

# Oulton Abbey Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	218197
<b>Inspection date</b>	12/05/2011
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<b>Email</b>	
<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*.

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## Description of the setting

Oulton Abbey Playgroup opened in 1970 and operates from a single storey building, which adjoins Oulton Abbey. The playgroup is situated in the village of Oulton on the outskirts of Stone, Staffordshire. There is a fully enclosed area for outside play. The group is open from Monday to Friday 9am to 12 noon, term time only. Depending on the needs of the parents, the playgroup also operates a lunch club on a Wednesday and Thursday from 12 noon to 1pm.

The club is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 26 children from two to four years may attend the club at any one time. There are currently 23 children on roll, some are in part time places.

There are five members of staff who work directly with the children, half of whom hold childcare qualifications.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is inadequate.

Children's welfare, learning and development are significantly compromised due to the lack of understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework regulations. The committee members and staff demonstrate an extremely poor understanding and reluctance to adhere to the legal requirements and in particular, the learning and development requirements of the framework. This has resulted in a number of breaches in regulations. Children's well-being is insufficiently promoted in order for them to be safe. Systems used to evaluate practice have not identified the considerable weaknesses, and so little has been done to improve outcomes for children. Inclusive practice is weak, with children's ability to understand and explore the wider world, limited. Partnership with parents is inadequate. Written information is scarce and sometimes inaccurate, which misinforms parents.

Overall, the early years provision requires significant improvement. The registered person is given a Notice to Improve that sets out actions to be carried out.

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

To comply with the requirements of the EYFS the registered person must take the following action by the specified date:

- ensure that all members of staff understand the safeguarding procedure; including the steps to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare) 10/06/2011

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| • improve the security of the building in order to prevent intruders entering (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare)  | 06/06/2011 |
| • conduct a risk assessment in order to identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis and review it regularly (Suitable premises, environment and equipment)  | 06/06/2011 |
| • carry out a risk assessment for each type of outing, which includes an assessment of adult:child ratios and review the assessment before each and every outing (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare)   | 06/06/2011 |
| • lead a collaborative culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion which takes account of the views of users to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development that will improve the quality of the provision for all children (Organisation) | 30/06/2011 |
| • promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice through a variety of meaningful activities that help children to develop an awareness of the wider world (Organisation)   | 30/06/2011 |
| • plan and organise systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and developing experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs (Organisation)   | 30/06/2011 |
| • ensure children's behaviour is managed effectively and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare).   | 06/06/2011 |

To improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- recognise the importance of keeping healthy, and those things which contribute to this, such as, routines for hand washing in order to reduce the risk of cross-infection
- provide further opportunities for children to develop their independence through everyday routines.

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

Safeguarding is a significant weakness within the playgroup as staff have an extremely poor understanding of the regulations. A written safeguarding procedure is in place but staff lack the understanding to sufficiently implement this. In addition, their ability to carry out procedures should an allegation be made against them are also considerably limited. Both the committee's and the staff team's general approach to safeguarding is of making assumptions. This has the potential to put a child at significant risk should a child protection issue arise. Basic daily checklists of the environment are completed, which identify most of the immediate

risks, although areas, such as the outdoor area have not been fully checked as there are some hazardous plants. Furthermore, the playgroup does not carry out any written risk assessments for the building, the equipment and resources or the outdoor area. Outings, should they happen, are also not assessed. Issues around the security of the premises are not fully monitored as main doors are unlocked at times, such as when parents are dropping off their children. The considerable potential risk to children is not observed or acknowledged by staff or management. Additional basic documentation is all in place and includes a range of adequate written procedures which the playgroup shares with parents, should they request them.

Partnership with parents is inadequate. Although the playgroup communicates with them through brief daily discussions, it has misinformed parents in relation to the intentions of the learning and development requirements, in particular the assessment process. Based on both verbal discussions and written documentation provided by the playgroup, parents have been led to believe that children's development would be compromised if assessments were carried out, as many view the process as detrimental to their children. The delivery of such inaccurate information leads to poor practice in the playgroup. Partnerships with other provisions that the children may attend, or are about to move onto, are limited, due to the lack of information regarding children's development. The committee, manager and staff do not clearly value the relationship between themselves and other settings, and for that reason, they are unable to fully support children's continuity of care.

The playgroup's ability to measure its progress is very weak and therefore effectively limits its capacity to improve. The committee and staff are extremely reluctant to make changes in order to improve outcomes for the children. This is further compounded by their reluctance to meet the regulations, viewing them as unnecessary and with no value to what they do with the children. The manager attends some of the committee meetings and passes on any issues or requests. These are left with the committee, which then makes the overall decision as to whether topics are dealt with or not. Very brief minutes are taken by the manager, but these are not shared with parents or staff. Furthermore, issues that are brought up are insufficiently investigated which leads to little or no action being taken.

Staff demonstrate a poor understanding of how to implement the content of their equality policy, which then allows staff to insufficiently value and respect all children and their families. Some steps have been taken to celebrate some of the families' backgrounds, but this is limited to just those children who solely attend the playgroup, and with little focus given to the wider world. Staff are generally unaware of other groups, and although the manager has received recent training and is the educational needs coordinator for the playgroup, she has failed to fully implement effective practice in order to sincerely celebrate all backgrounds and cultures. Furthermore, staff regularly reinforce key stereotypes through everyday language, such as, referring to children as, 'firemen' and 'policemen' as they dress up and act out their roles.

