

Playplus Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129383
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Inspector	Karen Molloy / Maura Pigram
Setting Address	Kingsway, London Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 2RQ
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Registered person	Playplus Kindergarten
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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 76 children aged from eight months to six years on roll. Of these, 27 receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The kindergarten currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The kindergarten employs 36 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 are beginning to learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care. They wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating, with young children given the necessary support. Children stay healthy as there are effective procedures to protect them from cross-infection. They use paper towels to dry their hands, help themselves to easily accessible tissues and terry towelling nappies are changed and laundered appropriately. Different indoor and outdoor shoes are worn and a no-shoe policy in the baby unit ensures children's well-being is considered. Children do not attend the kindergarten if they are unwell or infectious and this information is clearly shared with parents. The majority of staff hold a current first aid qualification and can therefore respond to children appropriately if they have an injury or accident. Suncream and sun hats are used to ensure children are protected in hot weather. All the relevant documentation is in place in relation to accidents and medication.

Children enjoy regular physical activity which contributes to their good health and helps to develop their physical skills. They have access to a spacious garden and participate in a varied range of physical play opportunities such as climbing and running. Children ride bikes with control and accurately manoeuvre their buggies around obstacles. They really enjoy being outdoors and are busy and engaged in their chosen area of play. In poor weather, children make use of a balancing beam, hoola hoops and smaller slides, to promote their physical development. Weekly music and movement sessions provide an opportunity for children to move around in different ways with control and coordination. Children use a range of tools and materials such as paintbrushes, pencils and chinks and complete puzzles, to promote their fine manipulative skills. Babies have time to practise basic skills as they pull themselves up and use resources such as walkers and ride-on toys to become more mobile. However, babies do not spend daily time outdoors and therefore do not benefit from regular exercise and fresh air. Children rest and sleep according to their needs. Young children follow their own routines and staff ensure they have their comforters ready for their sleep. Children are checked regularly, with times recorded and shared with parents.

Children are nourished. Parents provide their lunch and staff provide some information about choices to promote healthy eating. However, the variety of snacks is limited, with little evidence of fresh fruit, although the kindergarten are currently looking at developing this. Babies food is stored and re-heated appropriately. Daily information is exchanged with parents about children's individual diets to ensure their well-being is promoted. Older children sit in groups and good manners are encouraged. However, children's independence is not always encouraged at this time as staff organise, prepare and share out the snack and drinks for them. Children's individual dietary needs are taken into consideration, as staff work in partnership with parents and ensure any specific requests are recorded and adhered to.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe, secure and welcoming environment where most risks are identified and minimised. This means that children can move around safely, freely and with some independence. Appropriate safety precautions are in place such as socket covers, an entry pad and a signing in system for all staff and visitors. Staff and students currently wear tabards, and name badges are to be introduced to ensure staff are easily identifiable to parents and

other visitors. Fire drills are held regularly and all areas of the buildings are included. These are recorded and comments used for future evacuations, thereby promoting children's safety. Staff are generally vigilant and a high staff:child ratio ensures children's safety. Children are beginning to learn to keep themselves safe, for example, they are reminded not to stand by the door and asked not to run indoors.

Children are kept safe outdoors and potential dangers are explained to them. A good staff:child ratio is maintained on outings and an additional checklist is in place for taking babies out. Children learn about road safety as they take part in an activity where they become the lollipop person and learn how to cross roads safely. Children have use of suitable, age-appropriate and safe equipment. They make independent choices and many resources are low and accessible. Toys and equipment are kept clean and well-maintained.

Children are protected because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures in place when necessary. Staff have attended child protection training and as a result, have developed their knowledge and understanding in this area. They are aware of the need to share any concerns with the manager who will initiate any action.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled. They form positive relationships with their peers and the staff, and cheerfully greet us on our arrival. A befriender system means that all children are allocated a staff member who is responsible for their well-being. However, many part-time staff, who sometimes work at both sites, and a need to complete routine tasks means that children's needs do not always take precedence, and consequently children become unsettled or upset. However, generally staff are caring, attentive, kind and listen well to the children. They respond promptly and sensitively to them and in turn, children are confident to approach staff for support or reassurance. Children's independence is promoted as they move around freely and make independent choices. They are encouraged to select some resources as they come indoors and are soon absorbed in their chosen activity. Children develop confidence and self-esteem; they talk about their adventures with 'Benjie' the kindergarten dog and staff encourage children to recall events and share in their delight. Children receive praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements and staff respond positively to children's interest, for example, a younger child is allowed to join older children in the movement session, as staff recognise how much they benefit from the session.

