

# Small Beginnings Playgroup

The Scout Hut, Oakdene Way, ST. ALBANS, Hertfordshire, AL1 5FR

<b>Inspection date</b>	12/11/2014
Previous inspection date	01/03/2011

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	1
	Previous inspection:	1
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

- Staff have an excellent understanding of how to promote children's learning. They conduct concise and accurate assessments to identify and support their needs with precision.
- Staff skilfully promote an excellent balance of child-initiated play and adult-led teaching. They effectively ensure that children develop skills in the seven areas of learning to secure their readiness for school.
- Teaching is excellent because staff have an exemplary knowledge of children's next steps in learning. They are experts in planning purposeful activities that fully meet children's needs. Therefore, children progress in their development exceedingly well.
- Staff skilfully promote the safeguarding and welfare requirements. The manager effectively shares all aspects of practice, including policies and procedures, with staff and parents to maintain the outstanding management of the playgroup.
- The manager conducts regular supervision meetings and appraisals with staff. She monitors their practice excellently and provides them with ongoing support and training to continuously improve the outcomes for children.
- The manager and staff effectively reflect on practice. They skilfully engage parents and local authorities to ensure that children's needs are met at all times.

## 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 and children at play throughout the inspection. She conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector interacted with children and spoke with staff during the inspection.
- The inspector sampled a range of documentation, including policies, self-evaluation form, evidence of staff's suitability and safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector looked at children's assessments and planning records.
- The inspector had a tour of both, the indoor and outdoor play areas.
- The inspector sought parents' views through discussions on the day of the inspection and through written feedback in questionnaires.

### Inspector

Karinna Hemerling

## Full report

### Information about the setting

Small Beginnings Playgroup was registered in 1990 and is on the Early Years Register. The playgroup operates from a Scout Hall in St. Albans. It serves the local area and is accessible to all children. The playgroup consists of a playroom, kitchen and toilet facilities. There is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The playgroup opens Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 9.10am to 12.10pm. There are currently 32 children on roll in the early years age group. They attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup receives funding for the provision of free early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. There are currently six members of staff working directly with children. Of these, one is qualified at a foundation degree level and five hold appropriate qualifications at level 2 and 3.

### What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance the links between the indoor and outdoor areas to ensure children benefit even further from opportunities to extend their play outside.

## Inspection judgements

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

Staff have an excellent understanding of how to promote the learning and development requirements. They conduct outstanding assessments of children's learning, which start during their settling-in sessions. Staff effectively engage parents in identifying children's starting points of learning and skilfully tailor children's experiences to accurately meet their needs and interests. Key staff expertly use approved guidance to monitor the stages of children's development and to identify their next steps of learning. They effectively plan purposeful activities to support children's progress with precision. For example, children learn about triangles, and staff provide them with excellent activities to extend and embed their learning. Parents bring triangular objects from home and children enjoy showing these to their peers. Children participate in a triangle hunt; they draw, paint and make triangles out of modelling dough. Staff are expert in expanding children's learning and their existing knowledge. For example, children play tennis with a ball tied up on a string to the ceiling. They develop their skills as they attempt to hit the ball when it comes back towards them. Children hit the ball too hard and the ball goes over the roof. Staff very effectively engage them in thinking about how and why this happens. They encourage children to find a way to bring the ball back so they can continue to play. Staff effectively work as a team, and have exceptional knowledge of children's learning and development needs. They accurately conduct the progress check for children aged between two and three years, and promote exemplary support for those who develop below and above their expected age range. Children engage in activities with interest because staff provide them

with very stimulating and challenging opportunities to develop their skills. For example, children learn to use scissors and staff provide them with different scissors, so they can find the right one for their hands. Staff patiently teach children to cut using their scissors. Children persist and are eager to learn. Staff provide them with exceptional support through inspiring interactions that enhance all aspects of their development. Therefore, children flourish in their development.

Teaching is exemplary because staff are very knowledgeable about children's next steps of learning. Children learn through play as they experience an excellent balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff prepare varied educational routines in order to meet their different learning styles. For example, they participate in daily group discussions, such as, key group time, literacy, maths, story, singing and exercise sessions. Staff boost children's learning and development by encouraging them to play together. For example, children play outside and decide to clear the leaves from the floor. Staff skilfully engage them in thinking about how they can remove the leaves. Children and staff work together and collect wheelbarrows, brooms, dust pans and brushes. Children work collectively, listen to instructions and share their ideas with each other. Staff and children adopted a tree at the nearby park. They look after the tree; learn about changes in the nature and weather by observing the tree on a daily basis. Staff skilfully engage children in learning skills and developing their understanding about the world they live in. For example, there are strong links with community members, such as, the police and firemen, who regularly visit children to teach them important life skills. Staff provide children with excellent opportunities to develop their imaginative play. For example, every year they participate in a fairy tales week. Children enjoy exploring books, stories and a range of exciting activities, which includes acting out stories in front of their parents. Staff organise a science week, when they take part in experiments with staff and their parents. Children demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning as they play, create and explore their environment with interest. The educational programme provides broad opportunities for children to develop their skills in the seven areas of learning. Therefore, staff effectively support children to develop the necessary skills to ensure their readiness for school.

Staff promote partnerships with parents exceptionally well. They create a very effective two-way flow of communication to ensure children fully benefit from the continuity of care and education between home and playgroup. For example, parents record special moments and events in their children's individual 'weekend news' book. Key staff look at these books during key group sessions and children share aspects of their personal life with their peers. This very effectively supports children's language and communication development. Staff provide parents with daily feedback and a weekly summary of children's special moments at the playgroup. They effectively share ideas on how parents can continue to extend children's learning at home. Staff skilfully ensure that parents participate and contribute to their children's assessment and planning at the playgroup.

