

Playmates Pre-School (Raunds)

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Martyn Richards

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Playmates Pre-School is a committee run community group with charitable status, which was registered in 1991 and moved to its current premises in January 2001. The Playgroup is based in the former caretaker's house in the grounds of the local primary school in the small market town of Raunds. In addition to several small rooms in the house, it has access to an enclosed outdoor play area, and is able to use the school's swimming pool for lessons.

The playgroup may take up to 21 children from two years to under five years at any one time. Children attend for a variety of sessions during the week. There are currently 50 children on roll, and the playgroup receives funding in respect of some of them. It is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The playgroup is open each weekday during school term-times. Sessions currently run from 09.00am to 11.30am, and 12.30pm to 03.00pm. There is a lunch club from 12.30pm to 01.30pm.

Seven part-time staff work in the playgroup throughout the week. Five already hold appropriate early years qualifications, and one is currently working towards such a qualification.

The playgroup has close links with its adjacent primary school, and with the advisory and support agencies of the local authority. It is affiliated to the Pre-School Learning Alliance. It is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The pre-school has improved very significantly since its last inspection, and it makes excellent provision for its children. As a result of the high quality of leadership, and the staff's strong teamwork approach, children's individual needs are identified and met very well, and they make outstanding progress. The playgroup is a secure, happy and inclusive community. Children thoroughly enjoy activities carefully matched to their individual interests and abilities. They develop personal qualities of independence and responsibility, as well as important practical skills and insights. These equip them well when the time comes for them to transfer to school. Parental involvement is welcomed, and imaginative playgroup activities often capture children's interest to the extent that they carry their enthusiasm home at the end of the day. The playgroup has a strong record of innovation and improvement, and has an excellent capacity and drive to continue developing in the future.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- provide more activities to help children appreciate the culturally diverse nature of the world around them.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Leadership at the pre-school is dynamic, well-informed and highly effective. Keeping the children safe is rightly given the highest priority by the staff, and levels of safeguarding are excellent. The suitability of all adults wishing to work with the children is rigorously checked. The activity rooms, and the outdoor play area are secure, so children cannot slip away unnoticed. Visitors are required to identify themselves, and sign in on arrival, and the playgroup has stringent procedures for circumstances where a child might not be collected at the usual time, or might be collected by an unauthorised person. Staff have all had thorough child protection training and are alert to any indications that a child might be mistreated. They know the procedures to be followed if they are concerned. There are regular termly fire drills, carefully recorded, and the well-marked emergency exits are kept free of obstruction. Every year, a full risk assessment of the site and its resources is carried out, and any potential hazards dealt with. In addition, staff carefully identify possible risks that might arise from particular activities, such as trips off-site, or the regular programme of swimming lessons. The leader has instituted an excellent key person scheme. Each member of staff is responsible for the oversight of the welfare and progress of a small group of children. They maintain contact with each child's parents, note the child's response to the activities undertaken, and ensure the next steps in learning build well on the child's interests, knowledge and skills. The sharing of responsibility roles is an example of the high quality teamwork which characterises the playgroup, and it contributes well to staff professional development.

Staff are well-qualified for their work, and are keen to undertake additional training to further improve their effectiveness. An excellent programme of training has ensured that important new initiatives, such as the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, add breadth and challenge to the children's learning. They see each child as unique, and plan imaginative learning activities suited to their interests. Staff are very well-trained in supporting any children who might have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They liaise very closely with advisory agencies and others working with the children, to ensure continuity in provision for the child. They make certain all children can benefit from the full range of activities they provide, supporting those with difficulties, and providing extra challenge for those who need it. As a result of this individual provision, the children make excellent progress from their starting points during their time in the playgroup. Staff have also introduced a range of provision to help children appreciate the cultural diversity of the world around them, and have identified this as an area they wish to extend further.

