

Inspection of St Helens Playgroup

St Helen's Church, St Helen's Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2LS

Inspection date:

23 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

The provider does not have robust procedures in place to ensure that Ofsted promptly receive the necessary information to carry out checks on all committee members. However, these committee members do not have unsupervised contact with children or have sole responsibility in making decisions that affect children's well-being. Despite the weakness, children receive a warm welcome from the kind and nurturing staff. Good relationships are evident. Many children run in and hug the staff when they arrive. Routines are very well embedded as children self-register before settling into their chosen play. Staff plan an exciting learning environment to fully support children to be independent. As a result, children confidently move with ease and self-select resources that interest them. The sensory table is popular. Children excitedly explore the resources, commenting about the smell of the lime. They bash the ice, motivated to see what has been frozen within it.

Children create good friendships and are very helpful. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and support them to be polite. Staff recognise the range of languages spoken in the setting and provide books in dual languages. Children take pride as some of their parents volunteer to share activities around their cultural festivals. Children thrive in the outdoor area, which is well equipped and an exciting place for children. It caters for all areas of their learning, where children play well imaginatively.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- There is a high ratio of qualified staff to children and, as a result, all staff know the children incredibly well. The curriculum is successfully built on children's interests, which means children meaningfully engage and make good progress in their learning. Topics are introduced to support children to widen their interests, for example the life cycle of a caterpillar. Children show awe when they look at the chrysalis.
- Children's ongoing communication and language is incredibly well supported by staff. They consistently role model good pronunciation and add vocabulary to discussion to build upon what children already know. The staff focus on high-quality interactions and make the most of each moment to talk to children. Children love to sing. They show their knowledge as they independently sing songs and request stories, listening intently as staff read.
- Staff and children come together for short group times. Generally, children engage well but, on occasion, there are distractions which make it difficult for children to hear. This means they do not fully benefit from the intended learning.
- Staff have recently attended training on mathematics and, as a result, are highly successful in introducing it to all areas of play. Staff use routine activities

effectively, such as group time, to ask children to compare the numbers of girls and boys present. The boys cheer when there are more of them. Children use words such as 'short' and 'long' confidently in their play. They count objects independently and can work out adding numerals with ease.

- Healthy lifestyles are well promoted. Snack time is nutritious and children enjoy helping to cut the fruit. The playgroup only offers milk and water to support children's oral health. Staff skilfully support children's personal skills. They encourage children to follow good hygiene practices and embed good routines, such as handwashing before eating. Children take care of their personal care and get a tissue to wipe their nose.
- The playgroup uses additional funding wisely to positively impact on children's learning and experiences, such as paying for a dance teacher to offer sessions. Staff also regularly take the children to visit their local community.
- Staff work very well with other professionals to positively benefit the children. For example, Reception teachers visit the children transitioning to nursery or school. Parents speak highly of the setting. They praise the staff and feel well informed about their child's learning. Staff build strong partnerships with parents through everyday discussions and events. For example, they offer parents advice on potty training. This helps to provide continuity for children's learning at home. Staff are valued and their well-being is given high priority. Supervisions are effective. They support staff to identify training needs to ensure that the very best care and education is offered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
implement robust systems to ensure that Ofsted are provided with the necessary information about all committee members so that the required suitability checks can be completed.	23/07/2025

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- review the organisation of group times to minimise distraction, helping to further enhance children's attention and focus.

Setting details

Unique reference number	251649
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10398563
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	22
Number of children on roll	28
Name of registered person	St Helens Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP523389
Telephone number	07507455185
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2019

Information about this early years setting

St Helens Playgroup registered in 1999. It employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications ranging from level 2 to level 6, one member of staff holds qualified teacher status and one has no early years qualifications. The playgroup opens Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 9am until midday. The playgroup provides funded early education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Emily Holt

Inspection activities

- The manager talked to the inspector about their provision and curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- Parents shared their views of the playgroup with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the playgroup.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

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