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

Staff provide children with a very welcoming, calm and organised environment. Children settle well and form strong bonds and attachments with peers and staff. Staff very skilfully implement the key-person system, and children wear differently coloured uniforms to

indicate who their key person is. Parents and children participate in open days and settling-in sessions to ensure children are emotionally supported from early days. The very effective organisation of routines, allows key staff to spend quality time with their key children and this supports them to fully understand children's needs and interests. Staff and children play together and enjoy each other's company throughout the sessions. The partnership with parents, with regards to children's care and routines, is excellent. Parents share relevant information about their children's dietary requirements and home routines with staff. The highly skilled staff ensures children are provided with comfortable routines, suitable snacks and activities that meet their individual needs. Their utmost priority is to ensure that children are happy and supported in a secure environment.

Staff are very caring and attentive towards the children, who behave very well. They effectively engage children in the routines and activities available to them. Therefore, children are busy and involved in making decisions and choices. For example, they self-register when they arrive; they place their personal belongings on their named pegs and sit in their key groups for snack. Children help staff to set up and put away the snack table and activities throughout their time at the playgroup. They are confident, responsible and independent because staff provide them with opportunities to learn these skills. Staff maintain effective strategies to manage children's behaviour. For example, they talk to children about the playgroup rules and boundaries during group discussion time. Staff share the playgroup rules with parents to ensure they consolidate children's learning about good behaviour at home. Staff and children sing a special song about positive behaviour as part of their daily routine. Children are very caring towards their peers and work cooperatively at all times. For example, they effectively look after each other and as they wipe their noses, they offer tissues to those who also need them. Children effectively take turns as they freely access the equipment, resources and activities available to them in the inclusive learning environment. Staff promote children's independence and celebrate their achievements with praise. They support children to grow in confidence throughout their time at the playgroup.

Staff effectively promote healthy living and skilfully teach children about their personal needs and hygiene. From early days, staff obtain information from parents about children's skills with regards to managing their own needs. Children independently wash their hands before snacks and after activities. Staff teach children to wipe their noses and involve them in understanding the importance of being healthy. For example, a group of children reach for the tissue box, and staff question them about why they think it is important to wash hands after they wipe their noses. Children eagerly discuss the life cycle of germs and how they can affect our health. Staff and parents organise the menus for snacks. They skilfully teach children about healthy eating and implement this in the educational programme. Children are provided with opportunities to exercise on a daily basis and staff conduct regular indoor movement sessions. Staff plan nature walks and children participate in local outings to the park, shops, schools and supermarkets. They provide children with great activities in the spacious and interesting outdoor area. Staff are aware that they do not always maximise the links between the outdoor and indoor play areas. This means that children do not always benefit from freely-chosen opportunities to extend their play outside. Children independently access water to drink and are very independent when using the toilet. Staff skilfully teach children to take risks as they explore the environment and equipment. For example, children play in the garden

and because of the light rain, the equipment gets wet. They use paper towels to dry the toys so that they can continue to play. Staff effectively engage children in thinking about possible dangers and how to avoid accidents while they play outside. They maintain strong links with local schools and invite teachers to visit the children at the playgroup to ensure they are emotionally prepared for school.

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

Staff skilfully promote the safeguarding and welfare requirements. The manager effectively shares all aspects of practice, including the policies and procedures, with staff and parents to promote the very effective management of the playgroup. Staff participate in a thorough recruitment process, induction, trial days and ongoing checks to ensure their suitability to work with children. All staff participate in regular training to support children's learning and hold first-aid, safeguarding and food hygiene certificates. The manager ensures that staff continuously enhance their skills. She provides them with regular training and continuous professional development opportunities. Staff participate in weekly team and planning meetings. The manager skilfully manages the deployment of staff and their working hours to ensure they have enough time to maintain the assertive practice and planning. Staff are fully engaged in assessing the environment and effectively conduct daily risk checks to ensure children are able to explore the play areas safely. The manager delegates responsibilities amongst the trustworthy and qualified staff. For example, there are designated members of staff for child protection, first aiders and a special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. They provide expert support for other members of staff, children and parents. All staff have an excellent understanding of the steps to take should they become concerned about the well-being and welfare of children in their care. The knowledgeable staff maintain a very well-documented practice and their greatest priority is to provide children with the highest standards of care and education.

The manager closely monitors the teaching and learning at the playgroup. She regularly reviews children's learning journals to ensure staff consistently document their learning and progress. Staff monitor children's learning and development extremely well. Every term, they track their key children's progress and provide parents with a summary of their children's development. The manager skilfully tracks children's overall progress to ensure they develop accordingly. As a result, staff promptly identify children's emerging needs and provide them with the support they need.

The partnership with parents is excellent and they actively contribute to the outstanding quality of the provision. For example, staff skilfully engage parents in discussions about their children's needs and learning. They provide parents with a welcome pack, a summary of the Early Years Foundation Stage and policies and procedures. The manager shares regular newsletters and organises a variety of events for parents to participate in. The partnership with parents positively impacts on children's experiences and learning. There are excellent links with local children's centres and schools. Staff work closely with the local authority advisory team, who regularly evaluate the practice and support staff. The manager completes the Ofsted self-evaluation form with staff during meetings and maintains her own action and improvement plans. She effectively involves staff and

parents in reflecting on the services provided for children. For example, parents complete regular questionnaires to share their thoughts and expectations. Staff participate in regular supervision meetings and appraisals, during which they share positive and negative aspects of practice. They demonstrate excellent capacity for continuous improvement and promote the outcomes for children extremely well.

## 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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123591
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	854164
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 5
<b>Total number of places</b>	32
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	32
<b>Name of provider</b>	Julie Diane Walsh
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	01/03/2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	07818 297128

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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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