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

Children are not sufficiently developing across the early learning goals. The committee and staff have failed to fully understand the learning and development requirements that underpin the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. They have taken the decision to not deliver these, which are legal requirement. Due to the lack of understanding, members of the committee and staff view the learning and development requirements as a way of forcing children to learn, with a formal assessment process that takes time away from both staff and the children. This misrepresentation of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework has resulted in very poor practice with inadequate levels of support from staff. Both the manager and her deputy have failed to support their remaining staff, of which most are unqualified and with limited professional experience of working within the childcare sector. Overall, staff lack an understanding of how children learn and the ways in which they can help children further develop. This along with their reluctance to deliver the learning and development requirements has resulted in a range of uninteresting and poorly planned activities which do not naturally extend children's existing level of ability. Consequently, there are times when activities either lack sufficient resources or are time bound, which then leads to unnecessary interruptions in children's learning. Children regularly become frustrated at having to stop what they are doing or are required to take turns or share because resources are limited. Staff address this by merely correcting children's unwanted behaviour, and offer no support in the form of a simple explanation as to why they may benefit from a positive disposition to learn.

Children are at times unresponsive to staff's constant reprimands and carry on regardless, sometimes throwing scissors at each other or running around, unaware of the rules or more importantly their own safety. Some structure to the morning's events allows a small number of children to feel some sense of security in their surroundings as they greet their friends and engage in their own play. However, there are times when these routines are too rigid and this then begins to impact on children's ability to either continue their self-initiated play or to simply have the time to finish their piece of work. In addition, staff tend to deliver last minute unplanned activities in order to fill the gaps whilst waiting for tables to be laid in preparation for snacks or for areas to be arranged for their play. These times are generally chaotic, with some staff clearly overwhelmed with the responsibility of managing the children on their own. Stories are read to the children with little opportunity for them to become involved, or as they sing songs, jumping up and down and falling over each other or into things and then hurting themselves.

There are times, however, when some opportunities are provided and children's behaviour starts to improve as they are listened to and their learning is extended through some basic questions. Unfortunately this is often short lived as activities are poorly planned, with staff having inadequate teaching skills and not knowing each child's level of ability. Behaviour management is an overwhelming issue for the playgroup and often dictates the quality of the activities and how children play. Children are asked to help tidy away before outdoor play and as some happily place their things in the boxes and on the shelves, others throw their toys across

the room or wander off, not helping at all. The staff's general attitude is to tell children, often more than once, to help, but then as children ignore them, they take the attitude that this is what children do. Staff have failed to understand their role in helping children develop the skills to work as part of a group, take turns, and to share, helping them to understand right and wrong.

On occasion, where activities are planned for, children clearly enjoy the support, albeit limited, and are happy to direct their own learning. Staff set out resources, such as fresh fruit, with explanations beforehand about what they are going to make. Staff ask questions which test children's understanding of texture and taste, recalling a previous activity where they tasted sweet and sour fruits. Children are very confident at recalling past events and quickly and loudly answer questions, eager to move on. Staff try to extend their learning but clearly struggle, not knowing where or how to take them next. As a result, as in many activities, children's behaviour starts to affect their enjoyment and staff take the children into the other room where tables have been set up ready for the practical side of their task. The manager adequately directs children's play, asking children to yet again share the chopping boards as they tussle for space, sliding the board to themselves whilst others complain that they do not have one. Staff again spend some considerable time correcting children's behaviour but offering little support as to why they need to share. Simple questions allow some children to enjoy the activity as they carefully chop fruit with the plastic knives. However, staff are clearly not sure of their role and so either just stand and watch or ask the manager what they should do next. Children then place the chopped fruit into a large bowl which is then served to them in their own individual bowls. Activities such as this offer children some support and encouragement to extend and challenge their learning, but due to a lack of direction from the manager, poor planning and an inability to understand children's individual aptitudes, they often lose focus and their learning restricted.

Children's safety is significantly compromised as the playgroup has failed to fully assess the overall safety of their setting. In addition, recognising its own responsibility in helping children to stay safe is weak as it views safety as a hindrance to children's enjoyment. This approach to safety leads to a lack of understanding of the simple rules and boundaries children should adhere to while at the playgroup. Children run from one side of the building to another with toys in their hands or leave items lying around which get kicked about. The planning of the areas which contain the resources is limited, as it allows children to climb up onto the shelving units in order to reach their favourite books. Staff ask children to get down and then find the book for them, with no explanation as to why climbing in this way is dangerous, or thinking about how staff could adapt the environment to make it safe for the children. As they run about outside, children enjoy the freedom of the large playing field but have no sense of danger as they disappear from sight. Hazards are not always identified and the staff take a very relaxed approach to checking areas beforehand and assuming everything will be fine.

Children demonstrate a basic understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles as they are provided with biscuits at snack time and parents are asked to provide fruit. Some opportunities are provided for children to become independent as they pour their own drinks and take two biscuits from the tin. However, this is not



extended to other routines, such as putting on coats or aprons or as they tidy away. Children are prompted to go to the bathroom, with some needing extra help in using soap as well as water when washing their hands. The staff's ability in limiting the risk of cross-infection is hindered by allowing all the children to use the same towel and all staff use the same kitchen towel to wipe their hands.

## 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>	4
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	4

### 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>	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	4
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding	4
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	4
The effectiveness of partnerships	4
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	4

### 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>	4
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	4
The extent to which children feel safe	4
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	4
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	4

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