Children experience a balanced range of activities and play opportunities both indoors and outside, to support their all round development. Designated play areas provide different experiences and the cosy home corner and comfortable book corner are particularly inviting. Children acquire new knowledge and skills. In the baby unit, early skills are supported as children pull themselves up and begin to move around the furniture. Younger babies are given rattles to hold and interesting toys to watch, as they lay on their tummy. Older babies are helped to complete first puzzles; they take great delight in pulling the pieces out whilst a member of staff tries to show them how to put them back in. Treasure baskets are used with young children to encourage them to explore and investigate a variety of objects. Children have opportunities to play, rest and be active, often at their own pace. They benefit from free play as well as more structured activities, such as circle time when children's concentration and listening skills are promoted. However, there are times when some activities are very adult-directed and do not allow the children to express themselves freely, such as during craft activities. Staff are becoming much more confident using the 'Birth to three matters' framework

and planning now incorporates all aspects of the framework, to ensure all areas of children's development is promoted.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and this contributes to children's progress towards the early learning goals. Children take part in a variety of planned activities and staff are aware of their differing ages and stages of development. Children have a positive attitude to learning, they show interest, ask questions and develop confidence and self esteem. However, at times, there are missed opportunities for children to take responsibility and increase their independence, for example, at snack time, staff organise, prepare and carry out this task. Children benefit from a combination of family grouping and circle times. Family groups enable older and younger children to learn from each other, whilst smaller circle times focus on children's different ages and stages of development. Time and resources are organised well to meet children's needs with many of the resources taken outdoors to provide interesting learning experiences.

Staff have spent time developing the planning and assessment system which now covers all areas of learning. All staff have input into the planning with the areas of learning and stepping stones clearly identified. Activity plans are completed for each activity and include specific objectives, consequently, staff are aware of the aim for each activity. Although staff know the children well, some evaluations are general and it is not always clear how some children are supported or challenged. Therefore, planning may not always indicate how children reach their potential. Observations are carried out regularly and this information is collated and recorded in the six areas of learning. Children's individual files, with examples of their work and their progress record, are given to parents when they leave the setting.

Children communicate well. They are confident to speak in a large group situation and enjoy talking about their own experiences. They learn to take it in turns to talk and are encouraged to listen to others. Children listen well to instructions and follow them accordingly, for example, during the movement and music session, children follow instructions to move various parts of their body. Questions are asked during group times to develop children's thinking and they respond appropriately and with interest. Children become absorbed in stories and are keen to sit with friends and 'read' their own books. Children develop positive relationships with their peers and the staff. They give each other cuddles and generally play together cooperatively. Children are reminded of the expectations such as to put their hands up to ask a question. They show care and consideration for others and apologise when they have hurt someone.

Children have opportunities to explore and investigate and have recently completed a mini beasts topic. This was greatly enjoyed by the children who continue to search for worms and bugs in the garden. Weekly food tasting sessions enable the children to learn about new foods and they are enthusiastic to participate. Children recognise numbers on the telephones and can identify numbers from one to eight. They look at different heights as they measure how tall they are and learn about shape as they use various bricks to carefully build and construct. However, there are missed opportunities to develop children's learning of mathematical concepts or to introduce mathematical language through everyday activities, such as snack time.

Children really enjoy using the role play area where they spend lots of time creating imaginative play situations. Children 'paint' the fence and take their babies for walks. They explore various media and materials such as chalks, play dough and drawing materials. Children learn about rhythm and sound through use of musical instruments, rhymes and a weekly music and movement

session. Children begin to develop an understanding of different cultures and beliefs. Resources such as dressing-up clothes and dual text books support this. Children are involved in celebrating various festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year and take part in additional subjects such as French, which they are keen to attend.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued and respected and they are greeted warmly on arrival. Children develop a sense of belonging; they have named pegs, their individual comforters and named cups. Children are settled in gradually and sensitively, with their individual needs discussed with parents and recorded. A weekly parent and toddler group is an effective way of introducing new families to the setting and helps to make the transition from home to nursery as smooth as possible. Children are able to make independent choices in an informal and relaxed setting. There are systems in place to support children with special needs. A designated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) works in partnership with parents and other agencies, to meet the needs of the children and to ensure they are fully included in the setting.

Children understand responsible behaviour and play together well. Family grouping encourages younger children to learn from older children and promotes a sense of caring and concern for all children. They play well in pairs, making 'snacks' from bricks and they ask their friend 'can I have another one please?.' Children are clear of the boundaries, expectations are explained and reinforced to them during circle times, where they are reminded not to run and to be kind to each other. If children are fidgety they may sit with an adult or if they display unacceptable behaviour, an explanation is given as to why it is unacceptable. They are asked to apologise or give the 'hurt' child a cuddle, if appropriate. If unacceptable behaviour persists, 'time out' may be used and children sit where they can be seen by an adult. Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they are praised for their efforts and achievements. Their good behaviour is acknowledged, for example, children are praised for washing and drying their hands well, although on one occasion the child waits and then responds 'Excuse me, I'm always a good boy!'.

