

Merton Poppits Playgroup

Romsey Close, Popley, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 9HB

Inspection date	16/09/2013
Previous inspection date	25/01/2011

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		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Children take part in a wide range of challenging activities supported by skilled staff and stimulating resources. As a result children make good progress in their learning and development.
- A highly effective key-person system supports excellent relationships with parents and children, and helps every child feel safe, secure and valued.
- The manager and her experienced team have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities and work hard to drive forward improvements in the care and education of the children.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Staff do not always challenge children fully to think through and try to solve problems for themselves.

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.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed a wide range of activities and care routines across the indoor and outdoor play areas. The inspector talked with staff, children and parents.
- The inspector reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, staff recruitment and self-evaluation, and checked a selection of other policies.
- The inspector sampled a range of documentation including children's records and progress checks, the setting's planning and evaluation documents and information sharing with parents.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day, checked the complaints log and reviewed information provided by parents in their responses to questionnaires and in home-school books.
- The inspector met with and undertook a joint observation with the manager.

Inspector

Helen Robinshaw

Full Report

Information about the setting

The Merton Poppits Playgroup registered in 1999. It is situated within the grounds of Merton Infants School in Basingstoke, Hampshire and operates from a self-contained unit attached to the school. The playgroup is run by an elected committee of present and past parents and members of the host school staff. It serves families from the local community. Children are accommodated in one large room with a fully enclosed outside play area and there is additional access to the school's playgrounds and garden area.

The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It opens during school term times from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday. Children can attend for a variety of sessions or for the whole day. With a lunch club linking the two sessions. There are currently 32 children aged from two years nine months to five years on roll. The playgroup is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children aged two, three and four years. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and/or children who speak English as an additional language. There are seven members of teaching staff, six of whom hold early years qualifications to at least level 2, and most to level 3. The setting's manager is in her final year of a Foundation degree in Early Years and another member of staff has recently begun studying for a degree. The setting also employs a part-time business support administrator.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- further develop children's skills in thinking critically so that they can plan, make predictions, review strategies and evaluate their own progress.

Inspection judgements

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

Children make good progress in their learning and development at this happy and stimulating playgroup. The headteacher of the adjacent infant school chairs the management committee, and the manager of this playgroup is completing a Foundation Degree in Early Years. Both have a thorough knowledge of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the application of guidance and legal requirements. Staff use the seven areas of learning well to shape the educational programmes and children are thoroughly engaged in their play and learning.

A mix of child-initiated and adult-led activities flow together easily throughout the

sessions. For example, drawn to a table with trays full of different objects to weigh, measure and examine, children choose to sort coloured buttons. Staff build on the children's interests and set up a painting table so that children can mix coloured paint and dried pasta, as another resource for sorting. This gives staff a natural opportunity to extend the concept of sorting to other objects and talk about mixing colours and feeling textures. The children thoroughly enjoy the new experience, and go on to adapt their skills to sorting toys in the garden, counting as they do so.

Both the indoor and outdoor learning environments are diverse and stimulating with a wide range of accessible resources. During most parts of the day, children move freely between the two areas. Carefully placed coats, wellies and chairs help children to become competent at dressing themselves to suit the weather. In the outdoor area, children readily share out the magnifying glasses to search the cobwebs and remaining sprout plants for insects. Plans for a new playgroup building present wonderful opportunities to improve these facilities and provide children with a truly inspiring location. Staff know how to promote children's learning and provide an attractive, creative environment. There are crates and pallets to build with, a 'mud kitchen' fitted with a wide range of everyday utensils and an effective percussion section hanging from the railings.

Children make good progress during their time at the playgroup and are well prepared for their next steps. Staff know their children well, record observations of their progress on a daily basis and add this to ongoing reviews of their development. This helps them to keep children on track if there are any issues that might affect their development. Staff are sensitive to the needs of children and families who learn English as an additional language. Parents comment that this makes them feel accepted, respected and willing to share their rich and diverse backgrounds through cooking and singing. This helps children to mix home cultures across contexts and extends all children's awareness of the world. Staff are adept at reducing gaps in children's learning by focusing more intently on prime areas of learning when children enter without these skills. Children attend the setting from two years and nine months of age so progress checks for two-year-olds occur within the first weeks. Staff use information from these assessments to identify any areas where children require more support.

Excellent mechanisms are in place for engaging parents of new children and for following through with a highly effective key person system. Good relationships are also well documented between parents and members of staff and supported with coffee and information evenings. As a result, children benefit from good continuity in their care and learning.

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

All staff skilfully ensure that children form appropriate bonds and secure attachments. New children settle in quickly with sensitive and flexible arrangements geared to their individual needs. This reassures parents who also appreciate the board listing daily activities at the end of each session and the information sharing via a home-school book. Daily contact between home and the setting helps children feel secure and promotes their well-being

and independence.

