

Marlow Opportunity Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY419740
Inspection date	15/06/2011
Inspector	Sonjia Nicholson

Setting address	Scout HQ, Watery Lane, Woobum Green, Buckinghamshire, HP10 0NE
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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

Marlow Opportunity Playgroup is managed by a Voluntary Management Committee. It has operated for over 40 years in the local area and has been a registered charity for the past six years. It offers specialist care to children with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities and now runs from the Scout Hut in the village of Woburn Green in Buckinghamshire. This is within easy reach of the A40, M40 and local towns, such as High Wycombe and Beaconsfield. Children have use of a large main hall with access to both a lawn and hard surface play area for outdoor play. There is a kitchen to prepare snacks, a store room, foyer and toilets. The playgroup is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 12.30pm and for two weeks during the summer from 10.00am to 12.30pm for holiday sessions for children up to the age of eight years.

The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 24 children under eight years, 12 of whom may be under two years. There are currently 38 children on roll, all of whom are within the early years age range. A number of three and four year old children are in receipt of government funding for nursery education and several two year olds are part of the 'Two Year Old' pilot scheme introduced by the Department for Children Schools and Families to support disadvantaged children.

The setting is managed on a daily basis by a Playgroup Leader who is supported by a Supervisor and two senior play assistants. Eleven other members of staff are employed to work with the children, the majority of whom hold childcare qualifications to level 2 or 3. A varying number of volunteers are also used to support children and staff. The setting receives support from Buckinghamshire Early Years and Childcare Service and is part of the '0 to 7 Alliance' an initiative designed to support the most vulnerable children in the Early Years Foundation Stage within Bucks.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children flourish in this exceptional setting. Each child is recognised as an individual and staff work extensively with parents and outside agencies to ensure their unique needs are met. The setting is highly reflective in its approach and demonstrates a significant ability to make continuous improvements. There is a strong commitment to staff development and training with ample opportunities for them to gain a recognised childcare qualification and attend relevant courses, such as, safeguarding and paediatric first aid. Staff work closely with the local authority to constantly review their practice and bring about positive improvement; staff also offer valuable contributions and share ideas gained from other providers and visits to other settings, for example, they have successfully implemented a self-registration system for children and created a suggestion box for parents.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop children's independence at snack times by encouraging them, wherever possible, to assist.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff have an excellent knowledge of safeguarding procedures gained through a programme of on-going training. They give utmost priority to protecting children from harm and work closely with allocated social workers from the 'Children with Disabilities Team' if there is a concern. The management committee ensure the robust recruitment procedures in place are adhered to so that only suitably qualified and experienced staff are employed. A number of volunteers offer their time and are fully supervised and supported by staff; they are invited to attend in-house training to add to their skills and knowledge. The premises are extremely safe as staff complete a daily checklist to ensure children enter into a safe environment. They have conducted risk assessments for all areas, detailing the action taken to avoid injury and/or deal with potential hazards, for example, what to do if a child puts a non-poisonous berry into their mouth. Staff are exceedingly vigilant at collection times to ensure unaccompanied children cannot leave and unknown adults cannot enter. Visitors are encouraged to book an appointment but all visitors are asked to sign in and out of the premises. A reliable taxi company provides regular drivers who are known to staff and fully checked to transport some children to and from the setting; this is done with parent's written consent. Staff are easily identifiable within the setting as they wear coloured tabards and name badges. The fire drill is practised on a regular basis so staff, volunteers and children know how to leave the building quickly and safely and details are recorded for future reference.

All aspects of the provision are extremely well-organised. The highly motivated staff team work very well together and are dedicated to creating a stimulating environment for children. They are clear about their role, enjoy their work and undertake their daily tasks with confidence which means the session runs smoothly. The Play Leader is an inspiring role model for staff; they fully recognise the wealth of experience and knowledge she brings to this role and appreciate the support and guidance she offers them. There is a enormous range of high quality toys, resources and equipment. Staff select what is required each day according to children's individual needs and planned activities and set them out prior to children arriving. Specialist equipment, such as, standing frames and chairs with harnesses and trays attached mean all children, whatever their disability can be involved. Staff are mindful that small items needs to be fully supervised to avoid incidents of children chocking and have systems in place to sterilise larger toys that have been

placed in children's mouths so germs do not spread. Staff contemplate all areas of the service to ensure their aims are met, for example, twice a year they use questionnaires to gauge parents views, involve other professionals and parents when devising Individual Education Plans for children and evaluate each activity once completed. This means good practice is firmly embedded in what they do and staff are aware of the elements required to drive the service forward.

The setting positively promotes equality and diversity. Each child is encouraged to 'have a go' and they are actively supported to make their own choices using a variety of communication methods. Staff foster excellent partnerships with a range of outside agencies and they all work together to support children's learning and development, for example, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists regularly visit to observe children and implement and update their individual programmes. They also provide training for play group staff, particularly regarding medical procedures such as; tube feeding and administering oxygen. Staff attend Child Development Team Meetings hosted by the local authority where children's needs are assessed and if necessary support systems are put in place. Communication diaries used between the play group and other settings are a highly effective way of sharing information and ensuring consistency. A similar diary is used to communicate with parents of children who use the transport service so they are aware of the care their child has received.

