

Playschool Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY438929
Inspection date 22/05/2012
Inspector Maura Pigram

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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

Playschool nursery is one of two nurseries which are privately owned. It was registered in 2011. It operates from a converted school building in St Albans, Hertfordshire. There is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round except bank holidays. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6.30pm. Full time and sessional care is offered and children can attend for a variety of sessions. There is a parent car park to the side of the building and a covered area where buggies can be stored. A maximum of 82 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 56 children attending. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs thirteen members of child care staff. Of these, one holds appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and nine at level 3 or above. Three members of staff hold the Early Years Professional Status and one staff member holds the Qualified Teacher Status. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The providers are exceptionally well organised and totally committed to creating the best possible outcomes for the children. The uniqueness of each child is highly valued so that individual learning and welfare needs can be met. Overall the environment is well organised. The strong partnerships with parents and external agencies are a key strength of the nursery. Self-evaluation is rigorous and reflective practice, by the enthusiastic team, ensures children's welfare, learning and development are consistently monitored, resulting in the continuous improvement of the nursery.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- reviewing the use of indoor space for the toddlers, to provide more scope for free movement and homely spaces.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Positive steps, such as regular training and updates, ensure all staff have a very secure understanding of safeguarding issues. Comprehensive policies and procedures are well known by all, which means that any concerns can be effectively managed. Thorough recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure highly suitable staff are recruited and they are very clear in their roles and responsibilities. Exceptional procedures for arrival and departure times and the thorough monitoring of areas used by children ensure children's safety is a high priority. For example, finger print recognition pads prevent unauthorised persons from entering the areas used by children and effective use of closed-circuit television means that children's security is paramount.

The environment is bright, stimulating and welcoming. There is natural light in each base room and creative displays, including family photographs, ensure children and their families develop a strong sense of belonging. Furniture, equipment and resources are of high quality and suitable for the ages of children to support their learning and development. There are ambitious plans in place to further develop the garden so that it is rich in items to promote numeracy and literacy recognition. Space is well used and thoughtful adaptations to the layout of the pre-school and baby room mean that children are independently able to explore their stimulating environments with ease.

The providers value the enthusiastic staff who regularly update their skills and knowledge and have an excellent understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that they effectively plan activities, so that individual needs of the children are thoughtfully considered. As a result, this builds on children's existing knowledge and helps them to develop new skills. The senior management team are highly ambitious and include all staff, parents and children in their regular and thorough monitoring procedures. For example, weekly meetings provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and to contribute their ideas, which are then used to improve outcomes for children.

Parents speak very highly of the setting and the staff who care for their children. They say that their children 'love coming' and 'that they have come on in leaps and bounds since starting'. Parents are able to access an extensive range of information, which ensures they are extremely well informed about how they can support their children's learning. Views from parents are actively taken on board and used to further develop the partnerships and to improve children's outcomes. For example, a website is currently under development so that parents can more actively engage with the nursery and easily assess information regarding their children's learning and development. The partnerships with external agencies are strong. These include the nearby children's centre and schools, where children may attend in the future. This means that transition times are sensitively managed, so that children's learning and development continue to flourish.

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

Children are very happy and settled where they enjoy a wide range of purposeful and varied experiences, including the exploration of high-quality sensory equipment. There is a very good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Children are extremely confident to explore all aspects of the exciting learning environment. For example, resources are easily accessible in low-level storage units or baskets so that all children can make free choice whenever they wish. Space for toddlers, whilst appropriate, provides less opportunities for children to move as freely and have homely spaces. Babies love exploring the wide range of sensory items; they express wonder as a staff member rolls containers filled with various materials towards them. Children's natural curiosity as learners is very well promoted as they explore the garden area and talk about the insects they see and how they live. All children, including babies, delight in using their senses as they explore the texture of dry sand, wet clay and water.

Relationships between children and the staff are excellent. Staff respond to each child's individual need with enthusiasm and sensitivity at all times, showing great excitement as children demonstrate their emerging physical skills, when independently using a sit and ride toy. All children love exploring the stimulating outdoor area, which they access regularly throughout the day. They develop their balancing skills as they walk along the pebbled path. Children persist for some time at activities of their choosing. They take great delight in digging and planting items such as vegetables, flowers and herbs in the raised beds. Children show their increasing knowledge and understanding of the natural world when they excitedly state 'we need to get some water otherwise they won't grow'. They initiate the filling of watering cans and proceed to water their plants. The 'garden centre', which staff set up in the pre-school room, contributes to children's continued learning indoors.

Children love exploring sand, both indoors and outdoors, and learn to problem solve as they dig in the sand and use various items to fill and empty pots. Pre-school children relish in the topic of mini-beasts, which initiated from children's interests. They actively hunt for mini-beasts outdoors using magnifying glasses and containers. Related stories are enthusiastically read by the skilful staff. Phonics are introduced or reinforced and mark-making is easily available, both indoors and outdoors. Some children are able to write their own names and simple sentences. This effectively contributes to their high levels of self-esteem. Children are confident communicators who are developing essential skills for the future. For example, they initiate a game of 'hairdressers'. They organise their roles and delight in using props from the 'hairdressing resource sack' and their laminated 'book of hairstyles', which has been created using children's individual drawings. Excellent communication from staff means that children are encouraged to think and develop their vocabulary. For example, open-ended questions and supportive interaction means that they eagerly respond and learn skills for the future, such as listening and taking turns. Babies and toddlers develop their balance and physical skills as they crawl through tunnels and older toddlers use wheeled toys with confidence. All children love joining in with the music sessions, where they develop

creative, language and physical skills.

Assessment and monitoring of children's achievements and development is exceptional. Children's interests are a key element of all planning. Any additional support is identified early and the strong partnerships with outside agencies mean that individual needs can be effectively met. Key workers are positive role models; children are respected as individuals and all staff encourage independence, sharing and consideration. For example, children know to use their 'indoor feet and voices'. As a result, children have high levels of confidence and self-esteem and behaviour is exemplary. Children's safety is a high priority, positive steps are taken to ensure children are protected from the effects of sun and water is freely available. Mealtimes are sociable occasions with staff being active in promoting children's independence and language skills. Meals are very nutritious, freshly prepared using fresh fruit and vegetables. The cook and staff are very aware of each child's dietary needs and ensure these are effectively met. Older children know that the vegetables planted in the garden are used in their meals which contributes positively to children's understanding of healthy living.

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?	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
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	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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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