

Lowater Street Play & Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Alison Putnar

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

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Description of the setting

Lowater Street Play and Pre-school opened in 1987. It operates from the Carlton Community Church Hall in Carlton, Nottingham. Children attend from the local area. The group have access to a large room, two small rooms, kitchen and appropriate toilet facilities. They can also make use of the church hall for physical activities and celebrations. The setting is open each weekday from 9am to 12pm and on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 12.45pm to 3.15pm during school term times. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 40 children on roll. Of these, 26 children receive funding for early education. The group currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All children have English as their first language. There are five staff who work with the children, of these, four hold a recognised early years qualification. The group is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the Nottinghamshire Local Authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The enthusiastic staff team work well together to create an inclusive environment where individuals are respected and valued. Children's care and learning needs are fully accommodated as the setting communicates highly effectively with parents. Links with other professionals are also developing well. Methods for assessing and planning for children's learning are established. As a result, children make good progress in relation to their starting points. Space and resources are used creatively to provide a varied range of stimulating activities that help children learn whilst they play and explore. Children's welfare is well protected through secure practices. The leaders in the setting are exceptionally successful in inspiring the staff team. Together they review their own practice and identify appropriate areas for development to continually improve the setting for the benefit of the children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- establish further the links with other settings some children attend to ensure even greater continuity in children's learning experiences
- create further opportunities for children to positively explore and value similarities and differences in their cultural backgrounds, with particular reference to the cultural background of those in the group.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety and welfare is well maintained in the setting. Staff fully understand their responsibilities to safeguard children and capably describe

procedures for working with relevant agencies to protect children from harm or neglect, should the need arise. Appropriate recruitment and vetting systems ensure that staff are suitable to be working with children. All have relevant experience and the majority hold recognised qualifications for their role. A clear range of policies and procedures are effectively implemented to ensure the smooth day-to-day running. Secure methods are in place for maintaining a safe environment, staff supervise children consistently, doors are kept securely locked and risk assessments are conducted to minimise the likelihood of accidents. Additional safety measures are taken, such as, reviewing the record of accidents to identify any patterns and taking appropriate action to reduce these. The staff team demonstrate a secure understanding of good childcare practices and use their many years of experience to create a stimulating learning environment where children feel safe and secure, thus, enabling them to explore and learn.

The setting effectively provides an enabling environment which supports children's learning and development. Indoor spaces are well organised to enable children to feel comfortable and secure whilst they explore a good range of age appropriate, interesting play materials and activities. The well-considered layout of the areas enable staff to maintain close supervision of children, maintaining their safety, whilst allowing them to develop their independence, for example, selecting toys and resources from the smaller side rooms and through supervised access to bathroom facilities. The premises are clean and brightly decorated and staff work hard to create a welcoming atmosphere. Praiseworthy techniques are used to encourage children to further develop their ideas and interests. For example, the sand activity is placed next to the home corner to enable children to incorporate the material in their imaginative play. A group add sand to the mixing bowls as they 'make cakes' for their friends. Staff have a clear understanding of methods for observing children's developmental progress, highlighting gaps in their learning and setting next steps for children to work towards. Through bringing these into children's play activities, they successfully help the children to make good progress and build on the skills they already have. There is a good balance of free play between small and larger group activities.

The management has a clear sense of purpose and through effective and accurate methods of reviewing and reflecting on their practice, they engage staff in making changes that bring about positive improvements for children's welfare and learning. Regular staff meetings and frequent opportunities for staff development and training ensure that everyone keeps up-to-date with changes and are continually improving their skills for the benefit of the children. Together the staff team identify their strengths and areas for development, taking appropriate action to address any weaker areas. For example, through making use of the church hall and the local environment, the setting has successfully overcome the lack of an outdoor play area. They provide a wealth of physical activities and opportunities to support children's knowledge and understanding of the world. There are future plans to make use of the local school playground as another method to extend outdoor activities for the children. The setting now need to implement their ideas to have a positive impact on the children. This highly positive attitude and commitment to improving and expanding the provision ensures that any issues raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed and demonstrates a strong ability for continuous improvement.

