

Invicta Park Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number

127276

Inspection date

25/05/2012

Inspector

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Type of setting

Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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*.

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).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Invicta Park Playgroup was registered in 1996. It is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The playgroup operates from two rooms in an army barracks community building. It is situated on an army barracks site in Maidstone, Kent. The playgroup serves the Armed Forces community from the army quarters on site.

A maximum of 50 children between two and eight years may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 34 children on roll. The playgroup is open each weekday from 9.30am to 12.30pm, term times only. In the final two terms of their academic year there is a lunch club for those about to start school until 13.30pm. All children share access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area.

The playgroup supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and a large number of children who speak English as an additional language attend. The playgroup employs eight people and currently supports one student. Four members of staff have qualifications at level 3, two at level 2, and 2 members of staff are currently undertaking a qualification at level 2. The playgroup is supported by Kent early years advisory team.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are safe, secure and happy in this playgroup and their individual needs are met highly effectively by interested, enthusiastic adults. All children make good progress in their learning and development overall, taking into account their starting points. Staff have a strong knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and implement it well. The manager is an inspiration to her team and works well with external agencies and the committee. Children are highly encouraged to role play and to talk about home life, where many children have parents deployed abroad by the army. The management and staff strive towards constant improvement of the nursery and are extremely clear about the way forward.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continue to develop the outdoor area to give children further opportunities for children to have first-hand contact with the natural world.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Arrangements for safeguarding children are very effective and understood by all. All required documentation and records are in place. These are regularly reviewed and updated. Criminal Record Bureau disclosures for staff are carried out to assess their suitability to work with children. The premises are safe and secure to further promote children's safety. For example, any visitor's identity is checked and recorded. Adult to child ratios are adhered to at all times and staff are deployed very well to ensure children are fully supervised at all times, while encouraging safe levels of independence. Staff carry out robust risk assessments and these are supported by daily safety checks.

The manager is extremely hands on in her approach and is an excellent role model. The team works well together and have a very high regard for the manager and each other. All members of staff work hard to identify gaps in their knowledge and access relevant training in order to keep up to date with current good practice. Strategies such as questionnaires, a comments book and open evenings support the playgroup in evaluating their practice. Staff are extremely receptive to support provided by advisors from the local authority, and work very well with them to gather new ideas to bring about further improvement.

Staff organise a wide range of activities and the play space each day to ensure that most areas of learning are covered and children can move freely between their chosen activities. This includes free flow between the indoor and outdoor play area in all but the severest of weathers. The playgroup demonstrates a high commitment to sustainability with junk modelling opportunities using resources collected by both staff and parents. The children plant seeds and closely observe how they grow, supporting them in their understanding of the natural world. The outdoor area is not fully developed in providing opportunities for children to explore the natural world independently.

Staff have a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity. The well-established key person approach ensures that the planning for individual children is led by a member of staff who is best placed to understand their learning needs. Staff plan activities very well, and this enhances the quality of experiences offered to all children in their care. Staff observe and record what children are able to do which helps staff identify significant steps of achievement and shows what a child understands and is able to achieve. Activities are evaluated to ensure the individual needs of all children are met and their welfare promoted. Children with additional needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are extremely well supported both in the playgroup and through strong partnership working with external professional support.

Extraordinarily strong links with parents significantly benefit children. For example, parents access training on child development and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents actively contribute towards their children's learning and development because they are fully informed of the daily activities and are invited to share their children's achievements. Family life is often disrupted owing to a

parent being deployed abroad. Staff support children to write to their parents, sending drawings and letters, sharing stories and keeping absent parents up-to-date on their child's progress. A key strength of the playgroup is the sensitive and caring support they offer to all of the children and families, whose personal circumstances are often uncertain or unsettling.

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

Children benefit from a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The flexible routine allows them to pursue their own interests. The staff's excellent knowledge of the learning and development requirements and the exciting variety of activities and experiences they offer benefits the children well. Staff are friendly and caring which encourages children to be confident to make their needs known. Children make good relationships with staff and each other. The focus of the playgroup is learning through play. Staff keenly encourage independence and responsibility which has resulted in excellent behaviour demonstrated by the children.

Children sit at a table and push their hands into paint to explore textures and colour. Children giggle as they shake their hands and watch the paint droplets land on a staff member's hand, who laughs as the children spread the paint on her hands. Staff are highly responsive to children's emerging interests and help facilitate their play skilfully. Children are beginning to engage in organised play scenarios that have structure and rules. They flee, capture, escape and rescue as they play out themes based on good and evil, and doing "good deeds". The high activity of their role play helps to develop their physical development and well-being. Children enjoy further physical activity on a trampoline and slide and a weekly opportunity to use the barrack's gym hall.

Children enjoy healthy snacks and drinks, and independently access drinking water at all times. A large awning in the outdoor area provides shade from the sun. Staff talk with children about how important it is to have water, explaining that "we sweat and lose water so we need to drink it to replace what we've lost, particularly when it is hot like today". They learn about the importance of having a healthy lifestyle through discussions with staff, for example, talking about what they like to eat in the playgroup and at home. Children learn about aspects of their own safety as they are made aware of safe ways to use small and large equipment, such as knives to spread margarine. All children know what to expect if they must leave the building in an emergency situation because they are involved in regular fire drills.

Children use a laptop independently and play numeracy and language games. The children access a compact disc (CD) player and use this to listen to and move to music. They use the CD player with skill, listening to familiar songs. A small microscope encourages children to view items under its lens, seeing how they become bigger. Musical instruments are made available with children learning to shake, bang or hit to make the sounds. Children are encouraged to develop an

understanding of number as they sing number rhymes and match and sort objects. Children competently use a computer to complete matching games. Children visit the on-site shop to spend fifty pence each in order to gain an understanding of the value of money. Stamps are bought for letters sent to the children's home so that they can see that after posting a letter it is then delivered by the postman. All children are starting to develop their awareness of diversity through activities and resources. They access a wide range of resources to help them positively explore and value differences and similarities in the wider world. All these experiences mean children gain good skills for their future learning.

Most children have a good range of vocabulary and show confidence as they communicate with staff and their friends. Planning for children's individual needs takes into account children who speak and learn English as an additional language. Staff and children use simple words or phrases in the children's home languages to enable them to use their home language in play. This demonstrates to the children that their culture and language is fully recognised and valued. Children are extremely well behaved and highly engaged in their play. Staff are quick to intervene effectively when children occasionally find it difficult to share. Clear explanations and the use of a timer promote children's ability to take turns.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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