

# Small Beginnings Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique reference number**

123591

**Inspection date**

01/03/2011

**Inspector**

Tina Kelly

**Setting address**

The Scout Hut, Oakdene Way, St Albans, Hertfordshire,  
AL1 4TL

**Telephone number**

079701 39417

**Email**

**Type of setting**

Childcare on non-domestic premises

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011

## 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).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

## **Description of the setting**

Small Beginnings Playgroup opened in 1990 and operates from the main hall in a Scout Hut in St Albans, Hertfordshire. They have access to a secure outside play area.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register to care for a maximum of 32 children from two to five years old. They operate five mornings, term time only between 9.10am and 12.10pm. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs six staff who all hold appropriate early years qualifications. They are supported by the Pre-school Learning Alliance and local authority development team.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The highly qualified staff team are very successful in supporting and promoting the children's welfare and learning to a high standard. Some aspects of the planning for physical play is not implemented effectively. Children feel safe and secure, they are cared for in a bright and stimulating environment. Very effective partnership with parents and other early years providers and support agencies contributes significantly to the progress and development of all children. The registered provider and staff team work hard to ensure effective documents and evaluation process is in place to identify areas to be developed to enable them to maintain continuous improvement.

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

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- reviewing the planning and provision for physical play within the hall setting to ensure all children's needs are met.

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

There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding children amongst the staff as they receive regular training. Thorough safeguarding policies and documents from the Local Safeguarding Children Board are on display and readily available. This ensures staff and parents are aware of the setting's commitment to providing a

safe environment for all children. The proprietor has attended workshops on the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) requirements. Exceptionally well-managed documents ensure the well-being of the children and the very smooth running of the provision. Children's overall safety is of high priority. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure potential risks to children are identified and minimised in the hall, garden and on outings. The ethos of the play group is to provide children with new experiences in a safe setting that is accessible by all members of the community. All resources are set out and put away at the end of every session. They are of good quality and are used very imaginatively to provide children with interesting and stimulating activities and play opportunities. A grant that has been secured from the local authority early years partnership and has enabled the group to greatly improve the outside play areas. The setting provides an inclusive setting where all children's individual needs are identified and met in full.

The leadership and management of the setting is exemplary. The registered provider works as the play group supervisor. She is supported by a very highly qualified and committed staff team who work towards ambitious targets across all areas of their practice. There are high aspirations for the setting, staff's professional development and outcomes for all children. All staff are involved in rigorous monitoring and analysis to ensure the setting continues to work towards well-thought through plans for continued improvement. An effective evaluation process takes information from team meeting action plans and weekly reviews of the activities to continually review the service and the overall practice. Recommendations made at the last inspection have been met in full. This has improved their practice and outcomes for all children.

All children's needs are exceptionally well-met through highly effective partnerships with parents, other early years settings and support agencies. The links with home are very strong. The termly parent questionnaire is used to influence practice and to plan for improvements. Parents are able to comment on the children's achievements through their learning journeys and they have regular consultations with the staff team and their children's key person. Children's sense of belonging and self esteem is further promoted with the display of the family board depicting aspects from home. The 'Honey Bear' is taken home for parents to share detail of holidays and special events. The 'Weekend News' books ensure staff are well informed about aspects of home they can use to support the children's play and learning in the setting through out the week. Parents continually support the group in fund raising events, such as, fashion shows and sponsored activities for the children and social evenings out for parents. The funds provide new equipment for the group and donations to national charity events. The newsletter keeps them informed of the planned activities that can be supported at home, fun days, such as, dressing up as super heroes, parties and sports day. During the summer break the play group arranges a play day in the park for children and families to meet up.

Excellent links with local schools are well-established. This is especially strong for children who need additional support as they move settings. A summary of the children's progress towards the early learning goals is shared with the new setting with the parents consent. When necessary accompanied visits help with this

important transition period. The play group is aware of the support provided by the children's centres and local authority early years training opportunities. They use these services to continually improve their practice and outcomes for all children.

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

Children are cared for in a warm, welcoming and interesting environment by a caring and motivated staff team. The setting provides an inclusive setting where all children thrive and make excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Children demonstrate a broad range of skills that will help them develop in the future. The Early Years Foundation Stage is implemented very effectively. There is a very good balance between adult and child initiated activities. Children's individual progress is consistently good and often excellent in relation to their starting points. The process for assessing the children's achievements, recognising their starting points and planning for their future learning is extremely well-established. Consistent evaluation of the children's learning through effective observations in their learning journeys ensures children's next steps are identified and planned for. The outcomes for specific skills, such as, scissor use are recorded to show how well they are progressing. The overall planning shows that themes and topics are well-supported with free play, books, stories, songs and creative projects. However, some planning for activities that promote the children's physical skills is less effective. The lay out of the hall when children have free time with ride-on toys does not have clear outcomes and some activities running alongside were limited because of the space taken by the free play.

Children's understanding of their natural world is drawn into many aspects of the group's routines. The recently refurbished outside play area provides an excellent resource that children can access when they want to. Free flow is well-managed. The park land adjacent to the building is also well-used. The group has adopted a tree which they use as an imaginative and interesting resource. Photographs are used to keep a record of the change of seasons. The area around the tree is used for picnics and focused activities. The older children are keen to talk about their memories of the tree in various states through the year. They clearly understood the changes that take place and can talk confidently about the seasons and weather. Children demonstrate extremely good behaviour and high levels of self-control and independence. All children show a strong sense of security and feel safe within the setting. They show an excellent understanding of what is expected of them, they are aware of the impact their actions have on others playing nearby. They are confident in expressing themselves with their key persons and other adults in the setting. Children are starting to take responsibility for their own and others safety. This is supported with visitors to the setting, such as, the fire service and road safety sessions.

Children show an exceptional understanding of the importance of following good personal hygiene routines. They clearly understand they must wash their hands before snack times and can explain they are washing off the germs before they eat and to be nice and clean. Parents are well-informed about the healthy snacks provided at the setting. Children have many excellent opportunities to engage in a

wide range of activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. Through activity songs at circle time, children learn about different parts of their body and start to understand how they feel and how their body responds to exercise. They engage in physical activities in the hall, garden and the park land adjacent to the setting as part of everyday plans and routines. Children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle and the wider natural world is promoted to a high standard. The group allotment provides excellent focus for both planned and spontaneous activities. All children have Wellington boots so they can access the outside play freely. They dig and play with the compost, set out seeds in pots and watch the plants as they grow through the year. Vegetables are sown, cared for and cropped by the children. They are beginning to understand the concept of recycling as they use the large containers as part of the gardening projects.

All aspects of the children's learning is extremely well-supported by staff who are very experienced and keen to get involved in all aspects of their play. The animal hospital imaginative play session proved very popular. Staff introduced children to new concepts in the care and treatment of the toy animals. Their language and social skills are extended to a very high level. The resources are available for most of the session, children are able to return to extend and promote their own play ideas throughout the morning. They work exceptionally well independently and with other children showing excellent negotiation and co-operation skills.

## 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>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### 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>	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