Toys and activities are well organised, plentiful and within easy reach, giving children ample choice and varied challenges. As such, they generally engage enthusiastically and behave well. Staff expectations for children to stop and listen to brief instructions at points throughout the day are effective. All children stop, turn, attend and listen, so tidying away toys is quick and transitions to new activities are smooth. Staff recognise that children who learn more than one language, can struggle to listen in larger groups, and run circle time activities in their small key-person teams rather than in one large group. This is highly effective as children are very attentive, able to hear good speech models and can all receive individual encouragement to join in and have a go. This helps children to become confident and successful communicators with clearer speech patterns.

Staff contact time is high, positive and encouraging with the result that children learn to play well together, negotiating their way through role-play and joint activities. A stimulating environment helps children explore their surroundings, judge and manage risk taking. The garden slope enables children to learn to roll wheels and tyres, manage prams and tricycles downhill, or have a go at sledging in the snow. Sinks, hand towels, and clothing hooks are at appropriate heights to enable children to access each independently. This helps them to take more responsibility for washing their hands before snack, putting on aprons, hats or dressing-up clothes. Children are able to tell adults why they do these things and learn that hygiene and care practices carry over to other activities and places. These skills support them as they move on in their learning, for example, to school.

Staff give the highest priority to the safety of children and support their growing understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The indoor play-house includes a focus on cleaning materials with different types and textures of sponges and clothes. Staff observed children's lack of enthusiasm for this area and agree to change the topic to something of more interest to the children. However, staff do not take all opportunities to extend children's critical thinking and problem solving skills. For example, when a child poured their own drink of water and spilled it, staff do not involve children in working out how to deal with what has happened. Staff do not take this opportunity to support children to work out ways to solve the problem of the spillage, to work out how they can stop people from slipping, or to fully explore the consequences of their actions.

Thoughtful preparation from caring staff helps children make good moves to the next stage of learning. Whether children are just starting at the setting, adjusting to a new baby sibling or preparing for infant school, staff are sensitive and highly supportive. When children cannot visit their new school, staff visit, taking lots of photographs so they prepare children for what is to come. This makes children less anxious about the change and much better prepared for their next venture. Many of the children move on to the adjacent infant school where they share a playground boundary with their old playgroup. Their confidence, communication and respect for staff is evident as they chat through the railings, greet younger siblings and wave to former play mates. This means that the preparation for the move to new schools is highly effective.

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

The manager of the playgroup is already well qualified and is currently the final year of a degree in Early Years. She has gained considerable knowledge of good practice during the course of her studies and has confidence to implement new ideas. As a result, the setting has improved significantly recently and has the potential to sustain current good practice and develop further. A voluntary committee, chaired by the headteacher of the infant school, support and oversee the manager. A programme of training and development is in place through 'Children's Links' to strengthen the role of the setting's management committee, so that they may better understand their responsibilities and commitment.

There are secure systems in place to promote best practice across the playgroup. This is evident where the manager has identified priorities and addressed them thoroughly through a formal development plan. This guides staff development, helps identify training needs and brings the whole team together to discuss ways forward. For example, settling new children was identified as a priority. Staff then enrolled on training in children's attachment behaviour, which focused on how parents feel as well as how their children might feel on separation. Training informed a change in policy and practice. The whole team embrace a new process for welcoming families and listening to their knowledge of their child's needs and interests prior to entry. As a result, children now settle quickly and soon feel secure in their new environment.

Reviewing the children's learning environment is another priority for all staff. This drew staff to the 'Keep on Talking' project and further training in facilitating children's communication. The benefits of this focus are evident throughout the setting with varied cosy areas for shared play, and the addition of a small sandpit and outdoor den. Children not only have plenty to talk about at the setting, they have quieter areas where they can hear their peers, make up a story together or debate how to do something.

The manager is introducing a new programme of performance management. She has already observed all members of staff meeting with families and their key person this term. This helps to raise standards of practice across the team and identify further needs for improvement, training or sharing good practice. Working closely with the adjacent infant school opens up additional training opportunities as costs are shared and more staff can attend. Other staff training targets specific needs of staff to address the needs of specific children in their key-worker groups.

All safeguarding and welfare requirements are routinely applied by staff who all regularly update their training in child protection, first aid and health and hygiene. Along with the infant school, they practice fire drills and evacuation procedures frequently. Good procedures are in place for safe recruitment, induction and supervision of staff. These measures help keep children safe and secure.

The manager's drive to improve is evident from the network of professionals and services that she consults and learns from. Links with external agencies and other local providers are strong, providing a wealth of ideas to support improvements to benefit the children.

Good working partnerships with parents continue to be a strength across the playgroup. Annual parent questionnaires, termly information sessions and daily home-school books are all very positive. Parents appreciate easy communication channels on a personal level as they can share concerns and celebrations immediately. This is most effective for the children as interventions and praise are timely and have more impact.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

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	511077
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	814350
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 8
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	32
Name of provider	Merton Poppits Playgroup Committee
Date of previous inspection	25/01/2011
Telephone number	01256351036

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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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