

Saplings Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	123565
Inspection date	29/03/2011
Inspector	ISP Inspection

Setting address	The Scout Hut, Birchwood Way, Park Street, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL2 2SE
Telephone number	0798 5968 759
Email	
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

Saplings pre-school was registered in 1999 and is committee run. It operates from a scout hut in Park Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire. The playgroup serves the local area and has strong links with a local school. It is accessible to all children and there is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The pre-school opens during school term times. It is open Monday to Friday from 9.15am until 12.15pm. A lunch club is provided on Tuesdays from 12.15pm until 1pm. Afternoon sessions take place if demand allows. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 28 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 43 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The setting provides funded early education for two, three and four-year-olds. The playgroup supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven members of child care staff. Of these, two members hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 2 and five at Level 3 or above. The manager is working towards a degree in Early Years. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The manager and her team are knowledgeable and committed and they are effectively supported by the committee members. Positive steps are taken to ensure children are safeguarded, fully included and have their welfare needs met. There is a close partnership with parents and they share valuable information that promotes children's learning and welfare. Partnership with other professionals involved in the children's learning and development is a key strength of the provision. Monitoring of the provision is ongoing and steps are taken to ensure this covers all the outcomes for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review the planning and organisation of systems to ensure every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs, with particular regard to large group sessions and providing further opportunities for outdoor play
- develop further the culture of reflective practice so that it includes children's views and that of their parents or carers and use this to identify the setting's

strengths' and priorities for development that will improve the quality of provision for all children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded as the manager and her staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and effective links with supporting agencies ensure children's welfare is protected. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and relevant training is implemented as necessary. Clear recruitment procedures ensure that all staff working with children are suitable to do so and volunteers, such as students, are closely supervised to protect themselves and children. Effective procedures for arrival and departure ensure children are handed over safely to a known adult.

The manager and her close team have a clear vision for the future. They are keen to implement ideas from recent training, such as, ensuring learning styles and preferences are fully incorporated into the children's play and learning. Monitoring of the provision and the service provided takes place through team meetings and informal discussions within the team. Some areas to develop have been identified, such as, effective use of the outdoor play area. Although children's and parents' views are welcome these are yet to be included in the process. Previous recommendations have been effectively addressed. For example, parents now regularly receive details of their children's progress. Children, parents and carers speak well of the pre-school and comment positively on the support that they receive. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning through daily discussions and the sharing of children's achievements or targets for development, such as, speech and language support.

Staff work very hard to ensure the environment and resources are suitable and accessible for the children. For example, they set up and clear away the equipment each day. During the first half of the session children are busy and engaged in their play and some good use is made of children's interests, such as dinosaur play. Children are less engaged in the large group activities, such as story time. Children love the well resourced outdoor area. This is currently a timed activity which potentially limits children's active learning. Staff are well deployed, their individual responsibilities, including key worker duties and support for children with specific needs are well known. Opportunities for training ensure staffs' knowledge and skills are updated and enhanced. The manager has established close partnerships with outside agencies, such as, health visitors and family support professionals. This means that any advice or guidance to meet individual needs can be quickly obtained and implemented.

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

The manager and her team have a clear understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals and one-to-one support is provided to ensure that an inclusive practice is provided. Children are highly valued and advice from supporting agencies is sought when necessary so that they can fully participate. Planning is continually reviewed, flexible and linked to all the areas of learning. Children's initial interests are well known and obtained through the 'Children's information pack'. These are completed by parents and used effectively in the settling in period so that children feel comfortable and secure. Children's ongoing interests, such as superheroes, are beginning to be implemented into the planning. Staff are developing systems to ensure these are fully embraced into the activities offered.

Children play well independently and co-operatively in groups becoming active, curious and inquisitive learners. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities that fosters their learning. Children confidently select resources set out for them. They particularly enjoy imaginative play in the home area. This area is often changed to create added interest and stimulation, such as, a pet shop or doctor's surgery. They also enjoy imaginatively playing with a wide range of dinosaurs which are set out in a tray for ease of access. Language development is particularly well supported. Children enjoy helping themselves to the wide range of books. They share these with their friends and staff members in the cosy book area. Positive steps are taken to effectively support children who are learning English as an additional language. For example, photograph books showing children engaged in activities, assist with emerging language skills. In addition, songs and nursery rhymes in children's home languages are obtained from parents and learnt by the team. This means that children are able to hear their home languages in their play which supports their acquisition of English language. Some members of staff are also able to use sign language to help children express their needs. Children self register on arrival to help them recognise their own names and those of their friends. The manager is considering using photographs alongside these so that younger children are also helped to recognise them. Mark making is available indoors at specific tables, it is also available outdoors and children confidently select these resources. The manager is monitoring the use of mark making tools in areas, such as the home area. Early mathematical and problem solving skills are supported through imaginative play, construction, jigsaws songs and parachute play.

Children are effectively encouraged to develop the habits and behaviour appropriate to good learners, their own needs and those of others. Children's good health is promoted through consistent routines that help prevent the spread of infection. Dietary needs are well known and snack time is supported so that they develop good manners and are encouraged to pour their own drinks. This means that children develop skills for the future, such as independence 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

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	3
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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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