

The Hall School Baby Unit

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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 Hall School Baby Unit is a privately run setting which was registered with Ofsted in 2009. It operates within the premises of Hall School, which is an independent school in Northwood in the London Borough of Hillingdon. Access to the premises is via steps and the Baby Unit is located on the first floor. There is a base room for babies under two and another play room for two to three-year-olds. There is access to outdoor play facilities. The setting opens each weekday from 8.00am to 6.00pm during term time only and children may attend full or part-time sessions. Children move on to the nursery class within The Hall School which is not included in this registration.

The provision is registered on the Early Years Register to care for a maximum of 14 children at any one time. There are currently 12 children on roll aged from birth to under three years. The unit supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are three members of staff working directly with the children, all of which hold early years qualifications to at least level 2. One member of staff is working towards a further qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Strong partnerships with parents and within the wider school community help children to settle easily and build secure relationships. All children make good progress in their learning and development in relation to their starting points because staff have a well developed knowledge of each child's needs and generally plan experiences for children that take account of these. Children's welfare is promoted through effective policies and procedures overall. Practice is monitored through self-evaluation which accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses of the provision, although systems and records currently in use are not consistently reliable in showing how continuous improvement is maintained.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- establish more reliable self-evaluation systems as a means of monitoring practice and planning further areas for development
- review planning, observation and assessment systems to ensure planned learning and development experiences are tailored to meet children's individual needs and observational assessments of children are evaluative, used to identify the next steps in development and records are clearly dated.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safe recruitment, vetting and induction practices ensure children are cared for by persons who are suitable, experienced and qualified. A commitment to ongoing continuing professional development allows staff to develop further skills and knowledge and means staff are motivated and confident in their roles.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective in protecting and keeping children safe. Staff at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to following child protection procedures and would take appropriate action in the event of any concerns about a child's welfare. Procedures are reviewed and knowledge refreshed through staff updating their training in safeguarding to ensure current guidance is followed. The environment is risk assessed and appropriately maintained to allow children to become safety conscious without being fearful, such as when toddlers learn to use the stairs and garden apparatus safely. Effective steps are taken to promote children's good health and well-being. Staff are trained in first aid and follow clear health procedures and appropriate record-keeping.

The Headteacher of the school oversees the Baby Unit and together with the manager takes responsibility for monitoring practice. There are high expectations for staff and for children's achievements. Regular observations of practice lead to accurate assessments of what is done particularly well, such as the quality of interaction provided by staff, and what could improve, such as the organisation of the learning environment. In addition, staff appraisal systems are used to set individual targets and identify training needs. However, current self-evaluation systems do not provide clear or consistent evidence of how improvement plans are monitored, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of any improvements on outcomes for children.

Equality and diversity is promoted well. Staff take time and trouble to get to know children and their families. They make sure they understand about each child's family, their cultural or language needs as well as their daily routines. Family boards display photographs of each child's family members that allow children to identify with their own family and value diversity and difference amongst others. Key workers work closely with parents when settling new babies and establish valuable channels of communication for sharing information. They use a daily diary to exchange information which keeps parents up-to-date and involved with their children's welfare, learning and development. Parents report that they are very pleased with this approach. Effective communication and positive partnerships between the Baby Unit and school staff enable children to make a very smooth transition to the nursery class. Children have frequent opportunities to get to know the nursery children and staff in the school because outdoor play sessions and meal times are shared. This means children's progression to school is entirely natural.

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

Children settle easily and gain confidence because staff are highly attentive to their needs and effective in promoting positive attitudes to learning. Overall the environment is bright, welcoming and set out to encourage children to select resources independently. Staff understand how to support children's language, thinking, ideas and problem-solving through everyday play and exploration. They effectively set challenges when children build or do puzzles, ask questions during story sessions and stimulate imaginative thinking so that children develop enthusiasm for learning. For example, young children develop good listening and speaking skills as they thoroughly enjoy an interactive story session brought to life with puppets and props to capture their imagination. They develop early phonic awareness through singing alphabet rhymes with confidence and some babies benefit from being taught baby signing to support early communication. Children love to use their imaginations and are helped to develop their ideas by staff inviting them on a treasure hunt in the garden where they excitedly pretend to dig for treasure. Children are confident in using resources and exploring their surroundings. They have a particularly wide range of technological equipment from which to choose and enthusiastically experiment with operating programmable toys and computer programmes. Children explore a range of creative media and resources such as sand, water and paint.

Staff know the children very well and provide some spontaneous play and exploration opportunities based on children's interests and developmental needs. However, plans for some adult-led activities are often too generalised and do not show how the experience is tailored to help children of different ages and abilities learn and develop. Observation records too are not always evaluated or used to inform planning and support progress for individual learning needs. Nonetheless, children evidently do make good progress given their starting points because of the high levels of one-to-one attention they receive.

Children build strong relationships with adults and their peers alike. They respond well to praise and encouragement from staff and look thrilled at being awarded stars for 'fantastic tidying.' Babies feel settled and secure because they receive plenty of calm reassurance and comfort when needed as well as being encouraged to take part in play and routines with their older peers. The Baby Unit is very much part of the wider school so children develop a strong sense of community and belonging from the start. Children have daily physical activity sessions in the garden where they explore age-appropriate but challenging equipment and apparatus with interest. Staff carefully help them work out where to place their feet as they climb so that they develop confidence in movement and become aware of how to use equipment safely. They learn about the benefits of a good diet, regular exercise and personal hygiene practices on their bodies through planned topics and discussion during daily routines.

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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