

# Cobtree Playschool For Special Children

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 127120  
**Inspection date** 06/05/2010  
**Inspector** Mary Van De Peer

**Setting address** Cobtree Hall, Mote Park, Willington Street, Maidstone,  
Kent, ME15 8EB

**Telephone number** 01622 670464

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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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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## Description of the setting

Cobtree Playschool For Special Children is one of two provisions run by the charity 'Maidstone Mencap'. It opened in 1968 and uses two downstairs rooms for the main activities with access to an office and the kitchen, and two upstairs rooms for children to have one-to-one sessions or small group work with therapists. The premise is owned by the charity and is located in Maidstone, Kent. There is a lift to access the first floor, which is suitable for wheelchair use. There are toilet and changing facilities on the ground floor. A maximum of 20 children may attend the playschool at any one time. The setting is open on a Tuesday and a Thursday, term time only, from 10am to 2pm. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 15 children in the early years age group attending the playschool. Children come from a wide catchment area. The setting operates for children with moderate, severe and complex special needs. There are children attending at present with English as an additional language and some children use signing as their first form of communication. The playschool employs staff, comprising of qualified early years practitioners, specialist therapists and additional staff, including minibus drivers and a cook. There are volunteer adult carers providing one-to-one care for the children. The playschool receives support through the early years advisory service and the local Primary Care Trust. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Practitioners promote the unique needs of the children they care for, to ensure their welfare and learning needs are consistently and appropriately met. Children are provided with a wide range of play opportunities, which they use according to their needs. They are cared for using very safe boundaries and enjoy being with their carers and one another. The outstanding partnerships with parents, specialists and other settings are instrumental in ensuring that the children receive a high level of care and expert attention. The provision has a good capacity for maintaining ongoing improvement, which is evident in some areas of exemplary practice. The strengths and areas of priority for further development are effectively identified, promoting positive outcomes for the children.

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

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

- develop further the observation, assessment and planning processes to ensure children's progress and development can be monitored effectively
- develop further the self-evaluation processes to ensure clearer identification of the provision's strengths and areas for development, helping the continuous improvement in the outcomes for children.

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

All children are safeguarded through the effective procedures in place, and their welfare and safety is promoted extremely well. For example, all adults working with the children are appropriately vetted, including the volunteer carers and support staff. Every child attending this setting has moderate to complex special needs and they each benefit from having their own carer and key person. The management team enable all adult carers to access relevant and important background information on every child. This results in dedicated, experienced and informed personal care, meeting every child's unique and special needs. The ongoing suitability of staff is also carefully monitored. Excellent risk assessments with ongoing safety checks, minimise risks of accidental injury to children. Several of the care practitioners have attended recent safeguarding children training, and they cascade this information to all other staff. Therefore, all staff know exactly what they need to do in the event of a concern. Records and procedures are systematically kept and monitored, helping to maximise children's welfare and safety at all times. All the adults, including volunteers and support staff, work very well together. Strategies for ensuring the provision continually moves forward and improves the quality of care they provide, are embedded in daily practice.

Training updates for everyone are a clear priority and organised. Imaginative use of the available space helps maximise children's achievement and progress. Equality and diversity is clearly visible in all areas of the provision. Each child's needs are fully addressed and they are helped to reach their individual potential. Toys and resources include positive images of diversity and naturally help children learn about the differences between people in society.

There are effective systems for self-evaluation in place. These include the input of management, practitioners, outside professionals and parents. Children are also involved in this process, for example, they communicate their likes and dislikes and if they feel happy or sad. The one-to-one carers are able to take this information to management and review and change practices if appropriate. This means that the provision can continually identify the strengths of the provision and any areas for development to promote good outcomes for children.

Outstanding partnerships are in place with external agencies and professionals. For example, the setting works hard with local authority services, advisors and specialist teams to help support all the children. The provision has developed and strives to continue excellent links with several local schools. This helps to promote effective but flexible transitions for children into suitable reception classes. The whole provision engages very successfully and effectively with parents and carers. They are welcomed warmly into the setting and have built up constructive and very close relationships with their children's dedicated carers. Detailed policies and procedures are available to parents, informing them of important facts regarding the setting. A daily contact book means information on each child is continually shared with parents. They are actively involved in all aspects of their children's care, learning and development.

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

Children show that they are very happy, safe and settled within the setting. It is clear that they have formed strong and secure relationships with their carers and key persons, as the children rely on them for reassurance and support through their daily routines. There is much laughter, cuddles and warm smiles between the adults and children. The majority of carers are competent in using sign language with the children, resulting in varied communication levels, which are modified according to each child's individual needs. Children display complete trust and confidence in their carers and the environment they use. For example, children are relaxed and help themselves to the best of their ability, as carers assist them in and out of their walkers and chairs.

The good health and well-being of every child is actively encouraged. Whenever possible, children are able to benefit from the opportunity to play outside in the secure and safe outdoor area. Children also participate on short outings in the adjoining park, enjoying the sights, sounds and feel of nature and the fresh air. Healthy snacks and meals are provided throughout the session. A cook is employed to cater for each child's individual dietary needs. Fresh produce is used, including fruit, vegetables, fish, meat and cheese. Drinks of water and juice are always available. The children clearly enjoy mealtimes together and are able to eat at their own pace.

The ongoing commitment and high level of support from carers, parents and outside agencies has meant that every child has the opportunity to develop skills in all areas of learning. The setting ensures they provide a wide range of stimulating activities and resources to promote each child's very unique potential at their own pace. For the children who need one, they each have a mobility walker designed just for them. These are kept at the setting, so that they do not have to be transported between home and the group. This allows children to move around the provision as independently as they are physically able to. Every session is expertly managed by staff, who ensure it is consistently a worthwhile learning experience for all concerned. They are dedicated to encouraging and enabling children to progress and achieve.

Many activities are planned around children's abilities and interests. This helps them develop further skills they already have or learn new ones for the future, such as mark-making materials are widely promoted and children paint, write and draw, expressing themselves freely. Many of their creations are displayed which helps promote their self-esteem and confidence. Staff utilise daily routines well to encourage children's learning. For example, children have good opportunities to develop their communication skills at the 'welcome' time just after they arrive. Social skills are promoted well at snack and lunchtimes, as children sit together in small groups, interacting with carers and other children. A role play area means some children can act out scenarios familiar to them. Children show delight as they join in singing and are helped to participate in action rhymes. Experienced staff are able to engage many of the children as they give them different challenges

throughout the session. For instance, shape sorters to help children identify colours, varying sizes as well as shapes. They show real pleasure as they achieve in these activities. The adults praise and encourage the children constantly and they also display genuine pleasure, as a child manages a task they have not done before.

The sensory area is a calm place with visually stimulating and gentle light displays. Children with severe sensory and other disabilities are able to feel safe here, their carers use different methods to communicate with them. 'Tac Pac' is an activity to help communication through touch and music; objects closely linked with a specific sound or piece of music are used to touch the children where they can best feel it, for example, on their feet or their face. As a result, they are often able to communicate how they feel through their body language and facial expressions. This is such a wonderful achievement for both the child and the carer.

The key person for specific children compile a folder for each of them. This includes vital information on their abilities, needs, how they communicate and likes and dislikes. All the carers and key persons carry out observations and these are recorded, supported with photographs and examples of children's work. As each child has differing special needs and abilities, the staff continually search for the most appropriate method to record their progress. Some children's progress is very gradual but even small milestones are recorded. All the children clearly thrive on being part of the group which greatly supports and promotes their social well-being.

## 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>	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	1
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

<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	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met