



## Playplus Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	129383
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 December 2006
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<b>Registered person</b>	Playplus Kindergarten
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Playplus Kindergarten is one of two privately owned nurseries. It opened in 1999 and operates from two converted buildings. It is situated in Bourne End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

A maximum of 48 children may attend the kindergarten at any one time. The kindergarten is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share access to two secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 72 children aged from four months to six years on roll. Of these, 13 receive funding for early education. Children come a wide catchment area. The kindergarten currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The kindergarten employs 31 members of staff. Of these, 23 staff, including the principal, hold appropriate childcare qualifications and five are working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is satisfactorily promoted because staff are aware of how to implement the kindergarten's hygiene policies and procedures. For example, nappy changing takes place in clean designated areas and terry towelling nappies are appropriately laundered to minimise the risk of cross infection. The kindergarten has several first aid kits and ensures that there is always a member of staff who holds a current first aid qualification on site at all times. This means that children's health, if they have an accident, is protected.

The children are learning to be healthy. Staff support and help children to gain a satisfactory understanding of good hygiene practices through the daily routine. For example, children are beginning to understand they must wash their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating. Individual warm damp flannels are provided for children to use after eating so that faces and hands are wiped.

Children dietary needs are satisfactorily met. Parents supply their children's meals and these are labelled and stored appropriately for housekeeping staff to prepare and serve at mealtimes. Good systems are in place to alert staff to children's food allergies or dietary restrictions. Children have a choice of food and drink at snack time. Children are able to ask for drinks at other times. Children are encouraged to eat savoury food before sweet at lunch time. Younger children are able to practise their independence skills, for example holding their spoons to feed themselves. Infants in the baby unit have individual care routines which are conscientiously followed by staff. Staff are very attentive so that bottle feeds and the introduction of weaning foods are enjoyable and relaxed.

Children have opportunities to exercise and develop their physical skills within the daily routine. They show enjoyment when playing outside and benefit from regular fresh air. Their physical health is promoted as they are able to take part in a varied range of physical play opportunities such as running and climbing, as well as helping with simple gardening chores. Infants who are beginning to crawl or walk are well supported. For example, staff in the baby unit have arranged furniture so that children can pull themselves to standing. Some children have weekly opportunities to participate in dance sessions with a peripatetic dance teacher. Children over two have opportunities to sleep or rest after lunch. Infants under two have individual sleep needs met as needed.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Children's safety is compromised as they currently use converted and refurbished rooms which have not been inspected by a fire officer. This overshadows all other measures, such as an entry

pad system, use of electrical socket covers and maintenance of the outdoor play areas, which the kindergarten has in place to minimise risks to children.

Staff members are adequately deployed to ensure that children are supervised when indoors and playing outside. Systems to monitor sleeping children, including those children whose parents prefer them to sleep in buggies outside, are in place. Children over two who rest indoors, mainly after lunch, sleep together in a first floor room. Although fire drills are frequently practised with the children, the kindergarten has not carried out an emergency evacuation procedure during the sleep period to assess the feasibility of moving sleeping children to safety. Infants under 15 months are cared for in a separate building on the kindergarten site. Steps to minimise risks in the baby unit are taken, including a daily check list and a health and safety record. Children's safety is considered when on outings, such as walks to the nearby canal. The kindergarten allocates one staff member to two children so that every child has an adult hand to hold.

Children learn about how to keep themselves safe through the use of topics, such as road safety, and through daily routine activities. For example, children are encouraged to help tidy away toys and store them neatly for other children to use. Children follow sensible safety rules, such as walking when indoors, and remind each other of the importance of changing out of slippery muddy boots after an outdoor play session.

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. There is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection. Staff members, including newly appointed staff, are aware of the kindergarten's child protection policy and procedures which have recently been updated. Consequently, children's welfare is protected.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are content and there is evidence of warm caring relationships between staff and children. Children generally have access to a broad range of activities. This includes use of a well-equipped garden, where children have use of climbing equipment, wheeled toys and are encouraged to care for the kindergarten's pet rabbits and guinea pigs. However, at some points in the day, experiences offered to children indoors are limited to the use of commercial toys, for example a plastic ball pool, toy cars and plastic construction toys.

Some aspects of the 'Birth to three matters' framework are well used, for example encouraging children's communication and language skills, through the use of rhymes and sharing stories. Older children enjoy staff attention and are keen to involve them in their play. Although constant, staff interaction sometimes does not follow children's interests, encourage independent learning or provide children with sufficient challenge.

Infants under 15 months are cared for in a separate designated unit. Here, they are offered an exciting range of activities which includes a collection of natural materials and toys to promote sensory development. Staff skilfully interact with the children and foster all aspects of development. Babies play contentedly together, for example, emptying and refilling a basket encouraged by a staff member who sits nearby. Later the babies use a designated empty kitchen

cupboard to store 'treasures' and delight in opening and closing the cupboard door. Observations are beginning to be made by staff working with younger children and information used to monitor and support development.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory

There is sufficient evidence to show that children who receive funding for nursery education are being offered a satisfactory level of teaching. Children are introduced to some aspects of learning, such as the recognition of the alphabet, through the use of 'Letter Land', on a regular basis. There are some opportunities for children to explore and use their imaginations, particularly during the free choice sessions. When using the well-resourced role play area, for example, children re-enact Christmas stories and delight in creating their own version of the nativity story, complete with Mary, several donkeys and lots of friends to help.

