



Office for Standards  
in Education

## COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 123591

DfES Number: 546186

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	28/09/2004
Inspector Name	Gail Groves

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Full Day Care
Setting Name	Small Beginnings Playgroup
Setting Address	The Scout Hut Oakdene Way St Albans Hertfordshire AL1 4TL

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Mrs Julie Diane Walsh
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## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

### Information about the setting

Small Beginnings Playgroup was registered in 1990. It operates from the main hall in a Scout Hut in St Albans and serves the local area.

There are currently 41 children from two to four years on roll. This includes twenty three funded three year olds and one funded four year old. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently has no children with special needs or who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.15 until 12.00.

Four full-time staff work with the children of whom over half have early years qualifications to NVQ level 3. The group receives support from a teacher who is also the parent of a child attending the playgroup.

### How good is the Day Care?

Small Beginnings Playgroup provides good quality care for children. The staff are a well established team who work closely together and continue to maintain and update their skills through regular training. They create a welcoming environment which is enhanced by dividing the space in the large hall with tables and mats to create smaller, more defined areas for specific activities. The documentation required for the efficient and safe management of the provision is well organised and comprehensive.

Staff have a clear understanding of health and safety issues, are active in promoting good hygiene practices and have policies and procedures in place which minimise the risks to children. They are aware of children's allergies and food requirements and use snack time to promote children's independence as well as their language and social skills. Children's behavioural, emotional and intellectual needs are clearly understood by the staff who use this knowledge to meet the children's developmental and individual needs.

A wide range of age appropriate toys and many stimulating activities are offered to children. Throughout their play staff support and help them to make progress in most areas of their development. The group's behaviour management strategies are consistently applied by all staff and consequently children behave well and understand what is expected of them.

Staff are always welcoming to parents and form good relationships with them. Parents are given comprehensive information about the group and it's policies and procedures both when they enrol and later when their children first begin to attend. The group has a key worker system in place and staff are available at the beginning and end of sessions to talk to parents about their child's progress. Parents give positive feedback, particularly the affectionate and warm care their children receive as well as the range and diversity of the activities provided.

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

At the last inspection the group agreed to write a statement of the procedure to be followed if a child is lost and to hold and record regular fire drills. A written procedure is now in place and all staff and parents have access to it so that everyone is clear what processes need to be followed.

Fire drills are now held every half term and recorded in the group's diary along with an assessment of the efficiency of the operation and the children's reactions. This means that staff can assess the need for any adjustments to the procedure in the light of these regular practices.

#### **What is being done well?**

- Staff interact well with the children at all times. They extend the children's concentration and involvement by careful intervention in their play by talking and listening to them, asking questions to make them think and praising and encouraging them. Through this involvement, the activities and play opportunities are used to support and extend children's intellectual, language, social and emotional development.
- Children are supported by adults who praise, encourage and value their good behaviour. The group have behaviour management strategies in place which are clearly understood and consistently implemented by all staff. Undesirable behaviour is dealt with calmly and children are given explanations and reasons appropriate to their age and stage of development. The children behave well because they have good role models and because they know and understand what is expected of them.
- Partnership with parents is good. Information about their child's individual needs, family background, interests and their developmental progress is sought from parents before the child attend the group. A copy of the group's policies and operational information is provided in a starter pack given to all parents and there is a regular newsletter and parents' notice board to keep them updated. Parents are made aware of their child's key worker shortly after they begin attending so that relationships can be formed as quickly as

possible.

#### **What needs to be improved?**

- the procedure for recording any medication administered to children
- the range of experiences offered to children which reflect racial, cultural and religious diversity.

#### **Outcome of the inspection**

Good

#### **CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION**

*All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.*

*As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.*

#### **WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?**

#### **The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection**

Std	Recommendation
7	Ensure all records of medication administered to children are shared with and signed by parents.
9	Increase the range of activities and experiences which help children appreciate and value racial, cultural and religious diversity.

## INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

### How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for nursery education at Small Beginnings Playgroup is of good quality overall. Children are making very good progress in the area of personal, social and emotional development and creative development and generally good progress in all other areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff manage the children very well and form good relationships with them. Some staff have attended training related to the Foundation Stage although others are not so familiar with it. Staff generally plan a well balanced range of activities that includes both free play and more adult led activities, although there are few opportunities for children to use programmable toys or everyday technology. Assessment currently holds limited information on children's development and is not always used to inform future planning. Staff interact positively with the children, supporting and challenging them. They know them well and how to pitch activities at the appropriate level but do not always record this information.

Leadership and management is generally good. The manager is a 'hands on' leader who aims to provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment. Effective teamwork is an expectation and termly staff meetings are held to discuss planning and other playgroup issues. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and support each other well. A lot of information is shared verbally with each other and staff work together well.

