

Inspection of Little Bears

St. Margarets C of E Primary School, School Road, WARRINGTON WA2 9AD

Inspection date:

18 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

As children arrive at the setting, they wave their parents off at the front door and are keen to greet staff. However, at the beginning of the day, the environment is chaotic and disorderly. There is no clear direction from staff to the older children who attend the breakfast club. This results in older children wandering around, being unkind to others and shouting. During breakfast time, some staff do not supervise children effectively. For example, some children walk around with toast in their hands; they drop it on the floor and pick it back up to eat. Additionally, babies put paper into their mouths, and staff do not notice this until leaders highlight the risk to staff. These incidents pose a choking hazard for children. Although ratios are complied with, staff are not deployed well. For example, some staff are unaware of when children need assistance or when they are doing something unsafe.

Overall, children's behaviour and attitudes towards their learning are poor. Too frequently, staff are not astute to when children are unkind towards one another. Children's behaviour begins to deteriorate when they become bored. They snatch toys from their friends and do not follow instructions. Staff fail to adapt their teaching practice to keep children engaged in their learning. These low expectations from staff fail each child who attends this setting. Some staff have a poor understanding of child development. For example, babies are expected to make paper poppies for Remembrance Day and watch videos of soldiers. Leaders are unable to explain the learning intentions of these activities for babies. Children do not gain the necessary skills in readiness for their move on to school.

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

- A catalogue of breaches in legal requirements mean that leaders fail in their duties to provide an adequate level of care and education for children. The manager knows that standards have declined over time and that self-evaluation is inaccurate. During the inspection, leaders demonstrate a positive attitude to how they intend to tackle the number of shortfalls to bring about change. They aspire for the setting to be rated good.
- A poorly designed curriculum means that children, including those in receipt of funding, are not provided with the quality education that they rightly deserve. Staff expectations of children are either too high or too low. For example, staff in the baby room expect babies to complete colouring sheets and to have a secure understanding of wildlife, such as squirrels. Staff working with older children simply expect them to paint a paper plate for Christmas. Leaders cannot explain the reason why children are doing these activities and do not know how this sequentially builds on what children already know and can do.
- The manager acknowledges that staff have not had any supervision sessions or appraisal meetings for two years. There is no targeted programme of

professional development for staff, apart from mandatory training, such as first aid. Staff do not receive the relevant coaching, training and mentoring to improve their practice. However, leaders do ensure that staff workload is manageable. Many staff report that they enjoy working at the setting.

- Children do not always show positive attitudes towards their learning; consequently, their behaviour deteriorates. Some members of staff are inconsistent in giving clear expectations of behaviour to children. This results in children not always understanding right from wrong.
- Leaders fail to deploy staff well. This means that the needs of some children are not always met. Additionally, some staff do not supervise children effectively. This poor practice and lack of oversight from the manager puts children at unnecessary risk.
- Risk assessments are ineffective. Leaders fail to identify tripping hazards across the setting. The inspector had to intervene and highlight these hazards to leaders. Babies who are learning to walk are impeded, as resources on the floor hinder their balance and coordination skills.
- Children are assigned a key person when they first start at the setting. Staff spend time getting to know children, and this helps them to settle. Staff support children in readiness for toilet training and provide children with privacy, which ensures their dignity. However, some hygiene practices are poor. For example, too often staff do not reinforce the importance of handwashing after children blow their noses. This poses a risk of cross-infection.
- Partnership working is effective. Links with parents and the local primary school are in place. Parents receive updates about their children's time at the setting.
- Staff support children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. They work with parents and external professionals to ensure the relevant support is in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not ensured that staff have kept abreast of safeguarding procedures. Staff report that they are due to attend child protection training, and they welcome this. Some staff are not astute to the steps to take should they be concerned about the conduct of a colleague. They do not know the referral procedure and are not aware of external professionals that they can contact for advice. Staff are trained in first aid and understand how to respond to accidents. They complete accident forms and share these with parents. Risk assessments are ineffective. For example, resources are strewn across the floor in all rooms. These pose a risk of tripping. Too often, babies fall over resources and staff are not aware of this.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
ensure that risk assessments are effective in identifying risks for children, with particular reference to tripping and choking hazards	16/12/2022
ensure staff supervise children vigilantly, to promote their safety at all times	16/12/2022
ensure that leaders deploy staff effectively to meet the needs of all children	16/12/2022
ensure staff provide children with clear messages about their behaviour	16/12/2022
ensure children are provided with an ambitious curriculum that builds on what they already know and can do	16/12/2022
ensure staff receive supervision sessions to foster a culture of ongoing support, guidance, coaching and training to raise their practice to a higher level	16/12/2022
ensure staff are aware of the safeguarding procedures to follow should they be concerned about the conduct of a colleague.	16/12/2022

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

- review routines at the beginning of the day, to maintain an orderly learning environment for children
- refine systems for self-evaluation so that improvement plans are accurate and provide a clear overview of what leaders need to do in order to drive improvement forward
- strengthen hygiene practices across the setting, with particular reference to teaching children the importance of washing their hands after blowing their noses.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY428545
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10259503
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 10
Total number of places	35
Number of children on roll	45
Name of registered person	St Margaret's Playgroup (Orford) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP905936
Telephone number	07986 741 915
Date of previous inspection	4 May 2017

Information about this early years setting

Little Bears registered in 2011 and is situated in Orford, Warrington. The setting is open Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm, for 39 weeks of the year. There are currently nine members of staff working directly with children. Of these, all hold an early years qualification at level 3 or above. The setting offers funded early education for two-, three-, and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Luke Heaney

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 their evaluation of the provider.
- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The manager, the playworker and the inspector completed a learning walk.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children throughout the day and evaluated the impact these had on children's learning.
- A joint observation was carried out by the inspector and manager.
- The inspector held discussions with the leadership team, staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- Relevant documentation was reviewed by the inspector, including evidence of the suitability and training of staff.
- The inspector obtained the views of parents, staff and children through discussions.

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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