

Much Hadham Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	127813
Inspection date	25/05/2010
Inspector	Martyn Richards

Setting address	Oudle Lane, Much Hadham, HERTS, SG10 6DQ
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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

Much Hadham Playgroup has been running for 30 years and was most recently registered in 2003. It operates from a single storey purpose built premises in the grounds of St Andrews School in Much Hadham. The building is used in the afternoons by the school's nursery class. In addition to its activity room, the playgroup has access to an outdoor play area, part of which is covered. The playgroup serves mainly its local area, although, some children come from further a field.

The playgroup may take up to 26 children, aged from two to five at any one time. Currently there are 47 children on roll, and 21 were present at the time of the inspection. It receives funding for childcare in respect of some children. Children may attend for a variety of sessions during the week, and the playgroup has the resources, skills and practical facilities to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is open each weekday during term-times, from 9.00am until 12.00pm. The pre-school has links with its host school, and with local authority support and advisory services.

Six staff work with the children. The majority have appropriate childcare qualifications, while others are completing relevant training. It is registered on the Early Years Register, and 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.

Much Hadham Playgroup is a welcoming and supportive provision, in which the needs of children in the early years age group are recognised and met well. Each child is seen as unique, with his or her own interests, concerns and skills. These form the basis for the play and learning activities provided, so that children feel known, included and secure. The playgroup ensures that all aspects of its provision are available to all the children, and staff have particular skills and experience in supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The playgroup has a strong record of development over time, and has a good capacity to continue improving in the future.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- accelerate the implementation of assessment strategy so that children's progress over time is more evident
- extend the range of adult-initiated activities to excite and extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them
- provide more opportunities for systematic feedback to parents on their

children's progress and achievements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Ensuring the safety of the children is rightly seen by staff as their central concern. The activity room and adjacent outdoor areas are secure against intrusion or children slipping away unseen, and all adults coming to the playgroup are required to check in on arrival, and out on leaving. The suitability of those working with the children is thoroughly checked, and careful records are kept of children's attendance. Staff carry out sound regular risk assessments of the activity room and other areas, to make certain there are no hazards to put children at risk. Brief additional daily safety checks also ensure apparatus, equipment and planned activities are safe. There is a clear evacuation plan for use in emergencies, and fire drills are held regularly. These are carefully recorded, and fire exits are kept uncluttered. Staff have undertaken training in child protection, and know how to respond if they have concerns that a child might be at risk. Most have additional training in first aid, and they keep thorough records of any accidents. Parents are kept fully informed when incidents arise. There is a good Key Person scheme. As a result of this, parents know which individual staff member has the particular responsibility of supporting their child, and who is keeping a close eye on their child's welfare and development.

Parents think well of the playgroup. In their survey they rightly comment on the lively and caring relationship between staff and children. One said, 'my children have learned so much, and they really love going to playgroup'. A number of parents, while very appreciative, commented that they would value better opportunities for systematic feedback on their child's progress and achievements. The staff are aware of the parents' feelings and are keen to act on them.

The playgroup is a harmonious, inclusive community, where all children feel known and valued. Staff listen sensitively to them, and adjust their plans to take account of the children's interests or difficulties. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are welcomed and make good progress. Staff liaise with specialist local authority support staff, and with their adjacent primary school, to ensure continuity in the provision being made for these children. Several of the staff have learned sign language so they can help children with hearing, speech or language difficulties. The whole group learned to sign 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' when they sang it at their Christmas nativity play.

The playgroup is led well, and has developed in many ways since its last inspection. In particular staff have implemented the main requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, although, their assessment processes are still at an early stage, and as yet give only an incomplete picture of the progress individual children are making over time. Scrutiny of the children's activities, and the staff's collections of observations, however, shows that they progress well, and that parents are right to regard this as one of the playgroup's strengths. Staff undertake additional training, and are keen to extend their qualifications. They have implemented the recommendations of their last inspection very thoroughly.

They are eager to respond to the needs and views of parents, and periodically survey parental opinion for ways of improving the provision. The manager has introduced a very thorough self-evaluation system, to identify the strengths, and developmental priorities of the playgroup. Staff work well together as a team, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and this contributes importantly to its success.

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

The children enjoy coming to the playgroup. On arrival they settle quickly to the activities set out for them. The playgroup arranges tables of attractive picture books, and most of the children enjoy browsing them. Staff sit with the children, sharing their enjoyment of the books, and sometimes reading to them. The children have learned which way up a book is held, and which are its front and back. Some already know that the pictures and the text have different purposes. This makes for a calm and companionable start to the day. Children self-register, finding their own name tag and hanging their coats on the right hook. Adults rightly double-check the registration. Children recognise their own names, and some can sound the initial letters when these are uncomplicated. There is a table set out with paper and writing equipment, for children to practise mark-making as a precursor to writing. Many can hold a pencil comfortably, make doodles which stay within the frame of the paper, or join the dots on a puzzle picture. Some older children can write their names recognisably.

The children can choose from a wide range of activities provided for them. Particular favourites are modelling with salt dough, and building traffic schemes on a floor road layout. Good staff planning means that when adults join children in their play they have a clear idea of the learning that could take place. They intervene sensitively to extend a child's skills or understanding, recognising always that this is a self-chosen activity, and that the initiative of decision-making lies with the child. Activities are planned well in advance, to make sure the right equipment and materials are to hand. Staff select themes such as insects, life under the sea, and magnets. The planning addresses all the required areas of learning for children of this age, although, developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them through exciting adult-initiated activities, receives less attention than it should. Weekly and daily plans then add practical detail, including a good balance of indoor and outdoor play, and adjustments staff will make for individual children, based on earlier observations of the child's learning.

Staff have begun a thorough process for checking children's progress during their time in the playgroup. They collect detailed dated evidence, either in note form, or photographically, of significant steps in each child's learning. This process is still at an early stage, but already shows the good headway children are making in some areas of personal and social development. Children show a good level of independence in the daily routines of the playgroup, in making choices about activities, and in clearing away. They listen well to staff, and courteously to each other. They take turns, and are calm and well mannered during snack time. Most are orally confident, and can explain their activities to a visitor. They enjoy songs and rhymes. Most children can count to 10 or above, although, not always

accurately matching the spoken number to the objects collected. They identify regular common shapes such as squares, circles and triangles, and understand terms such as 'more' and 'less', 'larger' and 'smaller'. They have learned about some of the creatures that live in the sea, and that magnets will stick to certain objects but not to others. Several are very adept in using the computer mouse to move images around on the screen. The children develop good hand control through the safe use of tools such as scissors, pencils and brushes.

Vigorous outdoor play has helped them develop skills of balancing, jumping, catching and throwing. In creative activities they love singing, and enjoy improvising music on the percussion instruments outside the activity room. They can mix colours, and use suitable fixtures when decorating collage pictures with a variety of materials. The children move sensibly and safely around the activity room. They are well-behaved, friendly and helpful, and this makes a good contribution to the family ethos of the playgroup. Children have an excellent understanding of aspects of health and hygiene, enjoying healthy playgroup snacks, taking drinks of freely available water, and washing hands with little prompting. One child, asked about what he was waiting for said, 'I'm washing my hands because I'll get germs and they make you ill'. The personal and social qualities they develop, together with the knowledge and skills they acquire in the playgroup will serve them well 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	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	3

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	1
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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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