

St. Albans Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Christine Bonnett

Setting address St. Albans Church Hall, Norwood Drive, North Harrow,
Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 7PF

Telephone number 02084293796

Email stalbansplaygroup@msn.com

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

St. Albans Playgroup is managed by the voluntary management committee of St Albans Mother's Union Pre-School Playgroup. It opened originally in 1964 and operates from St. Albans church hall, North Harrow in the London Borough of Harrow. A maximum of 25 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open each weekday, except Wednesday, from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 27 children aged from two to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register, compulsory part of the Childcare Register and voluntary part of the Childcare Register. The group employs seven staff, of whom five hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are cared for by warm and caring staff within a generally safe environment. Children become highly independent and active learners as staff have good awareness of the Early Years Foundation Stage learning requirements and generally implement them effectively in each area of learning. Partnerships with parents are effective and well established resulting in children being valued and respected as unique individuals. The manager and her staff are fully committed to the continual improvement of the setting to enhance outcomes for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- make a record of risk assessments clearly stating when it was carried out, by whom, date of review and any action taken following a review or incident. 12/04/2011

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

- provide appropriate climbing apparatus at each session in order to offer daring and challenge to the older children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager and her staff fully understand their duties in relation to safeguarding children. They are knowledgeable about the indicators of child abuse, and are clear that they would address any concerns appropriately to ensure children are kept safe from harm. Recruitment procedures are well established and relevant checks are completed to assess the suitability of all adults working with the children. Although risk assessments of the premises are carried out in order to identify and minimise potential dangers to children, they are not recorded. This is breach of welfare requirements. Risk assessments for each type of outing are in place and recorded appropriately. Security of the hall is good and prevents children leaving unsupervised and intruders gaining access to the children. In addition, children learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they participate in regular evacuation drills and learn how to cross roads safely on outings. With the exception of the record of risk assessments, all the other records and documentation required for the efficient running of the group, and to meet the needs of the children, are in place.

The manager shares her enthusiasm and commitment with her motivated staff to continuously build upon the work of the group. They reflect on their practice as a team, and identify areas of achievements, and those to be developed. Action plans are devised with the support of the local authority development workers. Parents also contribute towards the self evaluation of the group and influence practice by completing questionnaires. As a result of the feedback from parents, the group introduced more substantial snacks for the children. The manager is also planning to hold two consultation weeks to enable parents to discuss their child's progress with their key person in detail. In addition, the group has implemented the recommendations made at the last inspection. All these initiatives have improved outcomes for children.

Because of the routine consultation with parents, strong partnerships exist between staff and parent/carers. A successful parent's rota operates which enables parents to spend sessions with their children at the group. This supports the work of the staff, and enables parents to see how the group runs day-to-day. The group also encourages parents to support their child's learning at home by inviting them to attend a story session each Friday. Parents and staff routinely share relevant about the children on a daily basis. This effective two-way flow of information contributes towards improvements in children's achievement, well-being and development. Parents comment that they are very pleased with the care and learning their children receive. As well as forming effective partnerships with parents, the group works closely with all parties involved with providing additional support to children when necessary. Good links are also established with other nurseries and group delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage that the children attend. Relevant information is exchanged about each child's development in the six areas of learning. This ensures a coherent and consistent approach to their learning is achieved.

The wide variety of play equipment helps children progress towards the early

learning goals. Resources are easily accessible for children to help themselves. Staff encourage them to freely explore the resources independently. However, staff are deployed effectively to extend the children's learning and to monitor their safety at all times. The hall offers suitable space for the children to play comfortably and safely indoors. The play materials are fit for purpose and in good condition to contribute towards the sustainability of the group. Staff have good understanding of the backgrounds of the children, and help them learn about and respect their own culture, and those of others. Major world faith celebrations are acknowledged, including Diwali, Easter and Chinese New Year.

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

Children enjoy their sessions at the group. They become active learners as they readily engage in a range of fun and stimulating play activities. Cooking activities are held each week. On the day of the inspection, the children made pancakes. Staff understood that this one activity successfully incorporated each of the six areas of learning. Children broke the eggs, counted the spoonfuls of flour, poured in the water and milk and whisked them all together to make the batter. They then watched the pancakes being made, and thoroughly enjoyed eating them at snack time. Observations and assessments are carried out to monitor and ascertain each child's achievements within the learning areas. The next step in the child's unique learning journey is then planned to ensure appropriate and consistent progress is made. Each child has a book containing examples of their work, photographs of them at play and their observations. These clearly demonstrate the progress they make. The setting operates a 'free-flow' play system. This enables children to play inside or out as they choose. The garden is well used and enjoyed by the children. They have great fun splashing in the water play tray, and watering the plants. Children also enjoy good opportunities for imaginative play. They have fun serving each other in the 'shoe shop'. They try on a selection of shoes and buy them at the till. These games help children develop social and emotional skills. Children select books from the well-stocked book case and sit down to look at them together. They know how to turn the pages and learn that print that meaning. Numeracy is also well promoted through a range of suitable equipment for counting and matching. Consequently, children develop the skills they will need in the future to achieve economic well-being.

The group enables children to learn the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. Healthy and nutritious snacks are provided that take account of children's individual dietary needs. These include fresh fruit yogurts, toast and chapattis. Children often help to prepare salad vegetables, such as cucumber, as part of a 'green theme'. They also independently pour their own milk or water. Children wash their hands at appropriate times, and the older ones explain why it is not good to eat germs. Physical exercise is enjoyed each day. The garden allows children to run around and includes balancing beams and stills. Obstacle courses are also regularly provided. However, although the group has a high climbing frame, it is not set up for the children to enjoy at every session. Consequently, opportunities for the older and more confident children to challenge themselves

and test their abilities are limited.

Children are content and happy within the setting. New children and parents are well supported by staff to ensure a successful settling in period, which is tailored to the needs of each child and family. Children enjoy positive interaction with staff and feel safe with them as they confidently express their needs, such as wanting more fruit. Children know what is expected of them at the setting and receive plenty of praise for achievement. Consequently, their behaviour is very good and they develop a strong sense of belonging and security.

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