

Playhouse Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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

Playhouse Nursery is a privately owned nursery and was registered in 1986. It operates from a large Victorian semi-detached house near the centre of Great Malvern. Children use the first four floors of the property and have access to a courtyard and purpose-built outdoor play area.

The nursery serves Malvern and the surrounding area and is open each weekday from 8am to 6pm, closing only at Christmas and Bank Holidays. It is registered on the Early Years Register to care for up to 40 children in the early years age group at any one time, of whom 21 may be aged under two years. The nursery is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language are welcomed into the nursery. There are currently 62 children on roll.

The nursery employs 12 members of staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, two at level 2, and two are working towards level 2 and 3 qualifications. The manager and deputy both have a degree in Early Years and the manager has achieved Early Years Professional Status. Each floor supervisor has achieved a Level 2 Team Leader qualification. The nursery also employs a cook and receives teacher support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children thrive at the nursery because of the individualised care they receive from the caring practitioners. They enjoy a well-balanced range of indoor and outdoor play opportunities that promote their development successfully in most aspects of their learning. The management of the nursery is strong; the manager works well with her motivated staff team to reflect upon their practice and carefully plans actions for improvement that are well-targeted and secure improvement well. Good working partnerships with parents and others involved in children's care further ensure that children's individual needs are met. Some positive steps have been taken to involve parents in their children's learning and to gain feedback from them as part of the process of self-evaluation.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve documentation relating to children's development to give parents a clear picture of how their children are progressing towards the early learning goals and the identified next steps for their learning, and to help practitioners to identify any gaps in children's learning
- consider further ways to help children learn to value diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All practitioners are aware of their roles and responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of the children who attend. They have all completed safeguarding training and there are comprehensive procedure documents to refer to should they have any concerns. Children are further safeguarded by robust recruitment and vetting of staff, and systems for appraisal ensure their ongoing suitability. Risk assessment is effective in ensuring that all areas of the nursery are safe for children to use. Staff are vigilant in their supervision and children display a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Many arrangements to safeguard children's health and well-being are excellent; for example, nourishing meal and snack menus take careful account of children's individual dietary requirements and allergies. Procedures to promote good personal hygiene and to minimise the risk of cross-infection are mostly implemented well.

The nursery presents as a welcoming environment, both indoors and outdoors. Each well-organised and equipped playroom is adorned with stimulating displays of children's artwork, photographs of them at play, posters and items of interest. Space is utilised well to create different areas for play. The resources include some that reflect positive images of diversity. The outdoor play area offers an exciting place for children to explore.

The practitioners generally demonstrate a very good knowledge of how children learn and instinctively know when to play an active role in children's play and when to stand back and let them play freely. The key person system ensures that children's individual needs are met. Regular observations of children are used to assess children's progress and to identify the next steps for their future learning. Information gathered is used to inform weekly planning to ensure that children are offered a choice of activities and many experiences that build upon their interests and abilities. The methods used to document children's progress do not, however, provide a clear picture of where children are in their learning. Therefore, practitioners are not able to clearly identify gaps in children's learning or help parents to see how well their children are progressing towards the early learning goals.

Partnerships with parents and others involved in children's care are good. Positive two-way communication is actively encouraged. Prospective parents receive valuable information as they are shown around the nursery and settling-in arrangements are agreed to suit the children and their parents. When children find it difficult to separate from their parents, the practitioners provide sensitive support and reassurance for both the child and the parents. Parents praise all aspects of the provision highly. The staff team value feedback from parents and have tried various strategies to encourage this, with some success. The newly established parent group has been successful in bringing groups of parents and staff together for social and fundraising events. Communication books are taken between the settings children attend. In this way, practitioners are able to plan activities that complement the experiences children have elsewhere.

Self-evaluation involves staff and some feedback from children and their parents. Rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of the provision takes place and action plans that are likely to bring about sustainable improvement build upon the already good practice observed. The practitioners recognise that their knowledge about different cultures is not strong. Therefore, they lack some confidence in supporting children to learn to value diversity. They also recognise that their systems for observation and assessment would benefit from further improvement.

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

Children are mostly very happy and settled in the nursery. They develop strong relationships with the staff and many of the older children have close friendships with their peers. There are lots of smiles of enjoyment and laughter to be seen and heard as children go about their play.

Children's all-round learning is promoted and they are helped to gain skills for the future. Children are motivated in their play and learning. Although it is not possible for children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments, they have plenty of opportunities to engage in a good range of outdoor opportunities.

Children demonstrate confidence in their communication skills and many of the older children demonstrate extensive vocabularies. Practitioners use open-ended questioning skilfully to encourage children's language and thinking, and are responsive to the non-verbal communication of babies and young children. Babies and children have good opportunities to practise their mark making skills and to develop an interest in books from an early age. Children are also encouraged to count, problem solve and use mathematical ideas at group times and as they go about their play. Many of the older children count spontaneously and with confidence to twenty and beyond. They talk about patterns they make, for example, as they line up wooden blocks outdoors, talking about how many more they need and how to make them fit according to their design ideas. The children use some programmable toys and are keen to explore the technology of microphones, digital cameras and compact disc players.

Babies develop their confidence to try new things, safe in the knowledge that practitioners are on hand to offer support and reassurance as required. They engage in a painting activity with interest, trying first with paintbrushes and then discovering that it is much more fun to dip their hands in and feel the paint as it oozes through their fingers. They make marks with the paint on the table and paper and are equally excited to wash their hands and then repeat the activity. Outdoors they explore water play and sand with excitement and practise their developing walking skills, delighting in the praise they receive from staff.

The two- to three-year-olds, known as the 'little explorers', enjoy the experiences they have. They are encouraged to choose activities for themselves and staff offer support and some suggestions for play that keep most children suitably engaged.

For example, outdoors the children choose to take out books and small world dinosaurs. Some snuggle up with a member of staff to listen intently as she reads them a story, and others race to use the wheeled scooter, tricycle and pull-along wagon. They pedal, pull or propel the wheeled toys competently at speed around the paved area, negotiating obstacles skilfully. They play with the dinosaurs in the sand area and sieve the sand using available resources. As children begin to lose interest in the activities offered, a practitioner sits with them and sings a song and then suggests they have rides in the wagon.

The older group, known as the 'big explorers', relish opportunities to engage in role play. This is evident as they play with small world resources and link up with others to act out first-hand experiences, such as shopping and caring for babies. Outdoors they become superheroes, racing around the exciting natural environment, chasing one another. They show good imagination, agility and cooperative working as they play together. They are also sensitive to the needs of younger children who may be playing outside at the same time. They join in physical activities with enthusiasm, for example, as they climb the wooden play structure and slide down, knowing they must take turns and wait for an adult to be present before they use it, in order to stay safe. Indoors they dance to the music played, following the actions of their group leader. Children also show awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, enjoying plenty of fresh air and exercise, delicious meals and opportunities to rest according to their needs, and developing awareness of personal hygiene routines generally well.

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	2
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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