

Merryfields Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Sarah Johnson

Setting address The Sports Pavillion, Diss Sports Ground, Shelfanger Road,
Diss, Norfolk, IP22 5XT

Telephone number 01379 650001

Email

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

Merryfields Playschool opened in 1986 and re-registered in 2010 when it moved to the current premises. It is a registered charity and is managed by a voluntary committee made up of parents of some of the children who attend the playschool. It operates from a room within a sports pavilion situated on the outskirts of Diss in Norfolk. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and surrounding sports field. Sessions run each week day from 9.15am to 12.15pm, during school term times only. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of these sessions.

The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 19 children under eight years may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 16 children in the early years age range on roll. There are strategies in place to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who have English as an additional language.

There are three members of staff, including the manager, who work directly with the children. All members of staff hold appropriate early years qualifications to Level 3. The setting provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children play and learn in a welcoming environment, where the experienced staff understand and support their individual needs very well. They benefit from a wide range of play and learning opportunities covering all areas of learning. Some of these activities take place in the outdoor environment. Effective risk assessments and robust recruitment procedures ensure that children's safety is given high priority. Staff engage very well with parents, carers and external services to ensure continuity of care and learning for all children. The staff are mindful to evaluate the provision on a regular basis, ensuring they understand the setting's key strengths and have clear targets for future improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- extend the use of the outdoor environment to offer a wider range of planned, purposeful play experiences across all areas of learning and development
- strengthen the children's awareness of differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, special educational needs and disabilities by providing more positive images, and sharing and celebrating a wider range of practices and special events.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff have a thorough understanding of their role and responsibilities in keeping children safe from harm. The manager carefully oversees the effective implementation of the setting's safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring any updates are regularly cascaded to all staff, students and parents. This means that all adults involved with the children are fully aware of what they must do if they become concerned about a child's welfare. Robust recruitment procedures are followed by the management committee, ensuring all staff and students complete the required suitability checks before they are able to work directly with the children. The indoor and outdoor environments are maintained to a very safe and secure standard, mainly as a result of the thorough risk assessments carried out before each session. There is a good range of stimulating toys and resources to meet the differing needs of the children and promote their ongoing progress towards the early learning goals. The indoor environment is bright, welcoming and organised in a manner that promotes children's free choice and ability to be independent.

The setting promotes inclusive practice. Although the staff do not currently support any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, they continue to attend various training courses to enable them to support children's specific needs in the future. They also work very effectively with external agencies to support and promote children's individual needs. For example, they link up with professionals from the local children's centre to draw on their expertise and access specialist equipment.

Staff have strong respect for all parents and carers and strive to work in partnership with them. An informative prospectus, regular newsletters and a dedicated parents' notice board help to convey ongoing information. As a result, parents explain that they feel very included in playschool life. Parents are able to contribute their views in various ways, including general discussions with staff or through volunteering as a member of the management committee. Their access to records about their children, including the learning journey records, is well promoted by the staff. This ensures they can contribute their own comments about their children's development, and are very well informed of their children's progress whilst at the playschool. The setting has developed secure and supportive transition procedures for children when they are due to move onto full-time school. For example, children know what to expect from the school routine as they share a book of photographs supplied by one of the local schools and talk openly to the staff about visiting the school. The setting's Special Educational Needs Coordinator also initiates joint meetings with school staff and parents to ensure all relevant information is passed on about any child who may need additional support.

Since moving into the current premises, the staff team have reviewed and adapted routines and practices to ensure they are making the most of the new environment and continuing to meet the individual needs of the children in their care. They see the benefits of reflective practice and have clear targets to bring about further

improvements to outcomes for children. For example, they are working closely with local authority advisors to source funding for new resources, particularly those that will strengthen children's awareness of diversity. Each member of staff also has a clear plan for future training which stands them in good stead for increasing their knowledge and enabling them to promote continuous improvement in their practice.

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

Children are made to feel very safe and secure as a result of the staff's warm and attentive nature. They settle with ease when they first join the setting, supported by staff who take time to get to know them and their parents very well. For example, staff gather meaningful notes about children's interests, home routines and starting points in learning so they can plan for these from the beginning. The various photographs and artwork on display promote children's strong sense of belonging at the setting, and the layout of equipment and resources helps them to be independent in their daily routines. For example, children learn to take care of their belongings as they hang their coats on their own named peg, and make choices as they select resources that interest them from the low-level toy boxes.

Staff spend their time actively involved in the children's play but equally know when it is appropriate to step back and allow the children's own ideas to unfold individually or within their peer group. Staff are confident in using spontaneous events to inspire further learning. For example, when children notice birds singing in the field, the staff foster this interest by singing songs about birds and planning a craft activity using feathers. Staff skilfully undertake observations of the children, which are used to inform an individual learning plan for each child. This system ensures that staff know how to plan effectively for the children, and are able to respond quickly when a child needs any additional support.

Children have daily access to the outdoor play area, ensuring they benefit from fresh air and space to be physically active. Although the range of resources provided in the outdoor environment is generally good, for example, a selection of ride-on toys and a popular playhouse. However, these do not always promote purposeful play across all six areas of learning and development or support and encourage children to explore the natural world. Children show strong interest in learning about the uses of everyday technology when completing simple programmes on the laptop computer and using mobile telephones in the imaginative role play areas. There are a good range of mathematical resources available, which staff actively use to extend children's awareness of space, shape and measures. For example, children confidently sort different bears into groups of the same colour, before sorting them by size. Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to master their skills when using small apparatus, tools and equipment. For example, staff show children how to handle scissors safely as they cut balls of play dough into small pieces.

Children's behaviour is good which indicates that they are engaged and challenged by the activities provided. They develop a positive sense of responsibility

throughout the daily routine, as they eagerly help to set the tables ready for snack time and get involved with tidying away resources. Children are generally supported to acquire a positive attitude towards people who are different from themselves, as they learn about the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah and share books written in different languages. However, activities and resources which encourage children to embrace differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, special educational needs and disabilities are not as fully integrated into the everyday provision as they could be.

Children adopt aspects of a healthy lifestyle during their time at the playschool. They actively learn about healthy practices, such as washing their hands after using the toilet and using a tissue when they need to wipe their nose. The setting offers healthy choices for mid-morning snacks, with a choice of fresh fruit pieces, toast, raisins and milk or water to drink. Children confidently serve themselves and pour their own drinks, before sitting down to engage in animated conversations with their peers and the staff.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

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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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