

Mentmore Road Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Susan Marriott

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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

Mentmore Road Under Fives opened in 1978 and was registered in 1992. It is a committee run playgroup which operates from the Pavillion in the town of Leighton Buzzard. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register to provide a maximum of 24 places for children in the early years age group aged from two to five years. The playgroup has use of one main room and has access to a kitchen and toilet facilities. They also have access to outdoor playing facilities. The playgroup is open on weekday mornings during term time only, from 9.15am until 12.15pm. There are currently 38 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The playgroup supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are seven members of staff, of whom, all hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

This is a very friendly and inclusive setting where the experienced and established staff team work conscientiously to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff sustain generally good quality interaction with children to draw learning from play and promote positive attitudes to learning. Children make sound progress in their learning and development although they do not have daily access to outdoor play and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy is not given sufficient emphasis. Many aspects of children's welfare are promoted well and there are good partnerships with parents and carers. Generally, effective leadership and self-evaluation secures the playgroup's satisfactory capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- take steps to prevent intruders entering the premises (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare) 14/02/2011

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

- improve the opportunities for fresh air and outdoor play on a daily basis
- improve support for children in developing their understanding of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy in a broad range of contexts in which they can explore, enjoy, learn, practise and talk about their understanding. Provide opportunities to practise and extend their skills in these areas and to gain confidence and competence in their use
- improve the systems for the organisation of the setting by leading and

encouraging a culture of reflective practice and self-evaluation to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development that will improve the quality of the provision for all children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff are very friendly, welcoming and approachable and good relationships at all levels, ensure that this is a happy place for children. The long serving staff team is a great strength of the playgroup. Children's welfare is promoted well as the pre-school has generally effective safeguarding procedures. Staff attend regular training and review their procedures to ensure that they keep up-to-date with this area of work. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Regular risk assessments and daily checks are appropriately recorded and ensure that hazards are minimised. Good daily practice, such as, ongoing explanations from staff, reinforces children's understanding of safety issues. For example, children are reminded that throwing sand may hurt their eyes and that running about indoors may cause accidents. Fire drill records show that practises are sufficiently frequent. The identity of visitors is checked and a record of the visit is kept. However, weaknesses in security measures potentially compromise the safety of children and staff. Although the premises are kept secure during the bulk of the session, insufficient steps are taken to prevent intruders entering the premises.

Available resources are used generally well, but children do not have daily access to fresh air. Management is committed to funding training to update staff knowledge and has a considered approach to change, steadily introducing improvements to the service through satisfactory self-evaluation in consultation with staff, parents and the advisory services. However, self-evaluation is not yet fully effective because it is not accurately identifying weaknesses in the quality of provision.

Effective organisation ensures there is always a suitable staff member on the premises to take lead role for sessions. Staff hold appropriate levels of qualification and work very well as a team, helping to create a positive environment where children feel secure and happy. Staff have a good understanding of anti-discrimination, enabling them to implement appropriate policies and provide a service which is inclusive for all children and their families. They work with parents and carers to ensure that they understand each child's background and culture and are, therefore, able to meet their needs and promote children's awareness of individuality. The staff are alert to the early signs of needs of the children that could lead to later difficulties. They respond quickly and appropriately, involving other agencies as necessary, to promote consistent and appropriate care for children. The registration form is comprehensive and has a very useful chart for those who have English as an additional language. This gives parents and carers the opportunity to share basic words in their home language with the playgroup and is a good example of partnership work.

Parents receive thorough information about the setting and their children's

progress, for example, through newsletters, daily talks with staff and review meetings with their child's key person. Staff observe each child at play in order to understand and support their individual well-being and development, enabling each key person and family to work together. Parents speak highly of the playgroup, commenting that 'children are provided with a good variety of toys which are rotated well to allow the children to play with things they would not ordinarily play with'. 'My child likes everything, particularly the snacks and going to the tennis courts and feeding the ducks'. 'Everyone is friendly and approachable', 'my children have really enjoyed their time here' and 'playgroup has helped them become more confident in themselves'.

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

Children experience an enjoyable programme of learning and development at Mentmore Road Under Fives. They are generally well-supported by the friendly and caring staff who work hard to meet their individual needs. The daily routine supports some effective learning. For example, children learn to recognise their names as they self-register on arrival. Children's enjoyment is enhanced and their learning is effectively extended because staff join in appropriately with their play and discussions. For example, a member of staff notices children playing with dolls and engages them in discussion by asking why the doll might be crying. Staff know when to stand back and when intervention is necessary, being aware that intervening too quickly can inhibit some lovely interaction between children. Staff speak clearly and calmly at all times, asking open questions and continually extending children's understanding. They acknowledge children's achievements with praise and actively promote children's independence. They include teaching about colours and counting in their commentary so that children learn effectively through play-based activities. Group activities and songs contribute positively to the quality of the provision.

The learning environment presents many challenges for the staff, which have to set out and pack away the equipment daily. They create an appropriate environment which is bright and thoughtfully set out, with chairs and tables being used to create play areas which reflect the six areas of learning. The space inside the premises mostly promotes children's progression towards the early learning goals. Play and exploration is generally planned and purposeful. A balance of adult-led and child-led activities results in children being active indoor learners, but the playgroup do not make sufficient effort to ensure that children have daily opportunities for fresh air and outdoor play. An area of the sports field is sometimes cordoned off with a moveable fence to create a safe outside play space but this is not available every day. The playgroup do have the use of the nearby tennis courts, the facilities of the adjacent park and the Memorial gardens, but these options are not exploited daily.

The play leader and her staff continue to refine the planning, observation and assessment system. Staff clearly spend a lot of time and effort completing a detailed weekly planning sheets and identified learning intentions are sufficiently matched to the criteria in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff observe children

as they play and record comments under the six areas of learning in the children's folders. Staff have attended local training to help them to 'Look, listen and note' and have begun to use the 'Progress tool' to analyse strengths and weaknesses in children's learning. This analysis of children's attainment is showing a weakness in the area of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. Staff are not exploiting opportunities to promote this area of learning throughout the daily routine. Staff lack confidence in planning play-based activities to develop children's learning about numbers as labels and for counting, calculating and shape, space and measure. Staff acknowledge that this is an area for improvement but have not accurately identified this through their self-evaluation systems.

A well-organised social snack time provides some good opportunities for children and adults to interact in small groups. Staff maximise the learning opportunities for promoting children's independence and discussion about healthy eating. For example, children pour their own drinks and talk about French bread and butter. Children's behaviour is managed well by the staff and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs. Children learn about the relevance of healthy lifestyles and develop skills for the future as they become independent, share ideas and work together. For example, staff encourage children to help one another at the computer, rather than doing the task for them. Children's self-esteem is promoted as they are offered opportunities to talk about themselves, their families and recent experiences.

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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	3
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	3
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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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