

Inspection of Sandcastle Playgroup Limited

c/o Castle Manor Academy, Eastern Avenue, HAVERHILL, Suffolk CB9 9JE

Inspection date: 12 October 2021

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 enjoy their time at this well-established playgroup, which is extremely well trusted and respected by the local community. They become engrossed in their play in the thoughtfully and carefully created play spaces. Out in the 'orchard', children thrive as they explore and experience the natural environment. They care for the playgroup's pets. Children giggle and smile as they zoom down a grassy hill on a sled. They talk about their experience and encourage their friends to climb up the grassy bank to join in. Children confidently explore a range of sensory play activities. They experiment with coloured water and dig in the sand. Children feel foam, making marks as they spread it on a table.

The staff dedicate themselves to supporting children during their time at the playgroup. They help children to build on their social skills. The bonds that children build with staff are trusting and secure. Children make links in their learning as staff help them to find out about an animal they are interested in. They develop their imaginations as they freely choose from a selection of fancy dress items or pretend that their toy insect is being rescued by an astronaut.

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

- The safety and well-being of children are at the heart of the playgroup's activities. Staff report that the skilled and experienced manager has led and supported them through the challenges, including those created by the COVID-19 pandemic, with professionalism and kindness. As restrictions have eased, the manager and staff consider the risks and benefits to children and families of returning to previous activities as safely possible. Staff and managers are acutely aware of what children have missed out on. They are keen to help children benefit from a diverse range of positive childhood experiences.
- Children learn to regulate their own emotions. Their positive behaviour shows that they feel safe and secure. Staff consistently help children to understand how to get along with one another, take turns and share. They give this aspect of children's learning high importance, recognising it as a skill for life.
- Staff skilfully support children as they play, to help them make progress across the seven areas of learning. Children's physical development is excellently supported. For example, one of the outdoor areas has slopes and different surfaces. It is designed to help children develop their core muscles as they have fun riding around on balance bicycles.
- Staff are motivated and complete further professional development to improve their already good practice. They share their new knowledge among them and this helps to improve practice.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language are well settled and enjoy their time at

the playgroup. They grow in confidence and begin to build relationships with others. Sometimes, staff do not give those children who need extra support enough additional help. Such as, being on hand to encourage these children to join in with some activities to help them to further build on their skills.

- Partnerships with parents are effective. Many parents have high praise for the staff team. Staff recognise how supporting parents contributes to children's safety and security. Parents feel assured that staff will offer them non-judgemental support and guidance at all times. During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, staff used a variety of strategies to keep in contact with children and families, providing support with home learning activities. For example, staff sent out 'home videos' about their own interests to help children to continue to gain new knowledge.
- Children learn new words through regular small-group story times, interaction with staff and by singing nursery rhymes. The manager has identified that not all staff consistently use the existing strategies in place to support children's language skills to develop. For example, some, but not all, staff emphasise the sounds in words they say, to help children to hear the sounds and pronounce new words clearly.
- Children enjoy a game of football with friends and staff. Their understanding of mathematics develops as they make tally marks with chalk of how many goals each person scores.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a strong understanding of the possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect. They are aware of what to do if they have concerns about the safety or well-being of a child. Staff work closely with other agencies to safeguard children and ensure that families have appropriate support in place. Clear policies and procedures ensure that appropriate people work with children. Staff have an understanding of wider issues in safeguarding, such as how to recognise and respond to potential indicators of exposure to extreme views.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- monitor provision more closely to ensure that agreed strategies to support the learning of children with SEND and children who speak English as an additional language are consistently put into practice
- help all staff to further their understanding of, and achieve consistency in, delivering the highest quality of support for children's communication and language development.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY371488
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10113227
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 5
Total number of places	33
Number of children on roll	54
Name of registered person	Sandcastle Playgroup Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP527984
Telephone number	01440 705660
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2015

Information about this early years setting

Sandcastles Playgroup Limited re-registered in 2008. The playgroup employs 13 members of childcare staff, including the manager. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. This includes the manager who holds a level 6 qualification. The playgroup opens from Monday to Friday, from 8.30am until 3.30pm, during term time. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The playgroup supports children with SEND and children who speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Kate Hipperson

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the playgroup received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the playgroup.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a learning walk. They discussed the curriculum that the playgroup offers children and the reasons that specific aspects have been identified as important for the children who attend.
- The inspector observed the quality of interactions between staff and children and evaluated the impact that these had on children's learning and development. Children spoke to the inspector about their activities.
- The inspector looked at evidence of the suitability of those making up the registered body and staff members. First-aid training certificates were viewed.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of a planned activity.
- The inspector spoke with a small number of parents and considered their views about the playgroup.

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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