults working in the playgroup, or applying for posts there. The rooms and the outdoor area are secure against unwelcome visitors, or children slipping away unseen. There are regular fire drills and evacuation plans are prominently displayed. Emergency exits are clearly marked. Adults and parents coming into the playgroup are signed both in and out and there are rigorous procedures for circumstances in which a child might not be collected at the right time or might be met by an unauthorised person. Staff carry out very thorough daily and weekly checks of the site and equipment to ensure there is no risk to the children. They are all trained in child protection and know what actions to take if they are concerned about possible maltreatment.

The playgroup staff are quick to identify the individual needs of each new entrant and to adjust their activity programmes to enable them all to progress to their best ability. Where children have learning difficulties or disabilities, staff liaise well with other agencies to ensure provision is consistent from place to place. Books and toys give a positive image of diversity and equality.

Together with support and advice from the local authority, staff are conducting a rigorous self evaluation of the playgroup, to highlight its strengths and areas where it could be improved. It has become evident that the introduction of more flexible opening hours has resulted in difficulties in bringing all staff together for shared discussion and planning and strategies are being developed to correct this. Staff have implemented the recommendations of their last inspection well and they regularly undertake additional training to enhance their skills.

Parents are very well informed about the playgroup and the Key Person programme is a particular strength. This is well developed and makes it easy for parents to meet their child's Key Person so that they can raise any concerns they may have, or to obtain a detailed picture of their child's progress. The playgroup's complaints policy is available for the public to use if they wish, but the procedures are not as clear as they should be about the action to be taken in the event of a complaint against a member of staff. While documentation and records are thorough and reliable, the requirement that copies be kept on site and available for inspection is not fully met.

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

Children arrive in the morning and settle quickly and calmly to the activities provided for them. An enjoyable session follows. The ratio of staff to children is good, and this means the children all receive as much attention as they need while playing, chatting or taking coats off. In small groups they gather to enjoy a story, tucked away comfortably in a den underneath a curtain with a staff member. They

listen attentively and some comment on the story. Others see the pretend pizzas stored nearby, offer them to each other and confidently provide a visitor with one. Another group of children gathers at the computer and show, at a very early age, considerable manual dexterity in using the mouse to highlight moving coloured images on the screen and are able to name the colours. Some others choose to play with coloured toy dough, cutting out shapes with pastry cutters. Outside, they play by running, jumping and hopping, or riding at speed on miniature tricycles. The youngest of the children particularly like exploring large indoor climbing and tunnelling apparatus, surprising adults as they pop out unexpectedly. While there is sufficient large and small apparatus for the older children, there is a shortage of medium sized manipulative play materials for the two years olds.

Throughout the day, children are calmly behaved, pleasant in manner and at ease with staff. They feel safe and at home in the playgroup. They cheerfully help to tidy up and their friendliness makes a positive contribution to the community. They wash their hands carefully before enjoying their nutritious snacks and after outdoor play if they have become dirty.

Many of the children can identify different kinds of weather, know the days of the week, announce that bees make honey out of flowers and suggest why model boats sink on water. All these activities introduce new vocabulary, as well as new challenges to children's thinking. They can count small numbers, place objects in order from smallest to largest and recognise their names. They show in painting, printing and collages that they are developing hand control and awareness of line and space. They achieve well across all areas of early learning.

All of this is carefully planned and clearly linked to the learning required for children of this age. Staff keep perceptive notes of how each child responds to the opportunities provided. This enables them to plan the next steps in the children's learning and to ensure they achieve as well as they can. These observations, assembled over time, give a good picture of each child's progress to share with parents and with the child's next school and demonstrate the acquisition of personal and academic skills which will be valuable to the children in their future education.

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	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	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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