The staff are committed to improving the playgroup even more. They have implemented the recommendations of their last inspection very thoroughly. They have put in place an excellent system for periodic self-evaluation. This is a reflective and self-critical process. It identifies the areas of strength in the playgroup's work, the improvements which have been made, and the major targets for future development. Many of the goals they have recently set themselves have been speedily implemented. For instance, they have planned a number of additional strategies for parental involvement, including more consultations, and home visits if requested. Other plans include a re-ordering of the accommodation, and making adjustments to the outdoor provision. A regular newsletter keeps parents abreast of developments, and a periodic survey of parent opinion helps keep parent's concerns to the forefront of the staff's mind.

The playgroup has excellent links with its adjacent primary school. They are able to use the heated swimming pool for swimming lessons, and are invited to suitable school events. The records of children's achievements are very detailed, and playgroup children and school staff visit each other's settings to help reduce anxiety. Similar transition arrangements operate with the other primary schools to which a few of the children transfer.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

From the moment they arrive in the mornings, the children enjoy the activities provided. They settle very quickly to play. Several gather round a new train track set out on the floor, exploring how the trains move, how the points can be set to avoid collisions, and what different noises the trains make. They take turns at moving the trains and are careful not to tread on the track by accident. Another small group choose art activities. One child makes hand prints, using a range of beautifully mixed pastel colours, and taking great care that her prints do not overlap each other. Yet another makes a collage, using glue to stick a range of different types of paper and card together to make a pattern. She realises that corrugated cardboard is not easy to stick, because her glue only goes on the raised parts of the corrugation. Two other children play at a computer screen, moving figures around to show how a character can stay safe. They have a fluent and confident manner of handling the mouse. Children show impressive levels of maturity and independence in selecting their activities. Staff are present at each activity, joining in conversation with the children, asking questions and making suggestions. They have a clear understanding of the range of learning each activity might generate, but are sensitively aware that the children themselves should take the lead in self-chosen activities such as these.

At other times, staff will build a programme of learning around an individual child's suggestion. After one child brought a bean seed to playgroup, the children learn about how seeds germinate and grow. They planted some in their outdoor garden and observed their progress. They also sowed sunflowers, and talk excitedly about how quickly they are growing. During the inspection two frogs ventured into the outdoor area, to the children's great excitement. They were gently caught and put into a small aquarium with a little water. The children watch them settle on a piece

of bark, or in the shallow water. They use hand lenses to get a close up view of the frogs' faces, noticing especially their eyes. They give the frogs names, and learn how animals must be treated gently and with respect. The range of activities the playgroup offers, to help children learn about the world around them, is one of its strengths. An exchange between a parent and the playgroup provided an excellent illustration of how learning can be extended when a child is captivated by an activity. His interest was captured by a world globe which showed where some animals had their habitats. With an adult at playgroup, he explored the kind of habitat different animals needed to thrive, and where these habitats could be found. His interest continued at home, where he found out more about animals, habitats, climate and foreign countries.

As children play, staff make notes of their reactions, of the skills they demonstrate and the ideas they have. These observations are collected together and used to help plan subsequent activities well-matched to the children's needs. Over time they present a vivid and detailed picture of the excellent progress children make from their varied starting points, and are available to parents at regular consultation events. They show the children gaining confidence and fluency in spoken language. They learn the right way to hold a book, and that the illustrations and the text have different functions. They hold a brush or pencil firmly, and increasingly make recognisable letters based on those in their names. They can count up to and beyond 10, and recognise terms such as 'smaller' and 'bigger' 'heavy' and 'light'. They can point out common regular shapes, such as circles and squares. They mix colours of paint for themselves and enjoy role playing in the 'hairdresser's shop'. Outside, they improve balance, jumping, and hopping skills. They exert themselves enthusiastically with large play apparatus, such as wheeled tricycles. The children are excellently behaved. They have a respectful and friendly relationship with staff, and are calm in manner. They use equipment safely, wash their hands without prompting when they get dirty, and take responsibility for putting equipment away when they have finished. The skills, and personal and social attitudes, they acquire in this outstanding pre-school will serve them well in their future education.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met