Children are cared for by staff who form good partnerships with parents. They work well to meet individual needs and communication is effective. This is done in a number of ways; a notice board, regular newsletter, information pack, daily diary for children under three and information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Parents views are actively sought via a suggestion box and questionnaires. Recent responses to questionnaires are very positive and they comment on; 'lovely staff, a caring and safe environment, excellent learning for older children, approachable staff, welcoming 'open door' atmosphere, warmth and friendliness, good partnership and say that children are the primary focus and concern'. Parents views are valued and the setting has responded individually to any queries or comments raised in the questionnaires. 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 of factors that support children's well-being. In addition, the kindergarten is planning a 'Grandparents Day' to invite them to see what goes on, this will help to promote a good partnership. Policies and procedures are readily available in the entrance to ensure parents are well informed.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Information about the nursery education is provided through the parents pack and includes an explanation on the Foundation Stage, the aims, early learning goals and stepping stones. The principal holds

a monthly open consultation session which parents can attend by appointment or on a 'pop-in' basis to discuss their child's progress or other issues. Parents are encouraged to share information about what they know about their children when they first start, although this is not carried out formally or routinely as they get older. Consequently, staff may not be fully informed of children's starting points or of factors that impact on children's development. Obtaining this information will help them to plan more effectively for children's learning. Parents have some opportunities to be involved in children's learning such as through the information displayed on the whiteboard, they are invited in for the farm visit and they may bring in items from home to link in with the current theme. 'Benjie' the kindergarten dog is taken home by the children and they are encouraged to discuss his adventures on their return, which provides a valuable link between home and the setting.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are beginning to develop an awareness of diversity with some resources including dressing-up clothes, puzzles and games to support this. Festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year are celebrated to broaden children's understanding of a wider society and children's birthdays are also marked with a cake and small gift. Daily prayers are a feature of the kindergarten day. Children are encouraged to be kind to each other, to share and take turns.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by a generally established and committed team of staff, although there has been some recent staff changes. Recruitment procedures ensure staff have relevant experience, qualifications, knowledge and skills to do their job. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of child development and continue to update their knowledge and skills. Staff records are suitably maintained. Appropriate checks are completed on all staff and anyone who is not vetted is not left unsupervised with children. New staff complete an induction to ensure they have a clear understanding of the setting's policies and procedures. Staff meetings are held regularly to enable staff to have some input and to ensure they are kept well informed and up to date. A diary for sharing information enables all staff to be kept informed.

Staff are generally deployed appropriately and work well together. A befriender system enables all children to have a dedicated staff member to respond to their individual needs. However, there are times when this system is not effective and children are cared for by a number of carers, as staff allow more routine tasks to take priority over the children's needs. Space is organised with some clearly defined areas and the adult to child ratio positively supports children's care, learning and play. The kindergarten aims to provide a home-from-home environment, where children can move around quite freely and in mixed age groups, as they would in a family setting. Consequently, children are relaxed and comfortable within their environment and confident to initiate their own play and make choices, yet still approach staff for reassurance or support. Policies and procedures work in practice to promote children's health, safety and enjoyment and many have been reviewed recently to ensure they are up to date with current practice.

Leadership and management of funded children is satisfactory. The staff team are led and managed by the owner and Principal, who is committed to ensuring children are safe, happy and making progress. She makes her expectations clear to all staff, and stresses the importance of being a positive role model to children. The manager is committed to improving care and education for all the children and regularly discusses issues with senior staff about expectations and improvements. Staff work well together and share information effectively. Staff have

attended Foundation Stage training and continue to develop their knowledge in the six areas of learning. As a result, staff have a sound knowledge of the curriculum. Staff appraisals are carried out and these are used as a way to discuss any concerns, celebrate successes or identify any training needs. An annual training day is set aside for staff to develop their knowledge or discuss forthcoming topics. Staff have recently spent time reviewing and developing their knowledge of both the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters' framework to ensure planning meets the needs of all the children.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting was required to respond to a number of actions in relation to care. These included improving knowledge and understanding of the requirements, with a procedure to comply with conditions of registration. The provider has reviewed the National Standards and established a monthly administrative checklist to ensure all conditions of registration are adhered to. A procedure to notify Ofsted of any significant changes has been developed. A risk assessment has been updated to cover new areas and recommendations made by the fire safety officer have been complied with. A fire drill of the loft sleep room has been carried out and recorded. Consequently, children's safety is safeguarded and all conditions of registration are met.

The provider was also asked to look at a number of recommendations in relation to Nursery Education. Children's progress is monitored and assessments are now clearly linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals. However, it is not always clear how individual children are supported or challenged. Therefore, this has been brought forward as a new recommendation. Planning clearly includes all areas of learning and ensures children receive a balanced range of activities and experiences. Although staff do not have regular opportunities to discuss, monitor and evaluate teaching and children's learning, they do use staff meetings and an In-Service Training Day to look at planning and assessment. Non-contact time is currently being organised for the team leader to enable her to develop planning and children's assessments.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure staff are deployed effectively to ensure the welfare and development of children; also in relation to the befriender system
- ensure play opportunities and experiences allow children to use their imagination, express themselves freely and develop their independence.

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 planning clearly shows how individual children are challenged or supported
- ensure parents are encouraged to share what they know about their children, to enable staff to plan effectively for children's learning.

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