

Inspection of Small Beginnings Playgroup

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

Inspection date: 22 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are happy and settled. They enter the setting and quickly become engaged in activities. Children enjoy finding their names as part of the registration process. They talk to each other about who is going to be in the setting on that day. This gives children a real sense of belonging. Children happily move over to the carpet area to begin their day with a group activity. They have a good understanding of the routine. Children are confident learners and enjoy answering questions about the weather and days of the week. Children who are not yet ready to sit on the carpet and listen can choose to explore the environment. They engage well in their chosen activities. Children concentrate at activities for long periods of time. This supports them to be ready for their future learning.

Children actively seek out their friends and enjoy playing with them. The older children spend time as a group playing with the cars and a ramp. They move the ramp up and down, working out how to make the cars go faster. This enables children to problem solve and learn through trial and error. Staff have high expectation for children's behaviour. The children respond to this well and are very kind to each other.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Staff have good knowledge of their key children. They talk confidently about their children's starting points. Staff use children's interests to create activities in the room for them to explore. However, on occasions, staff do not focus precisely on the skills that children need more practise with, before moving them on to new learning.
- Parents commend the setting manager and her team. They talk of the brilliant foundations in learning the nursery create and the impact this has on their children's future development. Staff communicate frequently with parents. They provide them with activity ideas to complete at home. This supports children's ongoing learning.
- All staff promote children's language development. Staff regularly read stories to children and talk about the pictures. They also ask children lots of questions. However, staff do not consistently allow children the time to think of possible answers, to help them become critical thinkers. Children enjoy action rhymes and join in with singing. They know basic sign language, which they use within group activities.
- The nursery promotes healthy lifestyles across the setting. The staff provide families with information on healthy snack options and encourage them to bring them in for snack time. Each day, the children take part in physical exercise as part of their morning routine. They jump up and down, and move their bodies in lots of different ways to get their hearts to beat faster. Staff encourage children

to feel their heartbeats. Children talk about how they feel.

- The staff use the garden area effectively to promote all areas of children's development. Children develop their muscle strength while digging in the mud patch. They go on hunts for worms. Children work together to dig deeper holes in the hope of finding more worms. This helps them to gain an understanding of the world around them. Other children play tennis with a member of staff. They hit the ball using the bats back and forth over the play equipment. Staff encourage other children to join in and allow them to play together. This supports children's social development.
- The manager has a good understanding of the setting. Regular supervision meetings allow staff to talk about children's development. Any concerns with children are dealt with quickly and effectively. The manager regularly discusses the training requirements of the staff. This ensures the quality of staff practice remains high.
- The setting uses funding appropriately to support children's development. Working together with parents, the setting introduced resources to support toilet training which can be used at home and in the setting. This helps to provide consistency for children's experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and her team have good knowledge of safeguarding. They recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and understand their responsibilities for reporting concerns. Staff have effective knowledge of wider safeguarding issues, such as extremism. The manager ensures that staff training is kept up to date. She monitors children's absences and makes appropriate phone calls to stay in contact with families. The manager offers support or signposts families to other services, where required.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to focus more precisely on the skills children need to practise, before moving them on to new learning
- give children more time to think and respond to questions, developing their critical-thinking skills further.

Setting details

Unique reference number	123591
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10127310
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	20
Name of registered person	Walsh, Julie Diane
Registered person unique reference number	RP907947
Telephone number	07818 297128
Date of previous inspection	12 November 2014

Information about this early years setting

Small Beginnings Playgroup registered in 1990 and is situated in St Albans, Hertfordshire. There are six members of staff working directly with the children. Of these, four hold appropriate qualifications at level 3 and one holds level 2. The setting opens during term time only. It operates from 9.10am to 12.10pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and from 9.10am until 1.10pm on Wednesday. The setting receives funding for the provision of free early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lisa Smith

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the setting.
- The inspector completed learning walks of all areas of the setting with senior staff. Together, they discussed the curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- The inspector looked at reviews from parents and took account of their views.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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