

Romsey Mill Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Veronica Sharpe

Setting address	Romsey Mill, Hemingford Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 3BZ
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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

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

Romsey Mill Playgroup has been established since 1980 and is currently managed by the Romsey Mill Trust. It operates from one of the main halls at Romsey Mill in Cambridge and serves the local area. Children have use of an enclosed outdoor play area.

The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 41 children under eight years may attend at any one time. Children are accepted from the age of two years and six months. Sessions run from 9.15am until 11.45am each weekday, with an optional lunch club on Mondays and Fridays until 1pm. There are currently 31 children on roll within the early years age group. The playgroup supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language. It accepts three- and four-year-olds who are eligible for early years funding. It is also able to offer a limited number of funded places for two-year-olds through the local authority.

The playgroup employs seven permanent members of staff, five of whom hold early years qualifications. The manager holds Qualified Teacher Status. The playgroup is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and works in partnership with Romsey Mill Children's Centre, which operates from the same building. The registration also covers a creche facility for families with children under five-years-old attending meetings or accessing courses within Romsey Mill.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children feel safe and secure in this warm and exceptionally inclusive setting. An excellent understanding of children's individual needs and highly effective partnerships with parents ensure each child makes the best possible progress in their learning and development. Staff are highly skilled in offering personalised support for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Meticulous systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision enable the setting to continuously improve the outcomes for all children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- reviewing the organisation of the sessions to even further enhance children's opportunities to extend their own learning and follow their own interests.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Robust safeguarding procedures promote children's safety and welfare. All staff are exceptionally well informed about safeguarding issues and have the training and confidence to ensure children's safety. Recruitment procedures are extremely thorough, with all adults, including volunteers, undergoing a rigorous vetting process to establish their suitability. Risk assessments ensure the environment, equipment and resources are safe, which gives children the freedom to explore and freely use all areas of the setting. Excellent staff ratios ensure children are looked after very well and they are constantly supervised.

Excellent partnerships with parents enhance children's welfare and learning significantly. Parents comment enthusiastically about the personalised service they receive and say staff are extremely caring. Communication is very good, enabling parents to share in their children's experiences in the setting. A well-presented prospectus and comprehensive policies and procedures mean parents gain an in-depth understanding of the setting. They have regular opportunities to offer their ideas and opinions to management through regular meetings and questionnaires. The playgroup has very close links with the children's centre, which enables them to offer consistent services and advice to parents; for example, families access the speech and language therapists in both the playgroup and the centre.

Staff value their links with other providers and are currently working on enhancing this part of the provision. Strong partnerships with local schools and nursery classes enable staff to provide children with opportunities to meet their teachers and visit new settings. This ensures children make their transitions with confidence. Other professionals, such as special educational needs advisors, say staff are highly skilled and responsive to children's needs. The setting's ability to offer inclusive care to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a key strength of the provision. One-to-one adult support gives children with complex needs every opportunity to join in and be an active part of the setting. Skilled staff work with parents and children to devise individual learning plans that meet each child's needs exceptionally well.

The setting is very well organised and is welcoming to all. Children's artwork, posters and photographs help them to feel a real sense of belonging. Resources are clearly labelled and easily accessible. Children freely make their choices with much enjoyment. Although the setting is a large, busy hall, staff have cleverly created cosy areas where children can play quietly. The small outdoor area is used throughout the session. In spite of its size, it offers children a rich learning environment because staff understand how to use space and resources effectively. Evaluating and monitoring the quality of the provision is given a high priority and involves children, staff and parents. Staff and managers are passionate about their roles and strive to bring about change. They meet regularly to assess their progress and identify new targets for development. New ideas are welcomed and readily explored, which gives the setting an excellent capacity to continue to improve the outcomes for children.

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

Staff have a thorough understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and positively encourage children to engage with equipment and resources to develop their skills. Planning is flexible and highly individualised. Staff plan for the day ahead, basing activities and resources on their observations of children's ideas, needs and interests. Input from parents is valued highly to enhance the staff's understanding of children's abilities and interests. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have comprehensive daily diaries in addition to their development records. This ensures consistency if their key person is absent.

Children thrive in this inclusive and welcoming setting. They settle easily to their activities and show their obvious enjoyment as they greet their friends and chatter to adults. They cooperate with each other extremely well; for example, three-year-olds help each other build a tall tower from blocks, taking turns and counting out loud. Children busy themselves happily as they choose a favourite game or sit on the floor with friends to make models from bricks. Staff deploy themselves well, ensuring children can access support if they wish, but allowing them the freedom to explore and extend their learning independently. The environment reflects children's families, backgrounds and lifestyles, helping children to understand and value differences in language, culture and religion.

Children develop a love of books because staff positively encourage spontaneous story times. Children snuggle down next to an adult with a self-chosen book, looking at the words and pictures with interest and concentration. Staff excel at active storytelling; children listen enthralled to the tale of the three little pigs and eagerly speculate what might happen next. Staff bring the children together for group activities and these are mostly varied and interesting. Children show their enjoyment as they sing lively songs. They play imaginatively indoors and out and enjoy dressing up or playing with the steering wheel in the outdoor area. They explore paint freely and swirl round the colours with energy, finding joy in the process of creation. Adult-led wall displays show that children learn about events and festivals, such as Chinese New Year. They also add their own paintings and drawings to the displays, demonstrating their own knowledge and appreciation of dragons.

Snacks are available throughout most of the session, enabling children to make choices about their foods. Some are hungry early on and quickly help themselves to bananas and pancakes, while others carry on with their play. Staff sit with the children and there are many lively conversations at the table that promote children's interest in healthy foods. Children show a good deal of independence in their personal care, given their age and stage of development. They understand the importance of hand washing and use soap with enthusiasm. Staff encourage children to learn safe practices by example as they all help to tidy away resources or sit on their chairs properly.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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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	1
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