

Elmtree Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

Gill Walley

Setting address

Bishops Cleeve Primary School, Tobyfield Road, Bishops
Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL52 8NN

Telephone number

07800600316

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*.

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Description of the setting

Elmtree Playgroup opened in 1995 and operates from the Elliott building in the grounds of Bishops Cleeve Primary School. It is situated in the centre of Bishops Cleeve on the outskirts of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The group is registered on the Early Years Register. The playgroup has one base room with toilet facilities, and use of the two school halls, library, special educational needs room and staff rest areas. There is immediate access to an enclosed, outdoor play area with grass and impact-absorbent surfaces. The playgroup has shared use of the school's hard-standing playground, playing fields and picnic area.

The Playgroup may care for no more than 20 children in the early years age group; of these, none may be under two years at any one time. There are currently 34 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. The playgroup receives funding for the provision of free early education for three and four year olds. The playgroup is open during school terms on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9am and 3pm and on Wednesdays and Fridays between 9am and 11.30am.

Children attend from the local community. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and is able to support children who are learning English as an additional language. The playgroup employs six members of staff all of whom including the play leaders, hold recognised childcare qualifications. The playgroup has close links with the primary school, area special needs co-ordinator and Playgroup and Toddler Association fieldworker. It also has close links with the local children's centre.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children respond well to the care and support they receive and make good progress. Activities are interesting and well organised and all children feel valued and fully included in these. There are good links with parents and carers, the host school, the children's centre and the local authority, and information is shared well. The new playleader and her staff have an extremely clear knowledge of the playgroup's strengths and areas for improvement, such as developing the outdoor learning area further. Children feel very safe and are kept safe although the playgroup does not have a policy for dealing with bullying if it arose. The playgroup has an outstanding capacity to improve.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- enhance children's outdoor learning experiences by providing opportunities for them to grow plants

- ensure that a policy is in place for dealing with any incident of bullying should it arise.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding is good because staff have a comprehensive knowledge and fully implement policies and procedures to ensure children's safety, although there is no anti-bullying policy in place at present. There are robust recruitment and vetting procedures. Security within the playgroup is good, because children are very carefully supervised, gates and doors are locked and the children can identify visitors because they wear identity badges. Risk assessments are thorough and carried out regularly to minimise accidents, for example during the farm visit. Fire drills are practised regularly so that children and adults become familiar with the routine.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. They receive regular information through newsletters and on the notice board. They are happy with the provision and feel their views are taken seriously. They say their children enjoy the playgroup because there are so many exciting activities and because adults take such good care of them. Parents and carers feel the children gain confidence and self-esteem because the adults praise and encourage them constantly. Staff keep parents and carers well-informed about their children's progress and share their 'learning journals' with them. They invite parents and carers into the playgroup, which helps them understand how they can be more involved in their children's learning at home. Partnerships with the host school are very good. The children visit the reception classroom and use the hall, playground and field regularly.

There are good links with teachers to ensure children have a smooth transition to full-time education. There are good partnerships with outside agencies to support children with specific needs. Information is shared effectively with other settings the children attend.

The playgroup is led and managed well and staff meet regularly to discuss planning and areas for improvement. The new playleader drives ambition very well and has already made a number of significant changes, for example by encouraging parents and carers to be much more involved. There are very good self-evaluation systems in place. Staff reflect on their practice constantly and parents', carers' and children's views are valued. The children choose what they want to learn about and the adults plan activities around their interests. For example, the children talked about crossing the road so the adults planned sessions when they learned how to do this safely, followed by a walk into the village to practise. When the children made playdough pizzas, the playleader planned some cooking sessions for them to design and make real pizzas.

Recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed. In particular, staff now provide the children with more opportunities to develop their understanding of number, shape and size. The staff make effective use of a good range of resources to meet the needs of the children. They actively promote equality and diversity and work very hard to ensure all children are fully integrated into activities. They are very aware of the different learning styles of boys and girls, and provide activities outdoors which encourage boys to develop their early writing skills. Staff work well together and attend training to enhance their

qualifications and expertise, for example in managing children's behaviour.

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

Children achieve well in all areas of learning because activities are well-planned and organised. Key staff evaluate the achievement of the children in their 'learning journals' and use these assessments to identify the next steps each child needs to take in order to move on. They can then assess whether children have achieved these targets. Children behave extremely well and are kind, thoughtful and considerate towards one another. They have negotiated their own rules and often talk about them to help them remember how to behave. They share their toys well and help with the tidying up routine. Staff support the children in their behaviour and use reward stickers to encourage them. They have an excellent relationship with them and know each child extremely well. Children learn to take turns and become confident in their choice of activity. Festivals, such as Diwali, Eid, Christmas and 'Australia Day' enrich their experiences and give them an understanding of other lifestyles, customs, dress and food. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, are fully included in activities and the staff are very sensitive to their needs.

Children are encouraged to make healthy choices at snack time and learn about the importance of exercise. They develop a very good understanding of keeping healthy and safe, for example through visits from police and fire officers. They develop a sense of responsibility, for example through their sponsored walk. Children develop their physical skills well as they ride their bicycles, balance on tyres and climb in the outdoor area. They use the outdoor environment well for many different activities although they do not have opportunities to grow plants. They learn about animals from visits to the farm and visitors who show them animals they may not have seen before.

Children are keen to participate in a good range of interesting activities. They develop good creative skills, for example by painting butterflies after they had watched some emerge from caterpillars and had been on a bug hunt. They practise their speaking and listening skills and develop their imagination through role play, for example in the 'building site' or when washing and dressing their dolls. They begin to learn sounds and enjoy a wide range of books including ones about different faiths and cultures. They learn to recognise their names during registration. The adults make learning meaningful for the children, for example after visiting the farm they learned about shapes by discussing the different parts of a tractor. Children enjoy practising their counting skills through singing songs and nursery rhymes. The adults recap on this knowledge well, for example when the children were playing with skittles they talked about how many they had knocked down and how many were still standing. Children are skilful at completing simple programs on the computer and use the digital camera. They learn to solve problems and persevere with puzzles and sorting and matching games. Overall, children are prepared well for their future learning experiences.

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	1

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	1
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	1
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	1
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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