

# Ashwell Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Inspection date** 18/01/2011  
**Inspector** Alison Reeves

**Setting address** Village Hall, West End, Ashwell, Baldock, Hertfordshire,  
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**Telephone number** 01462 742 541

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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

Ashwell Playgroup registered in 1975. It operates from Ashwell Village Hall in Ashwell, Hertfordshire. Children have access to an outdoor area. They are open each weekday from 9.15am to 12.15pm during term-time.

The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 25 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 15 children aged from two to three years on roll, attending various sessions. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and welcomes children with English as an additional language.

There are five members of staff working with the children including the manager. Most members of staff have relevant Early Years qualifications. The manager has a qualification at Level 3, the deputy manager is working towards a Foundation Degree in Early Years and one member of staff is working towards an NVQ at Level 3.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well supported and benefit from a team of dedicated and experienced staff who have a clear understanding of each child's individual needs. Children are valued and play a key role in shaping the provision of activities. This ensures they are making good progress towards the early learning goals appropriate to their age, ability and starting points. Most aspects of assessing children's progress are successful. Policies and procedures are implemented effectively to promote children's welfare and safety. Relationships with parents and other providers are well established and promote effective partnership working. Self-evaluation is embedded and demonstrates the commitment to further developing practice to promote better outcomes for children.

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

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

- develop systems for planning and assessment to include children's next steps
- review session organisation to make better use of available resources.

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

Children are safeguarded and well protected in the setting because staff have a good understanding of child protection issues. Detailed policies and procedures covering all aspects of safeguarding are clearly understood and implemented consistently and effectively. This means that children's safety and well-being are secured.

Staff make effective use of risk assessments to support them in ensuring areas used by children are safe. For example, they check all areas of the premises before sessions to ensure there are no hazards and reduce the likelihood of accidents. This means that children and their families are able to move safely and freely around the building.

Staff have a good level of knowledge in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage and use this well to support children in their learning. They work with the local school Foundation Stage teacher and network with other local providers and through the Pre-School Learning Alliance. This means their knowledge remains up to date and they are able to share practice issues with other settings. The environment is generally well organised and always accessible to the children. However, there are times when staff are making work for themselves in re-organising play space with little impact on the children.

Self-evaluation is embedded and staff frequently reflect on their practice. As a result, a clear plan of action is devised and changes are implemented effectively. The staff team engage parents in looking for ways to improve the provision for the children through questionnaires. These practices enable staff to set ambitious and appropriate targets. For example, with more staff engagement in imaginative play learning opportunities are taken up rapidly and promote greater critical thinking. Staff are asking open questions that prompt children to explore their ideas in greater depth and consequently seek out their own solutions.

The staff team forms close working relationships with parents and carers. They obtain useful information about each child such as favourite songs and rhymes, important people in their lives and special words children use. This means staff can plan carefully to support children in settling in at the setting and ensure their individual needs are effectively met. The staff and parents share important information about how each child is settling in and progressing during the first weeks. This means that parents are involved in their child's learning and each one is well supported in making progress towards the early learning goals. Effective relationships with other settings and professionals involved with the children are well established and contribute well to supporting children's welfare and learning.

Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs and work well to support them in making progress. An effective equal opportunities policy is regularly reviewed and supports the staff well. This means that the individual needs of all children are met and all children are included fully in the life of the setting.

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

Children are confident and have a very good understanding of how to stay safe. For example, they know why it is important to walk in the hall and can clearly explain that you might fall over if you run. This is because staff use gentle reminders throughout the session to help children remember the rules that help to keep them safe.

Children are developing independence skills as they learn to use the toilet and wash their hands to prevent the spread of germs. They enjoy a variety of healthy snacks that provide energy and nutrition for play and growth. They have time to talk about the food they eat, learning about where foods come from and which are good for the body. Children use the outdoor area for mostly free flow play and staff also organise some challenging physical play indoors. The children enjoy a fun game of musical statues trying to hold different positions when the music stops. Children use small tools for making patterns on their 'cakes' at the dough table. This means that children are developing healthy habits and an understanding of how their bodies work.

Children's language for speaking and thinking is well promoted with lots of opportunity for them to communicate in well supported small groups. The book area is very well used throughout sessions where numerous stories are being shared. Children enjoy familiar text and readily join in with well known refrains. Children reading the 'Gruffalo's Child' enjoy looking at the pictures and discussing the feelings of the characters. Children use mathematical language in their play and staff encourage number awareness by counting the number of mats needed for group time, asking about next numbers in the sequence and thinking about more and less. Children use a variety of simple cause and effect toys pushing buttons to make objects appear, as well as using more complex equipment, such as music players to develop their awareness of technology. Children are highly imaginative and enjoy sharing their experiences of the world with others as they act out roles with knights protecting their friends from the fierce tiger and fire fighters putting out blazes in buildings. Children show their care and concern for others as they play co-operatively. Outside, during an exciting and energetic game where children are looking for coloured objects to match to the mats, they are pointing out items to one another and working together to find the things they need. Staff regularly observe children as they play to assess their stage of development. These observations are used to support future planning although next steps are not documented on plans or in achievement records. Key workers, however, do know the children very well and can confidently explain individual stages and targets. Therefore, children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning.

Children behave very well in the setting because the staff set clear and appropriate boundaries. Children are helped to understand why these are important and the simple explanations and regular reminders help children retain the information. Children are developing a respect for themselves and others as they play together.

They are learning about the local community, cultures and beliefs. This is because staff make effective use of books, activities and children's own family background to introduce new ideas and promote diversity.

## 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>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</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	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

<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	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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