

Little Fishes Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 254465
Inspection date 05/06/2011
Inspector Elaine Poulton

Setting address St Mary's Parish Church, The Green, Aldridge, Walsall,
West Midlands, WS9 8NH

Telephone number 01922 455229

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.

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

W: 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

Little Fishes Playgroup opened in 1996. It operates from two rooms within a building sited in St Mary's Parish Church, Aldridge, Walsall. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the group at any one time. There are currently 30 children on roll who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage age range. The provision is registered with Ofsted on the Early Years Register. The playgroup serves the local area and is open Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings from 9.30am until 12pm and Monday afternoon between 12.30pm and 3pm during term time only. Little Fishes supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions.

There are six staff employed to work with the children. Four staff have appropriate early years qualifications to Level 3 and the manager is a qualified special needs teacher. The playgroup receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Most children make significant progress in their learning and development because they are extremely well supported by an experienced staff team who have fully embraced the Early Years Foundation Stage learning and development framework. They plan an extensive and challenging range of activities creating a stimulating and inclusive environment where all children are safe, secure and happy. There is very strong emphasis on identifying individual children's interests, needs and working cohesively with parents and other professionals to support each child in reaching their full potential. The self-evaluation is reflective and the team diligently strive to ensure they make continual improvement to benefit the children in this provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- enhancing further the plans already in place for exploiting the outdoor play space.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Procedures for safeguarding children in this playgroup setting are highly effective. There is an extensive range of policies, procedures and permissions to ensure

children are safe and secure. There are stringent staff vetting, induction and continued suitability procedures in place. Staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding, paediatric first aid and food handling and hygiene to support their practice. Staff are extra vigilant with visitors and security in and around the premises. There is a comprehensive risk assessment in place which includes additional daily checks to be undertaken. Children feel safe inside the setting as they are learning how to leave the premises quickly in an emergency situation. They are prompted to pick up toys from the floor and to tidy away resources after use to keep the floor space free from tripping hazards. These measures are effective in promoting the health, well-being and safety of all children in the setting.

Inclusive practice is exemplary in the setting and inclusion is strongly promoted through all activities and discussions. Children benefit from high levels of individual attention to ensure they reach their full potential. Children's individual identities are nurtured and practitioners are dedicated to adapting the provision to meet the constantly changing needs of the children who attend. Exceptionally well planned support systems are in place for children with learning needs and/or disabilities. This includes liaison and support from other professionals involved in the early years assessment process.

Children benefit from the enthusiastic and committed staff team who strive to make the environment attractive and welcoming to all. At the start of each session staff select a range of toys, games and equipment and organise the play space effectively. At the end of the session they clear away and store all of the resources. This is because the playgroup is situated in a building which is a community resource and used by other groups. Resources are well utilised and stored in labelled containers which allow children easy access and ample opportunity to choose and make decisions about their play. The rooms are spacious which allow children very good opportunities to move around freely indoors. They have regular access to the outdoor areas where they can explore, investigate and involve themselves in energetic play.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Staff demonstrate an exceptional commitment to working in partnership with parents and provide comprehensive opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the playgroup and management team. Informal discussions take place regularly between parents and the child's key person. Staff dedicate time to get to know children and their families, fostering strong relationships thus helping to ensure that children settle quickly and feel secure. Excellent quality information is shared with parents through information boards, newsletters, texts, website updates, leavers certificates and Learning Journeys. Parents speak extremely highly of the playgroup's approach to sharing their children's experiences and feel very well informed regarding their children's care, learning and development. Parents say the friendly atmosphere and approachability of staff are key factors in encouraging them to enrol their younger children and to recommend the group to other parents. Staff acknowledge that working in partnership impacts positively on children's attainment.

Partnerships with others who deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage are

extremely effective. Staff establish strong links with other early years professionals involved in the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Practitioners are dedicated to working with external agencies to support the inclusion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, the playgroup has made effective relationships with the speech therapist, the local authority special needs coordinator and teaching staff within local schools. This ensures continuity of care and effective progression for all children during the transition from playgroup to nursery school.

Excellent communication exists between staff and management meaning that good practice and the desire to make the setting the best that they can is actively encouraged and shared. The personal and professional development of staff is encouraged and a variety of training courses have been attended and then cascaded to others. The manager provides very clear guidance to staff and a comprehensive range of written policies and procedures to fully support the smooth running of the group. The self-evaluation process is exceptionally well considered. The group's development plan clearly outlines the setting's strengths and priorities for improvement. Management successfully lead and encourage a culture of reflective practice. In 2009 the setting received Quality Assurance through the Pre-school Learning Alliance and is currently working towards the local authority's quality assurance scheme. Both recommendations raised at the setting's last inspection have been fully addressed and have resulted in improved outcomes for children. This dedicated approach and professional attitude to ongoing evaluation assists the setting to continually look at ways to improve the quality of the service provided.

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

Most children make significant progress in their learning and development because staff expertly create stimulating, challenging and enjoyable learning opportunities for all children. They recognise that children learn best when they are interested and involved in what they are doing. They demonstrate an unhurried approach and a purposeful rapport with all children. Plans, observations and assessments are effectively linked to the six areas of learning. Digital photographs capture planned learning activities and are used purposefully in individual learning profiles to document children's development.

Staff use an excellent range visual clues to help children understand routines and instructions which also help children to express their needs and wishes. Staff bring all the children together at circle time to share the 'time-line' of planned and free-play events for the session. They make very good use of Makaton sign language to introduce activities and they show children laminated pictures, written words and symbols to help them make choices and decisions about their play. This has a positive impact on all children's learning and development.

Children's independence and freedom of choice is enhanced because of the well utilised resources. Children take part in an excellent range of imaginary play activities and use an extensive array of props to extend and consolidate their

experiences. For example, they are excited to find out about a visit from a fire fighter in a fire engine. They talk about the flashing blue lights and the loud sound the fire engines siren makes to 'warn people it is in a hurry'. They are learning about keeping safe and how they should 'never play with matches'. Children watch a character DVD to carry on the theme, play with toy fire engines, paint flames, look at story books together and in the home corner they wear fire fighter safety jackets and helmets and use lengths of garden hose to help put out fires

There is an effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated play activities and staff use their time exceedingly well to ensure all children benefit from high quality interaction. Staff encourage children to select a play activity that interests them and consequently they spend increasingly longer periods of time experimenting and investigating. Children have space to play energetically or to rest and take part in quiet activities throughout the playgroup rooms. Cosy areas are made inviting where staff read books with the children and engage them in one-to-one discussions. Children take pleasure in working cooperatively with their friends and enjoy investigative activities such as finding out how the laptop and digital camera work. All children are praised consistently for their achievements and good behaviour. As a result, they develop skills for the future and make strides in their learning.

Children have excellent opportunities to understand and adopt healthy habits such as good hygiene practices. For example, they learn about the importance of regular hand washing and practitioners incorporate topics about healthy eating. Children help prepare fruit for snack time and pour their own drinks. They learn about keeping safe through discussions, planned activities and the daily routines. The outside areas are used very creatively and practitioners are currently considering new and innovative ways to further develop and promote free-flow indoor/outdoor play. These measures contribute effectively towards children's good health and wellbeing.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