Highly positive relationships with parents emerge from the secure communication methods. Parents are encouraged to be involved in decision-making for the setting through being on the committee, questionnaires or being a 'parent helper' for the session. All parents spoken to during the inspection report that staff are friendly and approachable. They consider their children to be happy, settled and having fun in the setting, whilst making good progress. Parents received useful information about the setting through a pre-school guide. Regular face to face discussions with key workers ensure that parents are well informed about their children's progress and they are able to contribute to their children's learning through sharing individual next steps for learning. Innovative pre-school to home activities are provided promoting close working relationships and supporting children's sense of belonging. Children excitedly take home 'Jofli Bear' bringing him back the next day to share their experiences with others in the group. The number of staff available each session ensures all the children are well supported. Those new to the group are given individual attention and are comforted by their key worker. As a result, most settle well and develop the confidence to begin to play. Visual signs and symbols are used to aid communication and help young ones understand about the routines of the session. Staff succeed in striking a balance between interacting with children to enhance learning and providing time for children to make their own discoveries and learn skills through self-initiated play. Partnerships with other professionals are effective in ensuring that children's individual needs are met. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and are making good progress in relation to their starting points. The setting have established links with local schools to aid children's transition and are developing links with other professionals caring for children in the early years age range to endeavour to work together to provide continuity in children's learning and development.

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

Good relationships are evident between the staff and children. The key worker system enables children to build a close bond with individual staff, helping them to settle and feel confident. All children are warmly welcomed and those new to the setting are appropriately comforted and supported. Children develop a sense of belonging as they see displays of photographs of themselves and their art work. They select their name cards upon arrival and for snack time, which supports early reading skills and letter recognition. Children are making good progress in their development through the staff's effective methods for assessment and teaching. Children enjoy the range of activities provided and some older ones are beginning to understand that they can freely make choices and access other toys stored around the room to extend their play. The children are beginning to develop a sense of responsibility as they help to tidy away toys after play. Behaviour is good in the setting. These young children are sensitively supported to begin to understand the need to share and take turns. Useful visual reminders are used to support children with this, for example, a sand timer is used to help children understand that their turn on the computer has ended. Children build friendships in a mixed age group and work together on the computer to complete a programme.

Children are beginning to explore aspects of the wider world as they access toys and resources that reflect positive images of the wider society. Staff do not fully consider the cultural background and ethnicity of all those who attend when planning activities for special events and celebrations, potentially missing some opportunities to help children value and appreciate each other.

Good methods are used to encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles. These young children follow effective hygiene routines remembering they need to wash their hands before snack time. During the sessions children freely choose when to have their snack, developing an understanding of their own bodies needs. Snacks and refreshments are healthy and children develop their independence as they help to chop the fruit with safety knives or spread their own bread if making sandwiches. A rota is in place for children to visit the local shop to buy the fresh fruit for snacks incorporating wider learning experiences, such as, their knowledge of the world around them and early mathematical concepts as they count the apples they have bought or pay for their items. These trips out are also used as a tool to reinforce safety issues with the children, such as, talking about road safety. Children develop their physical skills as they use a variety of equipment in the church hall including wheeled toys, balls, bean bags and a climbing frame. Staff organise frequent trips in the local community and arrange for interesting visitors to attend the setting to further promote children's learning. Children develop their knowledge of the natural world as they enjoy a trip from a mobile zoo. Photographs of the visit clearly show children's interest in exploring a wide variety of small creatures and insects.

Children practise and develop skills for the future as they explore the wide range of resources and toys available to them. They explore their own ideas and creativity as they access a good variety of craft mediums. Play dough, paint, drawing and collage are readily accessible to the children. During these activities children develop the small physical skills and control needed for writing in the future. Children's language skills are developing as staff engage in play with them and use effective questioning to extend children's vocabulary and introduce other areas of learning. A child holds up a magnifying box containing two ladybirds collected on the trip to the shop, together they talk about the colours and count their spots and legs. Another child brings over some leaves to add to the box, showing their understanding of caring for living things, commenting 'they will like to climb on these'. Registration and story times provide opportunities for children to develop the confidence to talk in larger groups and practise listening skills. Here they explore letter sounds and begin to recognise numbers as they count those in the group, or choose songs to sing. Books are used frequently in the setting to enhance children's learning and develop skills for reading in future. Younger children enjoy playing imaginatively with role play resources, such as, caring for babies or pretending to make foods for each other. Older ones use their own ideas to create models with construction sets or join together the track for their trains to cover a huge area of the pre-school floor.

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	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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
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	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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