

Inspection of Little Bears

The Smile Centre, Sandy Lane, Warrington WA2 9BX

Inspection date: 21 March 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| The quality of education | Good |
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| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
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| Personal development | Good |
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| Leadership and management | Good |
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| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are warmly welcomed into this cosy but exciting playgroup. The home-from-home atmosphere helps all children to feel secure. Children develop strong and caring bonds with their key person, but all staff know the children well. Staff ensure that children are nurtured and cared for, which helps them to feel safe. The environment is stimulating and well resourced, which helps to facilitate children's play and exploration. Babies' care is personalised, and their individual routines are adhered to. For example, in the quiet and cosy sleep room, they are soothed to sleep when they are tired. Babies explore their dedicated play spaces, indoors and outdoors, and enjoy many sensory experiences. These include experimenting in crisped rice, delighting in the feel of the crunchy texture between their fingers. Babies sweep their fingers along the surface of a sequin board to watch the colour changing. Older children eagerly investigate with confidence and self-assurance. They learn about growth, for example, while using gardening tools, such as trowels and spades, to plant seeds for Mother's Day.

Children have lots of fun, which gives them the confidence and many of the skills needed for future learning. Babies join in with staff and sing nursery rhymes with enthusiasm. Older children remember the words and prompt others to sing along and join in with the actions. Children show friendly behaviour towards others. They share toys, build towers cooperatively and hand tissues to their friends should they need to blow their nose. Older children know what is expected of them. They follow the playgroup rules, and they even come up with some of their own, such as 'no messing in the toilet'. Children know which way they should ride scooters along the cycle tracks to ensure everyone is safe outdoors.

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

- The newly appointed manager, ably supported by the committee, is dedicated to providing a good standard of care. The manager and committee aim to provide ongoing support to local children and families. Since the last inspection, there has been a management restructure. The new leadership team has worked tirelessly to address the weaknesses identified previously. Staff training has been implemented, and policies and procedures have been improved. Self-evaluation and action plans are used well. The leadership team now has a clear understanding and accurate evaluation of the quality of the provision.
- Staff are skilled at providing experiences to interest children. Children enjoy activities that are based on a theme, such as growing. Children paint flower pictures and mould flower shapes and models from coloured dough. However, staff do not focus precisely on the skills and knowledge individual children need to learn from these activities. This means that, although children have fun as they play, they do not make the best progress possible.

- Partnership working is strong. Links with parents and the local primary school are in place. Parents receive regular updates about their children's time at the playgroup. Parents meet with their child's key person and receive updates on children's progress. Parents are told about current themes, and staff advise them of books to read at home. This collaborative approach helps to consolidate what children are learning.
- Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. Simple sign language is practised. This is one way to help children to communicate if they struggle to voice their needs. Staff work with parents and external professionals to ensure that relevant support is provided in a timely manner. Children who need a little more help receive meaningful and targeted care. This helps them to make the progress they are capable of.
- Lunchtime is a lively occasion where children develop social skills and independence. Staff encourage healthy eating and advise parents on what foods to include in children's lunch boxes. However, many children bring drinks from home that are high in sugar, such as fruit juice and cordial drinks. This contradicts the positive work being done to introduce fresh fruit for breakfast. This does not promote understanding around healthy lifestyles and good oral health.
- Children learn that people share similarities and others may be different to themselves and their families. Diversity is celebrated and accepted. Staff provide thoughtful resources so that inclusion is incorporated into the curriculum. Children delight when they see toys that represent them, such as dolls wearing spectacles. Children engage in animated pretend play, using puppets that are designed to promote disability awareness.
- Staff say they feel supported in their role, and staff retention is high. Staff speak highly of the leadership team. They value the improved professional development opportunities and training they receive. However, staff do not always know what they want children to learn from the activities they provide. The leadership team acknowledges this as an area to develop. The team is supporting staff through regular supervision to ensure that the curriculum intent is known and consistently implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all staff have updated their understanding of safeguarding procedures. Developing this child protection knowledge has been a priority since the last inspection. Staff understand possible signs and symptoms that could indicate a child is at risk of harm. Staff are provided with the local safeguarding partnership contact information. In the event of a concern about a child or the conduct of another staff member, they are able to make the relevant referral. Comprehensive risk assessments are completed in all areas to ensure that the environment is suitable. The leadership team deploys staff effectively in order to supervise children. Any minor accidents are dealt with promptly, and first-aid treatment is provided. Daily checks as children sleep help to ensure they are safe.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- focus more precisely on individual children's next steps in learning
- develop the curriculum intent further so all staff have a clear understanding of what it is they intend children to learn
- help to improve staff understanding of the need to promote oral hygiene.

Setting details

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| Unique reference number | EY428545 |
| Local authority | Warrington |
| Inspection number | 10266867 |
| 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 | 1 to 10 |
| Total number of places | 35 |
| Number of children on roll | 52 |
| 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 | 18 November 2022 |

Information about this early years setting

Little Bears registered in 2011 and is situated in Orford, Warrington. The playgroup is open Monday to Friday, from 7.30am 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

Layla Davies

Inspection activities

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The quality of education was observed, and the inspector assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector conducted a learning walk with the nursery manager. The intent of the curriculum was discussed.
- The inspector evaluated an activity with the nursery manager.
- Regular meetings were held with the leadership team.
- Relevant documentation was checked and discussed, such as policies and procedures. The inspector took account of self-evaluation and checked evidence of staff suitability.
- The views of parents were obtained.
- Children and staff were spoken to throughout the inspection.

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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