Partnership with parents is generally good. There are effective settling in procedures and information regarding individual children is gathered prior to them starting. Parents are provided with regular newsletters and an informative starter pack, although there is limited information regarding the Foundation Stage. Parents are encouraged to bring in topic related items and are welcome to help at a session. Parent's feedback is very positive with many families having had older siblings at the playgroup.

### What is being done well?

- Children are very happy and settled within the group. They are busy and absorbed in different areas of play, where the adults support and challenge them. Children are confident and independent, they show good self esteem and demonstrate a sense of pride in their own achievements.
- Children's communication skills are promoted well. Small group time encourages children to take turns to talk and enables the adult to have more one to one time with their colour group. The children listen and concentrate well and respond with enthusiasm to group discussions and songs.
- Children have many opportunities to express themselves freely and engage

in imaginative play. They explore different areas such as the water, small world play and create their own role play situations.

- Staff interact with children in a very positive manner. They listen to them and acknowledge their comments, they ask challenging questions and equally, offer support and guidance when necessary. Staff regularly praise the children and spend time with them on a one to one basis. Children, in turn, are confident in their approach to the adults.
- Staff work in partnership with parents. They have formed good relationships with them and are very welcoming and friendly in their approach to parents/carers. Parents are encouraged to share information about their child through the 'all about me' sheet and feedback from parent questionnaires is very positive.

#### **What needs to be improved?**

- opportunities for children to use simple programmable equipment and everyday technology
- staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage, with regard to the stepping stones and early learning goals
- planning and assessment systems
- information shared with parents/carers relating to the Foundation Stage.

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

This is the settings first inspection.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are very happy and settled. They are busy and absorbed in different areas of play and have a positive approach to new experiences, such as, taking part in races. Children move around freely and make independent choices from the available activities. Children show concern for others and take a pride in their own achievements. Children concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate, equally, they initiate conversation and relate well to adults and members of the group.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children's speaking and listening skills are good and they respond with enjoyment and enthusiasm. They are confident in expressing themselves and some are able to predict what happens next. They join in with songs and rhymes and handle books with care and with interest. Some children are beginning to recognise letters in their name, although there are limited opportunities for mark making. Children engage in activities that require hand/eye coordination such as cutting, gluing and puzzles.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children enjoy joining in with number rhymes, counting both forward and back down. Opportunities to develop concepts of shape and space are in place but activities to explore number problems are more limited. Children are being introduced to mathematical language. For example, using the scales in the grocers to introduce the concept of balance and finding items that are heavy and light. Some children are beginning to recognise and recreate simple patterns with a variety of coloured shapes.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children show curiosity and interest in why things happen, such as, when playing with the water discovering items that float or sink. Children build and balance with construction pieces, using the magnetic blocks to stack and make towers. They are beginning to differentiate between past and present by talking about baby photographs and discussing past holidays. However, there are limited opportunities to use simple programmable equipment and find out about everyday technology.

<b>PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Judgement:	Generally Good
Children are offered a range of activities to develop fine manipulative skills such as sewing, puzzles, cutting and gluing, which they do with increasing control. Children move confidently in a range of ways such as running and jumping during indoor races and they have opportunities to play outdoors, although this was not seen on inspection. Children engage in activities that require hand eye coordination, threading shapes with precision and carefully stacking a group of circles.	

<b>CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Judgement:	Very Good
Children have a range of opportunities to use their imagination freely and do so enthusiastically. They notice what the adults do and imitate them in their role play. Children join in with favourite rhymes and action songs, first slowly and then fast, laughing as they do so. They use musical instruments to express different feelings and emotions, using both loud and soft sounds. They communicate their ideas to others whilst playing with the dough, making 'a mermaid's tail'.	

<b>Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.</b>
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## **OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION**

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

## **WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES**

- increase opportunities for children to regularly explore and develop information, communication and technology skills in knowledge and understanding of the world
- develop staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage
- develop the planning system to ensure plans include clear learning intentions and differentiation to meet the children's varying needs; develop assessment records for use in planning to show children's progress towards the early learning goals
- share information with parents in relation to the Foundation Stage

*The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.*

## **SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS**

### **STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON**

*Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.*

### **STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION**

*The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.*

### **STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY**

*The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.*

### **STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

*The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.*

### **STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT**

*Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.*

### **STANDARD 6 - SAFETY**

*The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.*

### **STANDARD 7 - HEALTH**

*The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.*

### **STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK**

*Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.*

### **STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

*The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.*

### **STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)**

*The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is*

*proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.*

#### **STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR**

*Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.*

#### **STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS**

*The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.*

#### **STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION**

*The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.*

#### **STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION**

*Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.*