

# Early Days Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	146754
<b>Inspection date</b>	29/03/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Martyn Richards

<b>Setting address</b>	Oughtonhead School, Mattocke Road, HITCHIN, Hertfordshire, SG5 2NZ
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<b>Type of setting</b>	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**

Early Days Playgroup registered in November 2002. It operates from a large, self-contained room at Oughton Primary School in Hitchin. The children have access to a covered outdoor play area.

The playgroup opens Monday to Friday during term times. It is open from 8.45am to 3.15pm. A lunch club operates from 11.45am to 12.15pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 27 children aged between two and five years may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 64 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age range. The playgroup receives funding for early education places. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Seven staff directly work with the children. The leader has a graduate qualification in Early Years education. Five other staff hold relevant childcare qualifications. Two hold National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 and three hold NVQs at level 2. The playgroup is registered with Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

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

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children make outstanding progress in this vibrant and welcoming playgroup. It provides excellent levels of care and a rich programme of activities. It is a fully inclusive playgroup, making excellent provision for all children. The playgroup's very close links with its host children's centre and adjacent schools means it ensures parents, carers and children experience exemplary levels of continuity of care. It has built on the strengths noted in its previous report and regularly engages in very thorough self-evaluation. It is dynamically led, and has an outstanding capacity to improve in the future.

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

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

- planning additional activities which link indoor and outdoor play, to promote children's creativity and further extend their learning.

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

Ensuring children's safety is at the heart of the playgroup's concerns and staff safeguard children to an outstanding level. Careful checks are made on the suitability of anyone seeking to work with the children. Visitors sign in and out and

both the activity room and the outdoor areas are secure from intrusion, or from children slipping out unnoticed. There are clear and rigorous procedures for circumstances in which a child might not be collected at the expected time, or be met by an unexpected adult. All staff are fully trained in safeguarding and child protection issues. They are alert to any possible indications of mistreatment, and they know what action they must take if they are concerned. Regular and thorough risk assessments are made of the activity rooms and outdoor areas, and of the furniture and equipment, to ensure there are no unexpected hazards facing the children. A very effective key person scheme means that for each child there is a single named adult with special responsibility for overseeing his or her welfare and progress, and for liaising with parents. Parents hold this system in high regard, which allows children to feel highly safe and cared for at all times. The thoroughness of the playgroup's safeguarding, and the caring and encouraging relationships of staff with the children, lay an excellent foundation for positive learning and development.

This is a self-critical playgroup, with staff always looking to drive forward improvements. They have undertaken a wide range of additional training to enhance their skills, and the results are very evident. For example, staff employ a range of skills to further extend children's progress in language. Staff meet regularly to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the playgroup and rigorously assess the extent to which it is meeting the individual needs of every child. These discussions result in long-term and short-term plans and have brought about improvements to the toilet facilities and to learning plans. They have fully implemented the recommendations of the previous inspection and have introduced the Early Years Foundation Stage framework very successfully. Staff have also obtained a grant to create a covered decking area for outdoor learning space, allowing children to access it in all weathers.

Outstanding links with the children's centre and the host school enable the playgroup to signpost parents to other services for support and advice while helping ensure consistency among all those working with an individual child or family. Parents think very highly of the playgroup. They comment on the excellent progress their children make, the ease of communication they have with staff, and the confidence they feel in the safety of the playgroup. Staff keep them thoroughly informed about their children's progress, and take full account of any suggestions they make. Recently, most of these have related to improving the toilet provision, and fundraising efforts are being made to bring this about.

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

Staff note the responses of each child during activities and chart the progress they each make over time. Their records show the children come with a wide range of starting points, but make very rapid headway in their learning. Parents comment on how much their children enjoy coming to the playgroup and this becomes evident from the moment they arrive. They slip their parents' hands and head straight for the attractive play activities in this colourful and stimulating room. Children eagerly join staff to mix ingredients for homemade modelling dough. They

discuss the thick, sticky texture of the mixture, name the ingredients and decide what to make with the dough once it is ready. Throughout the activity, staff draw the children's attention to changes in the mixture and listen to their conversations. Staff encourage children to listen to each other, and ensure they have time to find the right words for what they want to say. Children also enjoy large jigsaw puzzles of different people, selected to show a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

Staff make excellent use of gestures, pictures and photographs to promote children's language skills. Written language is evident in the displays found in all corners of the colourful activity room, and picture books are made readily available. The ready access of speech therapy, through the playgroup's excellent links with the children's centre, has made a major difference to the speech and learning of some of the children. The playgroup is also fully aware of the importance of continually providing challenges for children who learn quickly. Early science activities allow children to experiment with magnification, weighing and balancing, and extend the understanding of all children extremely well. Children greatly enjoy learning about different days, festivals and celebrations. Recently, they have been learning about Mother's Day. This theme led to children showing an interest in flowers, which was further extended when staff used a hand-held microscope linked to a laptop computer to allow children to see a magnified image of an anemone flower. They wondered at the enlarged images and the colours, patterns and details inside the flowers. Children were also fascinated to see the pores on their fingers when they used the microscope to view their hands. Practical activities such as these capture the imagination of the children and give them an excellent insight into the world around them. Children work extremely well together during their play. For example, children build a complicated train track very peacefully together and work in groups to guide a radio-controlled model insect around the legs of tables and chairs.

Children demonstrate excellent levels of independence when they help themselves to their milk drinks at snack time and then decide to play outside afterwards. Once outdoors, they wash and hang out some dolls' clothes. They also enjoy painting with sticks and leaves, noticing especially the veins on the leaves while they do so, which fits in very well with a recent theme about textures. While the range of outdoor play is very good, staff are looking to plan more learning themes that have both indoor and outdoor dimensions to further extend their experiences. The children have an excellent knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe, and they grow in confidence, independence and social ease during their time at the playgroup. They know how important good food and exercise are for them and make the most of being outside. Their behaviour is excellent and they are relaxed and friendly. The personal attitudes, knowledge and skills they acquire in the playgroup will stand them in very good stead in their future education.

## 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

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### 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

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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