

Inspection of Play Alma Mater

123 Long Lane, Oldham, Lancashire OL9 8AY

Inspection date: 15 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
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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

Leaders have been too lax in ensuring that they are legally compliant with the requirements of their Ofsted registration. Since the last inspection, standards have declined. The level of care and education provided for children is poor. Leaders' low expectations mean that too often too many children do not receive the quality of care and education that they deserve. Leaders fail to provide children with an ambitious curriculum. Staff are unsure of what they should teach and in what order this should be done. This means that some activities are pitched too high or too low. Children lose interest in their learning and become bored. They wander around with no clear intent to their learning and look to staff for stimulation. This results in some children not having positive attitudes towards their learning.

Leaders have low ambition for what children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve. They rely too much on parents and external professionals to take the lead in supporting children with SEND. For example, leaders are unaware of when children have been given an education, health and care plan. They do not get the information that they need to support children with SEND. This means that children with SEND do not make the progress that they are capable of. They do not develop the necessary skills in readiness for their next steps in learning, including their move on to school.

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

- Leaders have been too complacent and have not kept an eye on the quality of care and education across the nursery. There are many breaches in legal requirements and self-evaluation is inaccurate. Leaders fail to monitor staff practice. Staff do not receive the guidance and coaching needed to raise their practice to a higher level. Leaders are now aware of what they need to do to raise standards. They aspire for the nursery to be good.
- The provider informed Ofsted of a significant event where a child left the nursery unattended. They met the legal obligation to inform the relevant agencies of this incident, including Ofsted. The provider has taken prompt action to prevent this from happening again.
- Staff deployment and child supervision are poor. Leaders were not aware of this until the inspector highlighted it to them. For example, staff working with older children stand together and talk while children are unsupervised in other areas of the nursery. This results in children becoming upset and finding it hard to regulate their own behaviour. This lack of understanding from leaders and staff puts children at unnecessary risk.
- Leaders have a poor understanding of child development. They have not designed an adequate curriculum. Staff are not aware of what leaders intend them to teach to children. This means that activities are mundane and do not

capture children's interest. For example, staff working with babies expect them to write their names. They teach them numbers beyond 10 and expect them to have a detailed understanding of the monarchy. Children are at a disadvantage and do not benefit from well-thought-out play and learning experiences.

- Leaders have a poor understanding of how to meet the needs of children with SEND. They do not understand why children with SEND fall behind in their learning. Leaders put the onus on parents and external professionals to help children with SEND get the support that they need. Leaders' low aspirations for children with SEND are not good enough. As a result, children with SEND are at a disadvantage and do not make the progress that they should.
- The key-person system is ineffective. Leaders give little consideration to how they can best meet children's individual care and learning needs. For example, too frequently, children become upset and do not settle throughout the day. Some children's key persons are absent and the adults caring for them do not understand their individual needs. This means that children's emotional well-being is not met.
- Leaders do not equip staff with the skills and knowledge to support children in managing their feelings and emotions. Staff do not know the best ways to support children when they have emotional outbursts. This means that some children find it hard to regulate their own feelings and behaviour.
- Parents receive information from staff about their children's time at the nursery. Staff's links with the local community and with other settings are in place.
- Children enjoy spending time outdoors. They like to play ring games and kick balls. They develop their physical skills while using play apparatus.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not ensure that all staff have a secure understanding of child protection. Some staff are unaware of the indicators of possible abuse and neglect. They are not clear about the steps to follow if there is a concern about a colleague. This puts children at risk. Although ratios are complied with, leaders fail to deploy staff effectively and child supervision is poor. For example, on occasion, children are left in rooms without any adults present. This results in children becoming upset and behaving in unsafe ways. Staff undergo stringent suitability checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The premises are suitable for childcare. Leaders use risk assessments to check that all areas of the nursery are safe.

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
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ensure that staff are aware of the indicators of possible abuse and neglect and that they understand the steps to follow should they be concerned about the conduct of a colleague	26/06/2023
ensure that leaders deploy staff to meet the needs of all children	26/06/2023
ensure that staff supervise children with vigilance at all times	26/06/2023
ensure that staff provide children with an ambitious curriculum that builds on what they already know and can do	26/06/2023
ensure that the key-person system supports children's individual care, learning and emotional needs.	26/06/2023

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

- develop systems for self-evaluation so that improvement plans are accurate
- provide staff with greater levels of support, guidance and coaching to raise their professional practice to a higher level
- support children to manage their feelings and behaviour more effectively.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY417433
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10291767
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	50
Number of children on roll	60
Name of registered person	Gordon, Pamela Jean
Registered person unique reference number	RP514810
Telephone number	0161 681 0995
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2019

Information about this early years setting

Play Alma Mater registered in 2011 and is located in Greater Manchester. The nursery employs 14 members of childcare staff. Of these, 11 hold an early years qualification at level 2 and above. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round, with the exception of bank holidays and Christmas. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides 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 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.
- 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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