

Playschool Nursery

The Laurels, 22 Leyton Road, Harpendon, Hertfordshire, AL5 2HU

Inspection date	18/02/2013
Previous inspection date	30/09/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Leadership and management is exemplary and staff practice is inspirational. This is because staff receive high levels of support from the management team which raises their commitment and dedication and creates a happy, secure environment for staff, parents and children.
- Meticulous monitoring of practice and exceptional self-evaluation ensure that action plans are well targeted and developments continue to be made where they have the greatest impact on children.
- Children flourish in a child-centred, enabling environment where the nursery staff recognise the uniqueness of each child. Children's needs are met because highly effective partnerships between the nursery, parents and others positively contribute to the settings knowledge of individual children.
- Rigorous assessment and planning for children's individual progress are sharply focused and includes all those involved in the child's learning. The high quality of teaching enables children to make rapid progress in their learning and development.
- Children play a dynamic role in their learning and show high levels of confidence, self-esteem and an eagerness to learn.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in all rooms and the outside learning environment.
- The inspector held discussions with the registered persons/managers and staff.
The inspector looked at children's assessment records, planning documentation, the self-evaluation form and a range of other documentation including a selection of policies and children's records.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day and from information in the nurseries own parental survey.

Inspector

Jane Mount

Full Report

Information about the setting

Playschool Nursery was registered in 2009 and is on the Early Years Register. It is the second childcare setting owned and managed by the Playschool Nursery Company. The nursery is located within a refurbished listed building and is situated close to the centre of Harpenden in Hertfordshire. It operates on two floors with staff rooms on the third floor. The ground floor is fully accessible and there is a fully enclosed outside area available for outdoor play.

The nursery employs 22 members of child care staff. Of these, the majority hold early years qualifications at level 3 or above and this includes three members of the management team with Early Years Professional Status. Ancillary staff are employed to manage cooking and cleaning tasks. The nursery receives support from the Hertfordshire Early Years Development Team and is a member of the National Day Nursery Association.

Playschool Nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 7.15am to 6.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 84 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- further enhance and maximise opportunities for children to extend their learning in the outdoor play environment.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the revised Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is reflected in their outstanding practice. They use their expert skills and knowledge of how children learn to effectively support children's progress. They have high expectations for the children in their care and are skilled at providing activities that engage children. Activities cover the seven areas of learning with children's progress closely monitored through highly effective observation and assessment systems. Information gained from these is used by staff to purposefully plan activities to extend and reinforce children's learning, which is relevant, meaningful and builds on children's current interests. For example, staff have implemented the use of spider diagrams in each room to record individual children's daily interests. This

information is then fed into the planning for their base room ensuring that each child is interested in the activities, enabling them to learn and develop to their full potential. Staff are very aware of the different ways children learn and this is taken into full consideration when planning play experiences and activities. Therefore, the quality of teaching is consistently high as children's learning and development needs are identified and catered for and they are making excellent progress towards the early learning goals. All children, including those with additional needs or English as an additional language, have their learning needs supported extremely well.

The nursery has a highly welcoming, child-centred environment that enables children to become independent and enthusiastic learners. Children enjoy the vibrant atmosphere and show a keen interest in what they do. Staff promote a culture of actively encouraging children to be independent and from an early age children are encouraged to play an active role in the setting. This results in them being secure in their surroundings and feeling confident when making choices. For example, children quickly develop a positive sense of themselves and others as they learn and develop self-help skills, such as putting on their shoes when going outside to play or learning to feed themselves at mealtimes. A recent introduction of a slide whistle lets children know when it is tidy up time and children of all ages excitedly help to put away resources when they hear the whistle noise.

The well-embedded key person system ensures that children's individual needs are met as they work in close partnership with parents. This creates security for children which encourages them to be confident and motivated in their play and enables them to develop good attitudes to learn effectively. Consequently, children are developing the key skills needed for the next steps in their learning including starting school. Parents are kept informed about their children's attainments as they receive regular information about the play experiences their children have been involved in and the achievements they have made. They are made aware of their child's development records, called 'Learning Journals' and are able to look at them at any time on an informal basis. More formal opportunities are also available to ensure parents are kept well-informed. Parents are also encouraged to be actively engaged in their children's learning through sharing observations of their children's achievements at home, to fully promote their learning.

