

Bright Sparks Playgroup at Empingham

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	AUNE TURKSON-JONES

Setting address	Empingham C of E Primary School, School Lane, Empingham, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 8PQ
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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

Bright Sparks Playgroup was registered in 1992 and is situated in the village of Empingham. It caters for children from the local village and its surrounding areas. It is privately owned and operates from a classroom in the village school. The playgroup has the use of the school hall and access to the school playground. The playgroup is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9am until 3.30pm and Tuesday and Friday from 9am until 12 noon, term times only.

The setting is registered to cater for 18 children aged from two to five years at any one time. Currently, there are 30 children on roll who are within the early years age range. The setting is in receipt of funding for early education places. The playgroup supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and is able to support children who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

There are six staff who work with the children. Of these, one holds an advanced diploma in child care and education, two have National Vocational Qualifications at level three, one has an NVQ qualification at level five and the remaining two are working towards an NVQ qualification at level two. The playgroup is supported by the local authority and receives advice from a curriculum advisor and an Area Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). The playgroup also has links with the host school.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Bright Sparks pre-school provides a relaxed and welcoming environment where children enjoy spending their time. The setting is based within the host primary school and is inclusive, catering for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children have opportunities to be involved in making their own choices of activities although resources are not always accessible enough for children to make independent decisions about their play. Staff are developing assessments of each child's achievements, but these are not consistently linked to the early learning goals, and because of these children make satisfactory progress across the six areas of learning. Key strengths within the setting include staff's good understanding of safeguarding issues and communication with parents. Staff commitment to training ensures that the pre-school meets the needs of the early years children, and the sound leadership shows reasonable capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve further the activities for children to develop their problem solving and sensory experiences in the outdoor provision, and organise resources throughout the setting to give children greater opportunities to access resources
- refine planning for children's development so that it focuses on each of the six areas of learning and identifies the next steps
- improve links with other settings providing for children in the early years foundation stage to ensure a two-way flow of information and continuity of learning and care.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding policies and procedures are effective in keeping children safe. All required documentation is updated regularly and fully reviewed on an annual basis. Staff are thoroughly vetted for their suitability to work with children and they all have a good knowledge and understanding of how to protect children from harm. Staff carry out daily, weekly and annual risk assessments of all areas, to ensure that children can play and learn in a very safe environment. The site is secure and children leaving the main areas to access the school facilities are accompanied at all times. Staff training is fully up-to-date and all of the adults know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Clear procedures are in place should concerns be raised about a child. Children are encouraged to adopt safe practices as they move and play in the setting and the necessary policies are in place to support this. Staff and resources are satisfactorily deployed around the setting to support children's needs and encourage their development. However due to the layout of the premises there are not always sufficient opportunities for children to self-select games and activities. This impedes their ability to make independent choices.

The manager of the setting has made reasonable improvements since the time of the last inspection and the setting now employs two additional staff members. Self evaluation shows that the manager has a reasonable understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff are also developing ways of driving improvement amongst themselves. Current assessments of the provision help to move improvements forward at an appropriate pace. Staff are engaged in making observations and documenting children's learning points, however, these assessments are not always sufficiently focussed. Planning lacks focus on the early learning goals and staff do not always pinpoint next steps in learning for individual children, preventing them from making even better progress. The setting has established its priorities for further improvement and is currently developing the outdoor space to provide extended opportunities for children to learn and develop. At present, this area is under development and does not provide enough opportunities for children to develop their problem solving skills.

Parents' ideas are actively sought and the setting provides detailed induction

information when children start attending. The setting also actively encourages parents to access their easily understood policies, regular newsletters, questionnaires and suggestions box. The manager has planned future coffee mornings for parents to gather and speak informally. Parents really appreciate this level of support and this demonstrates the good level of engagement that the setting has with them. The manager has improved links with the host primary school and children benefit from having lunch in the school hall and twice weekly opportunities to visit the reception class. Other school facilities are also shared and this has been especially useful while the setting has been working to secure improvements to its own, dedicated outdoor area. Links with the local authority's early years children's service ensure that the setting has access to a number of specialist support services and this provides quality care for children with special educational needs. However, systems to share information about ongoing progress and achievements with other early years settings, where children also attend, is not fully established. This does not fully support a complementary framework and continuity of learning and care for all children.

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

Children are engaged and busy throughout their time in the setting, which provides a range of planned activities each day. Sessions are structured to include a balance of adult guided and child-initiated activities. Some limitations have been created by the current developments to the outdoor area; however this is now close to completion. In the indoor space, some resources are arranged in different areas according to the early learning goals. Plans are in place to more effectively organise resources, so that children have better opportunities to make independent choices, both inside and outside. Children receive appropriate support in their learning, and a key person system is in place, which means all children have a member of staff with direct responsibility for their care and needs. Parents are aware of this and can speak regularly with staff regarding all aspects of their child's development.

Activities and play used to promote learning and development help children to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Children are encouraged to act responsibly and show that they can share resources and attempt to resolve their own disputes. The setting supports progression towards the early learning goals through exploration and learning is purposeful. Support is available for those who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Opportunities for early mark making and counting skills are woven through aspects of the setting's work and staff often question and challenge children to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Children enjoy participating in counting songs and going outside for guided nature walks around the school grounds. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to work with computers. Tailored computer packages help them to build on their numeracy and literacy skills, by encouraging them to count, sort and match. Staff lead by

example and encourage children to be polite and courteous towards each other. Reasonable attention is drawn towards aspects of equality and diversity, with suitable posters and resources depicting other cultural aspects of society and the children learn about different religious festivals through themed weeks and topic work. The children also have opportunities to explore their local community, through planned visits and walks.

Staff are aware of children's dietary requirements and any specific needs are catered for. Children sit together at snack times and participate in cutting their own fruit with special knives and serving themselves with drinks. Healthy snacks are served daily and children have opportunities to go outside for walks and outdoor activities. This gives children a developing understanding of how to stay healthy. Children say that they very feel safe and show good awareness of some aspects of safety. They are encouraged to play carefully and have been visited by the police community safety officer. Staff promote good hygiene practices and children know that they must wash their hands prior to eating and after using the toilet. Appropriate action is taken when children are ill, with suitable procedures to prevent the spread of infection.

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?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
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	3
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	3
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	3
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	3

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