

# Acton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique reference number** 251395  
**Inspection date** 10/02/2011  
**Inspector** Kath Beck

**Setting address** Acton Primary School, Lambert Drive, Acton, Sudbury,  
Suffolk, CO10 0US  
**Telephone number** 01787 377089  
**Email**  
**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011

## 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).

Children only attend this setting before and/or after the school day and/or during the school holidays. The judgements in this report reflect the quality of early years provision offered to children during those periods.

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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

## Description of the setting

Acton Playgroup is run by a voluntary committee of parents and carers and has charitable status. It operates from a classroom in Acton Primary School, Acton, Suffolk, and opened in 2000. The playgroup has exclusive use of a secure outside area and also has access to the school hall and library by arrangement.

The playgroup is open 12.30pm until 3.30pm each weekday and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 8.45am until 11.45am. A breakfast club runs Monday to Friday from 7.30am to 8.45am for children up to the age of nine and a lunch club for playgroup children from 11.45am until 12.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. A holiday club for 16 children aged three to thirteen operates on demand.

The playgroup is registered to take a maximum of 24 children at any one time, none of whom can be under two years of age. Currently there are 46 children on roll, all of whom are within the early years age group. It receives funding for early years education. The playgroup cares for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. There are six members of staff. Two have an appropriate qualification at level 4; two have National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 3, and two are at NVQ level 2. The playgroup has close links with the staff of the host school, is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the local authority. It is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and 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.

Children's individual needs are met exceptionally well in this outstanding playgroup. Staff use the skills they have learned through high quality training to provide captivating learning experiences and a highly safe environment. Play is purposeful and planned very well, and takes into account children's ideas and interests so they make rapid progress. Excellent partnerships with staff in the host school and with other professionals enable the playgroup to be fully inclusive. Consequently, it gives very effective support to all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Strong teamwork and frequent evaluation of the playgroup's strengths and weaknesses underpin the playgroup's outstanding capacity to improve.

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

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

- improving further the outside play area to extend children's physical development and knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

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

Safeguarding is outstanding because staff take considerable care to ensure that children are kept free from harm. All those working with the children have been trained in first aid and know what to do should they become concerned about any possible mistreatment. Parents are made aware of the playgroup's responsibilities should such concerns arise. Highly comprehensive policies and procedures are reviewed annually and checks are made to ensure all involved in the playgroup are suitably vetted and qualified to work with children. Risk assessments are very thorough and undertaken regularly and staff are aware of their defined roles. This ensures staff are aware of any likely hazards and take determined action to minimise them. The high ratio of staff to children ensures children are looked after very well and are supervised at all times, both indoors and outside.

The playgroup was judged outstanding at the time of the last inspection and is used by the local authority as an example of best practice to train staff in other childcare provisions. In their determination to do their very best for all the children, staff continue to attend a wide range of training to ensure that children's individual needs are met. In addition, staff are fully committed to a new programme they have introduced to promote children's speaking skills. Children who were previously reluctant to talk or lacking the skills to convey their needs clearly can now converse at length. They are confident in their relationships with one another and with adults and show verbal creativity and imagination in their play. To ensure that all children are fully included some staff have undertaken training in signing or use pictures to help children express their needs. These new skills have been shared with parents and other settings to ensure continuity of care. For example, a recent stay and play session where parents made puppets and performed puppet shows with their children gave them a real insight into how their children are progressing through the playgroup. The playgroup uses its close links with other settings that the children also attend extremely well to ensure that the knowledge and skills they gain are built on in each provision. Staff evaluate the quality of provision rigorously. They meet regularly to review their planning and activities to ensure they continue to meet children's interests to a high standard. Their focus is always to find the best ways to help children to progress rapidly. They also review the overall provision for its effectiveness in order to identify where they need to improve. Currently the playgroup is drawing up plans to improve the outside area to enhance children's physical development and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. When projects are undertaken they are evaluated carefully for their impact. In addition the views of parents are sought and acted upon. Consequently, the room has been reorganised at the entrance so that it is easier for children, parents and carers to come in and out at the beginning and end of each session.

Excellent partnerships with parents, other professionals and the school enhance children's learning and welfare significantly. Parents assist with trips to the theatre,

the local art gallery, the church, musical concerts and meetings with children's authors. These visits broaden children's experiences considerably. Open evenings, workshops and daily opportunities to exchange information are valued highly. Regular visits from the Reception teacher and role play games to help 'teddy' settle into school ensure children transfer easily at the age of five. Excellent resources support children's high quality learning as staff provide a well-organised, stimulating environment, with resources that are easily available.

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

Children's enjoyment of the playgroup is clear from their excellent behaviour, happiness in playing together and delight in finding fascinating things to do. Many of the activities stem from themes or interests of the children and so children's curiosity is stimulated. Staff plan and evaluate a range of activities each day and also ensure that there are many opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves. Staff are skilled, not only in promoting language development, but also in supporting and enriching children's self-chosen learning, such as making a pond in the rain, to help them become independent and make decisions. Children enjoy opportunities to make cakes out of modelling dough and are able to freely discuss their actions as they play. They talk about how cakes are made and how families celebrate birthdays with cakes. Children sing happy birthday, count the number of cakes they make and the number of candles on them. Afterwards children take turns placing their cakes in the toy cooker and wait until they are 'cooked'. Quality resources, such as the sand pit, enrich children's experiences. They enjoy opportunities to experiment with the sand, such as sifting it through tubes. They discover which tubes are 'taller', 'smaller', 'higher', 'shorter', and try to see how much sand would be needed to fill the tubes.

Children are also encouraged to be spontaneous with their play. After discovering a spider in the sink, children are prompted to start drawing spiders and think up imaginative stories. A railway ticket provokes an imaginary role play trip to the 'giggle factory' with 'ticket bear'. Computers are used effectively to help children learn to operate simple programmes that develop literacy and artistic skills. Staff make the most of situations, such as the wet weather, to enable children to explore the sounds and patterns of rain on umbrellas. In the music corner children are challenged to find out how sounds can be changed. The high priority staff give to children's language development underpins their learning and creativity so they are self-assured.

From parents and carers, staff gather a substantial amount of information about their children's likes and dislikes when they enter the playgroup so that they can plan accordingly. They also assess the children against national levels of development so that they are clear about their starting points and can measure their progress over time. The key person for each child makes careful observations of what children know and can do so they can build more challenging tasks in future sessions. These observations and photographs are entered in each child's learning record, which give parents and staff a very clear picture of the excellent progress made by the time children leave.

Children's high levels of confidence and ability to communicate contribute significantly to the joyful atmosphere. Children engage in activities for extended periods of time, fully immersed in their imaginative role play, investigations and active learning. This enables staff to become involved with groups or individuals without being distracted. Excellent relationships ensure children gain a strong sense of being safe. They know that staff are always interested in their welfare and know how to use tools and equipment sensibly. For example, when cooking they learn to peel and cut vegetables safely. Snack time is a very social occasion when children and staff sit together and talk about what they have been doing or new matters of interest. Children also demonstrate their excellent knowledge of healthy lifestyles on these occasions, washing their hands independently and making sensible nutritious choices. Outdoors children can climb, slide, jump and balance well, but there is limited space to further challenge their physical development. Staff have undergone extra training in outdoor learning and have plans to develop a natural area to enhance children's experiences of the natural world. Over the year children learn about different foods, festivals, celebrations and cultures from around the world. All these factors, stemming from excellent leadership and management, contribute significantly to children's rapid rate of progress and excellent outcomes.

## 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>	1
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>	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

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

### 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

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## 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



