

# Playbox Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 146751  
**Inspection date** 08/12/2010  
**Inspector** Lynne Talbot

**Setting address** Hitchin Christian Centre, Bedford Road, HITCHIN,  
Hertfordshire, SG5 1HF

**Telephone number** 01462 442238

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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*.

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

Playbox Playgroup has been operational for over 30 years. The provision operates from self-contained facilities within the Hitchin Christian Centre in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Access routes to the building are level and children have access to a secure outdoor play area. The provision is open each weekday during term-time only and sessions are from 9.15am to 12.15pm every morning, and 1pm to 3pm on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. There is also a lunch club on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12.15pm to 12.55pm. A maximum of 28 children may attend the provision at any one time and the setting receives funding for nursery education.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare register. The setting is also registered to offer care to children aged over five years. Children occupying these places share the same facilities as the children in the early years age range. There are currently no children on roll in this age range. There are currently 49 children on roll in total, all of whom are within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Some children attend other settings such as the local primary school or childminders.

The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children for whom English is an additional language. There are eight staff members, who all hold relevant childcare qualifications.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage is adapted to children's interests and generally shows good range and detail. This ensures that children's experiences foster excellent progress overall. Staff create a highly welcoming environment, using excellent safeguarding procedures and thorough risk assessments. They have very good knowledge of each child's needs so that they can ensure every child is fully included. Partnerships with other agencies, parents and carers are strong. The managers communicate drive and ambition to secure continued improvement using developing self-evaluation processes.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- plan and provide experiences which are appropriate to each child's stage of development as they progress towards the early learning goals; this refers to showing how children's individual next steps are incorporated with both challenge or support as necessary, and developing information shared with parents and offering support for extended learning in the home
- ensure there is a balance of adult-led and freely-chosen or child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play; this refers to

- opportunities for them to encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations
- develop further the self-evaluation and quality improvement processes as the basis of ongoing internal review.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Comprehensive and detailed safeguarding procedures ensure that children are fully protected. The managers ensure that all persons required undertake the appropriate checks to safeguard children. Daily routines within the premises and staff vigilance ensure that safeguarding procedures work at all times. An intercom at the main door, a locked rear gate, and number and ratio checks whenever children move between play areas support the overall security. Senior management implement thorough recruitment and induction processes including mentoring of new staff, or those in new roles, to ensure that the staff group remains effective at all times. Risk assessments of all areas are comprehensive and completed both annually, as part of an overall assessment of the premises, and daily. An accident log is maintained and reviewed systematically to address any recurring issues.

Managers are highly enthusiastic and have clear expectations for progression. There is commitment to ongoing professional development throughout the staff group resulting in a positive impact on the care and learning provided. Self-evaluation processes have been introduced and have included input from the staff group and feedback from the users of the service. However the process is not yet incorporating regular review, identifying accurate areas for development or focussing on the impact on children. This means the process cannot be fully promoting the outcomes for children.

Children's individual learning styles are respected. Staff learn key words in languages such as Punjabi and Polish to enable children to share each other's home language and to help children to be secure in the setting. Areas within the room are labelled in multiple languages. Children are given options within their play and express opinions easily. New children have in-depth settling-in procedures which include daily observation and records for the first week focussing on their personal, social and emotional well-being. This is used to develop an initial next step plan. These methods ensure that every child is supported to achieve. Staff are deployed very well throughout sessions moving between areas, aware of each other as they move with numbers of children from the main room to either the outdoor area or the lobby. The environment is highly conducive to learning and is safe and well-cared for. An excellent range of quality play provision is used to achieve the planned goals; this is further supported by the wider range available through the children's centre toy library.

The setting has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers. They are involved through volunteering in the group and attending events. Parents' views are sought using questionnaires and regular newsletters are issued to keep them informed. Parents are kept well-informed about their children's achievements, well-

being and development. At the end of each term, parents receive a summary of children's achievements and planned next steps and they are invited to comment on this report. However, parents are not yet seen to contribute to children's planned learning on a regular basis using milestones reached in the home or working towards those planned next steps. This means that opportunities to build on spontaneous learning in the home may not be maximised and linked to learning in the setting.

The managers and staff actively promote equality and diversity and tackle unfair discrimination. They are committed to working in partnership with others and are proactive in establishing effective working relationships. They send a copy of all summary developments to ongoing nurseries and schools, invite teachers to visit and maintain photograph albums of local schools to enable children to familiarise themselves with new settings. The managers are part of a local forum with other settings which addresses issues and ongoing development. The managers and staff make the most of events and festivals to broaden children's awareness of other cultures. Children take part in extended activities to explore new tastes. For example, after reading a popular children's book which shows unfamiliar fruits they used a juicer to try new tastes. Countries such as Africa and Hawaii are explored, and children take part in fundraising for Comic Relief day. This helps children to appreciate the wider society around them.

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

Children are offered planned activities that help them to make rapid progress overall in their learning and development. Detailed assessment through recorded observation is in place and the information gained is used to identify clear next steps. Spontaneous observation is gathered through photographs and post-its which are added to progression charts. Parents may contribute to these charts by using the parents' feedback section on the end-of-term summary assessment. The staff group meets every two weeks to plan, using key-person information for each child and collating information to ensure that planning meets every child's next objective. However, the weekly planning shown does not detail why or how activities are planned for individuals. This means that focus may fail to meet those actual aims which have been planned.

Staff plan inventive activities which, while set around themes, do adapt to children's emerging interests. For example, children thoroughly enjoy story books such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar' and, following their interest, staff supply caterpillars from a supply agent to allow children to view their lifecycle first-hand. This leads onto extended activities such as baking butterfly-shaped biscuits, making butterfly wings to wear, dressing up as insects and making cocoons in several media. Children delight in telling each other stories and repeat the story to each other, singing songs about bugs and using remote-control bugs. Children are very interested in what they see around them, asking relevant questions, and are keen to take part in activities. For instance, a water tray with shallow water which has frozen overnight prompts children's interest. They chatter delightedly talking about why it has frozen, asking staff if they can ice-skate on it, and discussing how

the animals have frozen into the ice. They use language confidently talking about items being stuck and needing to thaw, they solve problems as they discuss how they can chip the ice to release the animals, and they compare the thickness of the ice estimating the thick and thin areas. These simple activities foster learning in all areas and engage children in new experiences.

Children show an extremely strong sense of security and belonging in the group. They work exceptionally well independently and with their peers showing excellent negotiation and co-operation skills. Children enjoy writing cards for their friends and posting them in the Christmas post box. Relationships are strong at all levels. Achievements are celebrated through the 'You are a star' board where children's achievements are applauded. Children enjoy receiving certificates to share with their parents marking those achievements. Children have ownership of their health and well-being and demonstrate that they are well informed about healthy living. For instance, when cooking, children tell each other without prompting that they need to wash their hands to remove the germs. They remind staff during the hand-washing song that the other verses contain washing in between your fingers and to go right around your thumbs.

Children use a range of tools and equipment within the setting and know how to handle these to keep safe. The emphasis from staff is on prompting children to consider the consequences of an action and they always ask children to consider what may happen when they are playing. This assists in developing children's own reasoning skills. Road safety week is observed and a visit from the fire service further strengthens children's understanding of safety. Children take part in planting sunflowers and runner beans in pots. However, children have few opportunities to encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations as they do not yet have regular opportunities to explore their local community. Children are eager to attend and make significant gains in their learning. They show high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration.

## 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

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

### 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

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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