Staff make a tremendous effort to ensure children's transition to either special school or mainstream school goes smoothly. They accompany parents and children on their initial visit and invite teachers and learning support assistants to visit the setting. Parents are particularly grateful for this assistance at such an important time in their lives, but value all aspects of the service. They comment 'it's wonderful!', 'I'm delighted; it's brilliant!', 'I love it!' All parents feel their child has made good progress since attending the playgroup; they feel the staff are nurturing, very knowledgeable and supportive; 'they are lifesavers' comments one parent. They like the communication books and feel staff always have time to talk to them. Parents feel the link between other settings is good and staff work well with other professionals. Parents welcome the fact staff consistently use sign language, complete children's physical programmes and tube feeding which gives them time to spend on their child and siblings once back at home. They appreciate the wide range of equipment which they cannot provide at home, such as, Light Emitting Diode (LED) mats and other multi-sensory toys. There is a huge array of information for parents including a notice board and regular newsletters. At collection time it is clear staff have developed outstanding relationships with parents and information is exchanged freely.

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

Children happily enter the setting and are keen to participate in the activities on offer. The atmosphere is vibrant and productive with children busily engaged with their key person. For example, one child explores the wooden activity cube designed to develop his dexterity and coordination and another examines a battery

operated keyboard, pressing buttons and enjoying the sounds it makes. Children's starting points for learning and development are discussed with parents and this information along with input from outside agencies is used by staff to plan Individual Education Plans for each child; this means activities are specific for each child. Children develop trusting relationships with their key person and as a result feel safe and settled within their care. For example, a visually impaired child enjoys being within close physical proximity to his key person and enjoys the verbal interaction she provides; he becomes a little distressed when she leaves him for a very short time but is quickly comforted by her cuddles and verbal reassurances when she returns. The activity room is organised into areas to ensure children gain the most from their time in the setting, for example, the communication area is used by a member of staff to play a colour matching game with two children; the screens ensure they listen and concentrate well. In the messy area children can express themselves creatively and make marks with paint and brushes on the easel by 'driving' cars through the tray of paint to make tyre tracks for a Father's Day card. The quiet area is used to maintain children's privacy and dignity when staff are tube feeding them or completing their physical programmes. Children have access to the enclosed garden, weather permitting, and enjoy the opportunity to develop their physical skills and strengthen muscles as they run, play with sand, dig using spades in the tray containing soil and ride or push trundle toys. Occasionally small groups of children walk to the playground nearby which contains further large equipment that is suitable for disabled children to practise their physical skills and have fun. Children develop excellent hygiene habits as they wash their hands before snack time and after going to the toilet. Staff have a high regard for maintaining a healthy environment and wear gloves to protect themselves and children when carrying out medical procedures and preparing and handling food. The Play Leader manages a situation regarding a viral infection impressively. She informs all parents of the situation and gives them advice about the signs and symptoms in order that they make an informed decision about whether their child remains at the session. The Play Leader also contacts Ofsted to report the incident and then the local health protection unit for further guidance.

Children enjoy healthy snacks, for example, fruit and a savoury option, such as, breadsticks and rice cakes. Staff prepare snacks with children's individual needs at the forefront of their mind; they refer to allergy lists on display in the kitchen to ensure children are not given food that may harm them and follow the instructions on each child's snack card which indicates whether food is mashed or sliced. Some parents provide food for their children and this is stored appropriately in the kitchen so it does not spoil. The cards also helps staff when managing snack time so they know which children are able to eat/drink independently or needs to be spoon fed. Everyone is included at this time, for example, a child who is tube fed sits at the table and pretends to feed a doll. There are limited opportunities for more able children to assist during snack time by handing out plates and bowls of food and pouring their own drinks. Children make a positive contribution to the setting as they behave in an exemplary manner, particularly at large group times and tidy up time where it is very evident they are familiar with the daily routine and know what is required of them. Staff successfully use the visual timetable throughout the session to help children understand what is happening next. They are consistent in their approach and have high expectations for children's behaviour, for example, they use a picture prompt card to communicate to a child

that she must sit on a chair at snack time and not an adult's lap. Children respond positively to the abundance of praise heaped on them by adults and enjoy receiving reward stickers and certificates for their efforts.

This rich environment provides children with significant opportunities to develop skills for the future. Children are beginning to learn basic information, communication and technology skills as they use a laptop computer, operate electronic games and investigate resources where they have to press buttons, and turn dials. Visitors are used to extend children's learning and are often linked to themes, for example, during 'pet week' different animals, including a dancing dog, visited the setting so children could observe and stroke them. Children also benefit from visits from a yoga teacher and several music/singing groups. Children have wide ranging abilities when exchanging information so staff tailor their interaction accordingly using both verbal and non-verbal communication methods, for example, they chat freely, ask questions and use sign language. At story time props are used innovatively; the member of staff uses a toy train, track, whistle and bells along with lots of repetition to help children understand the story. The story also includes counting up to five and children further develop their understanding of mathematical concepts as they play a colour matching game and sort and weigh plastic vehicles using scales. Children enjoy mimicking real-life situations, for example, in the role play area one child feeds the doll in the highchair and another pretends to make a call on the telephone.

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	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	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