Staff ensure all children are supported in their play and learning, with a balance of child-initiated and adult-led play experiences. Both indoor and outdoor activities are planned to take account of children's capabilities and staff are clear what children should learn from these experiences. The indoor space is organised to provide rich, varied and imaginative play experiences for children and this encourages children to be active learners. Exceptionally good use is made of the outside area, and a free flow system is sometimes available which enables children to freely move between the indoor and outdoor environments. Staff are enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning as they have been working hard to develop the area as a place for high quality learning experiences. This is working extremely well although there is scope to maximise opportunities further.

Children's communication and language skills are promoted exceedingly well as staff support children in their play, asking questions and engaging them in conversation. They encourage mobile babies to explore and imitate sounds, such as when playing with shaker

bottles and making loud and soft noises in the sensory room. They talk with toddlers during story time and children keenly select their favourite books and talk about the pictures. Puppets are also used to develop and extend children's language development. Children have many opportunities to talk about their families and home life and delight in showing photographs of the special people in their lives on the family tree displays situated in each room. Writing and drawing materials are accessible and children have regular opportunities to become familiar with the written word. For example, they are beginning to understand how writing has a purpose and keenly make shopping lists with their favourite foods. Consequently, children are acquiring useful skills in early literacy.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children's well-being is promoted as staff are friendly and approachable. They give priority to making sure children settle well and new children and their parents are exceptionally well supported by staff to ensure a successful settling in period that is tailored to the needs of the individual child and their family. For example, the nursery has a key person system in place and they use key person pairs to support the bonds between children and their key person. This ensures children can feel safe as close bonds are formed and this creates security for children which encourages them to be confident in their surroundings and play. Highly effective systems are in place so staff can support children and prepare them for transitions, such as moving rooms within the nursery or starting school. For example, a meeting is arranged between the key person and the child's parents each time a child is transitioning to a new room. Also, staff work closely together and short visits are organised for children so they become familiar with their new surroundings.

Positive relationships between staff, children and parents enable children to feel secure and children are self-assured in the setting. Children's understanding of keeping safe is evident and staff help children gain an excellent awareness of keeping themselves safe as they explain and practise simple procedures. For example, children know that running indoors may be dangerous as they could fall and hurt themselves and they regularly discuss the benefits of 'walking feet' inside and 'running feet' outside. Children know when they go for walks in the local community they need to wear high visibility jackets and older children are able to talk about the reasons for wearing them. Children's behaviour is exemplary. The nurseries 'golden rules' are regularly discussed and children are aware of the importance of being kind to others as well as sharing and taking turns. Staff are excellent role models. They empower children to take responsibility for themselves and teach them how they can play together harmoniously and at the same time learn how to share in a productive manner. For example, staff use a sand timer as a visual indicator to children when their turn with a favourite toy has finished and children's independence is promoted as they happily organise whose turn it is next.

Children are learning how to stay healthy and are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The routines in each room help promote healthy habits and children from a young age learn to take responsibility for washing their hands, flushing toilets or wiping their noses and disposing of tissues appropriately. Good hygiene practice is reinforced through activities involving the handling and preparation of food, such as when children make fruit kebabs or smoothies. Children enjoy freshly prepared, well-balanced and nutritious meals

and snacks with menus shared with parents. They relish the independence of learning to feed themselves as they are encouraged to try new foods and participate in activities where they learn about the benefits of healthy eating. Plenty of fresh air and exercise keep children fit and develops their confidence in all aspects of physical development. Children develop self-confidence in their physical skills as they participate in a variety of physical play activities on a daily basis. They enjoy music and movement sessions and love to dance and sing. They confidently run, climb and explore when using the outdoor climbing equipment and move with control and co-ordination as they manoeuvre around obstacles when riding bikes.