Children are generally busy, but some periods of the daily routine lack pace. For example, some children are not fully engaged during the daily circle time. Staff working with older children know the children well and intuitively cater for their needs. For example, children who enjoy sharing books are encouraged to talk about favourite stories and are offered quiet story sessions after lunch.

Children are generally offered a broad and balanced curriculum. Areas such as the book corner and designated art area are attractive and inviting and children eagerly participate in offered activities. Staff model skills to children, such as learning how to use scissors. Children's efforts as well as their achievements are praised. Additional subjects such as French and Spanish are offered both by a peripatetic teacher and a bi-lingual member of staff, which children are very keen to attend. However, overall, there is an emphasis on communication, language and literacy and mathematics, particularly counting and shape recognition.

Planning and assessment are in place. The kindergarten is developing planning to show clearly the link between learning intentions, the stepping stones and early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. Assessment, although completed on each child is general. For example, daily planning does not always indicate how adaptations are made and evaluated, so that all children benefit from participation in activities to achieve well. However, steps are being taken to address this.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued. They receive a warm welcome and quickly gain a sense of belonging. Staff take care to find out about children's preferences, such as the use of comforters. Parents are given a conducted tour of the kindergarten and time is available to discuss individual children's needs. The kindergarten has a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). There are systems in place to support children, including the use of outside agency support, such as visits from the local authority SENCO advisor.

Children behave well. They begin to form friendships and play cooperatively. Staff help children develop an understanding of right and wrong, proportionate to the child's level of understanding and maturity. The staff create an environment that encourages children to think about the feelings of others. This includes the use of 'behaviour stamps' that recognise children's kindness towards others. Daily prayers are a feature of the kindergarten day.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff make good use of daily sessions, such as snack time, to promote children's understanding of sharing and turn taking. The kindergarten has a satisfactory range of resources, such as books, which presents positive images of diversity and helps children gain an understanding of the local and wider community. Significant events, such as birthdays and festivals are celebrated.

Children benefit from the sound partnership with parents that the kindergarten has formed. Parents receive an information pack which outlines the services that the kindergarten has to offer. In addition, the entrance hall has a notice board and a display of staff photographs which keeps parents updated about changes. The principal holds a monthly open consultation session which parents can attend either by appointment or on a 'pop-in' basis to discuss their children's progress or other issues. Parents are made aware of the kindergarten's complaints procedure which includes information about how to make a formal complaint. As a result, parents are fully informed to enable all to work together to support children's well-being. During the inspection visit, parents were keen to share their positive views about the kindergarten, stating that they felt the kindergarten has a 'unique caring ethos'.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory.

Information about nursery education is provided through the kindergarten parents' pack and by regular newsletters. Parents are invited to attend open sessions and special events, such as the annual children's Christmas parties and concerts. Children's general progress is shared with parents both on an informal and formal basis.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

Overall, children's needs are not met. The kindergarten is currently operating outside the conditions of its registration. The recent transfer of a baby unit has not been managed well. Ofsted, although informed of the kindergarten's proposals, was not informed that building work was completed and that the move had occurred. This means that essential checks to determine if the newly refurbished rooms are fit for purpose have not been carried out. The registered person, who is also the principal of the kindergarten, has failed to assess the implications on children's care of not keeping Ofsted informed. Consequently, National Standards one, six and 14 have been breached.

Records, policies and procedures to support the other 11 National Standards are in place. Staff ratios, in particular are above the minimum National Standard. This means that staff members have time to form positive relationships with the children. However, the occasional transfer of staff to the other Playplus kindergarten site potentially disrupts this. The kindergarten seeks to provide a home-from-home environment for children. The environment is welcoming and

staff are friendly. However, at the time of the inspection visit, the registered person was not adhering to conditions of registration. Consequently, three actions have been set to ensure that children are safeguarded.

Leadership and management of funded children is satisfactory.

Monitoring and evaluating the quality of care and education provided to children is adequate. Changes have been, and continue to be made by the principal to address some of the issues raised at the last inspection in February 2004. This means that children are continuing to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff who mainly work with children receiving nursery education have a sound understanding of the principles behind the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. However, time is not made available for them to develop their roles and share information about children's achievements. They form a committed team and children benefit from their enthusiasm and attentiveness.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspections in 2004 of the kindergarten (Kingsway site) and baby unit, then located at another address, two actions were set surrounding the registered person's failure to report significant events to Ofsted. Following the inspection visits, the use of an additional building at the Kingsway site and the presence of household members over the age of 16 living in the family home which housed the baby unit, were reported. Although these actions have been resolved, the registered person has again failed to report two significant events: the use of the refurbished rooms and the transfer of the baby unit to the Kingsway site. This breaches both conditions of registration and mandatory National Standard requirements. Children's safety is compromised and actions have been set to ensure that the registered provider takes immediate steps to safeguard children.

Some recommendations made at the last inspections have been fully addressed. For example, an accurate system for registering children and staff is now in place, procedures to check suitability of staff are followed and the name, address and date of birth of each child who is looked after is recorded. However, assessment and planning, highlighted as weaknesses, remain under- developed. The registered person is currently reviewing existing systems, using local authority advisory support, to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

#### The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulation and put in place a procedure to comply with all conditions of registration.
- assess the risks to children in relation to using first floor rooms and adjoining buildings, including compliance with any recommendations made by the Fire Safety Officer, and take action to minimise these
- set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of any significant changes to the premises.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

#### The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure children's progress is consistently monitored and that assessments are linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals to inform future planning
- ensure that activities and experiences offered to children reflect the six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage
- ensure that staff have opportunities on a regular basis to discuss, monitor and evaluate teaching and children's learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)