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

The leadership and management is exemplary with a highly motivated management team who have a clear vision for the future of the nursery. Their dynamic approach provides clear leadership and ensures all staff have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities to meet the requirements of the revised Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Comprehensive and highly informative written policies and procedures underpin the high quality practice within the nursery and ensure the nursery is run efficiently to safeguard children's welfare and promote their learning and development. High levels of support are in place for staff and this helps to create a happy, secure environment for all.

Arrangements for safeguarding children are robust with rigorous recruitment and vetting processes in place. All staff have an excellent understanding of how to protect children and safeguard their welfare. Highly effective systems are in place to ensure staff are inducted in child protection procedures when they start at the nursery and they regularly update their knowledge through attending safeguarding training. Clear management responsibilities in relation to child protection have been established including having a named designated person who is responsible for ensuring the correct procedures are followed if there was a concern. A highly informative safeguarding policy, along with staff who fully understand their roles and responsibilities if they did have a concern, ensures children's welfare is protected. Children's safety is paramount and staff are vigilant and responsive at all times with high staff to child ratios and close supervision of children. Highly effective measures are implemented to keep children safe. For example, meticulous risk assessments ensure the environment remains safe at all times with any potential hazards identified and minimised immediately. Also, excellent security systems, including full CCTV monitoring and fingerprint recognition systems and coded locks ensure maximum safety for all staff and children.

The highly qualified staff team demonstrate high levels of motivation and a professional outlook. They value each other's skills and abilities and work extremely well together as a team. Comprehensive induction systems ensure staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities. Their enthusiasm for caring for children is evident and consequently, outcomes for children are very positive. Staff performance is closely monitored. For example, staff have six monthly appraisals which are used to discuss and evaluate practice and identify areas for further development. Continuous professional development is

positively encouraged. For example, there is a comprehensive and ongoing programme for staff development and all staff undertake extensive and varied training, attending both external and in-house early years courses and workshops to ensure they are well-informed practitioners.

The nursery closely monitors itself to assess the quality of the provision. For example, the nursery has a 'Delivery and Quality Assurance Coordinator' whose role is to observe practice in all rooms to ensure the children are accessing the highest levels of care and learning. This is then evaluated to ensure that any weaknesses found can be made stronger and that the strengths are maintained. This includes close scrutiny of the educational programme to ensure it has sufficient challenge and reflects the needs and aptitudes of all children who attend the setting. A rigorous self-evaluation process and quality improvement action plans are used to systematically identify the nurseries strengths and areas they wish to develop and enhance further. All of the staff team actively contribute their views and opinions to the evaluation process. For example, reflective practice meetings are regularly held and this is a time when staff can discuss and share ideas to help and assist future development. The views of others are also sought including parents, children and early years consultants.

All children and their families are valued and included by staff who are approachable and friendly, helping parents feel secure and at ease. Excellent partnerships with parents significantly contribute to children's well-being and ensure their care and learning needs are fully supported. Parents receive a wealth of good quality information about the setting including a parent handbook when a child starts at the nursery. Displays, informative notice boards and newsletters are just some of the ways used to keep parents informed and there is a well presented web site. There are frequent opportunities for parents to get actively involved and this strengthens relationships and ensures children's individual needs are effectively met. Staff are forthcoming in sharing information and seeking feedback which ensures children settle in quickly and any issues are dealt with swiftly. Parents spoken to on the day of inspection say they feel well-informed and involved in their children's learning.

Partnership working with other agencies is well-established and used to ensure children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported and have their specific needs met. There are close links with the local children's centre, such as signposting parents there if they need additional guidance. Teachers from local schools are invited to visit the nursery prior to children leaving to move on to school. This has been found to be very beneficial in ensuring those children make secure transitions. Partnership working with other child care professionals and sharing good practice has also been found to be beneficial with regular attendance of network groups and close partnership working with the local authority early years consultant.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY389549
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	904342
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	86
Number of children on roll	84
Name of provider	Playschool Nursery Ltd
Date of previous inspection	30/09/2009
Telephone number	01582 766 674

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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