

Inspection of Soham Playgroup

Soham Childrens Centre, Weatheralls School Site, Pratt Street, Soham, Ely,
Cambridgeshire CB7 5BH

Inspection date: 7 July 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff at this playgroup are caring and attentive to the children. They know every child well and greet them warmly when they arrive. Children happily say goodbye to their parents and are eager to come inside. Children develop positive relationships with the staff and each other at playgroup. Staff talk to children about their feelings and support them to cooperate and play together well. This leads to children forming friendships and showing positive behaviour. The caring approach from staff helps promote children's feelings of well-being and belonging.

Staff implement the carefully sequenced curriculum effectively. They understand where children are in their learning and provide activities and experiences to build on this and promote their progress. Group activities focus on children's language skills and their concentration. Staff use simple signs alongside spoken words and resources, such as balls, that contributes to children learning about size and positional language. Children show concentration, join in with the signing and talk about the ball being bigger, smaller, going up to the ceiling and down on the floor. Staff adapt their interactions with children according to their individual level of development. They speak clearly to children and build on their vocabulary. When children show an interest in a recipe book, staff help them identify toppings on a pizza, such as olives and anchovies.

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

- Leaders are experienced and confident in their role. They are reflective and continually consider how the curriculum promotes children's learning. Leaders work effectively with staff and the whole team are committed to providing fully inclusive support for all children who attend the playgroup. They make effective use of additional funding to ensure children have experiences they would not normally have and to support children to make the best progress they can. Leaders demonstrate a commitment to partnership working with other agencies to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded and their needs are met.
- Overall, staff engage with children well. Staff mostly notice when children need support and assistance. They are quick to respond when children fall over and get upset. However, sometimes staff do not engage as frequently with quieter and less confident children. This results in some children occasionally not taking part in meaningful activities that contribute to their learning.
- Staff know the children well and guide them to explore and practise their skills. When children find a stick, staff clearly explain the stick is for stirring the potions they make with herbs and water. Staff demonstrate to children how to use the stick to mix the water and herbs together. Similarly, when children show an interest in scissors, staff demonstrate how to hold the scissors and snip the herbs. As a result, children learn how to use resources safely and effectively.

- Staff have a consistent and positive approach to supporting children's behaviour. Staff are good role models for children. They remain calm when they talk to children and clearly explain why certain behaviour is not acceptable. Staff successfully distract children and guide them towards a different activity. Staff praise children when they show care and concern for their friends when they are upset. This effective approach helps children be motivated and eager to take part in the activities as well as learning about the expectations for behaviour at playgroup.
- Staff help children develop their independence as part of their preparation for going to school when the time comes. They show children how to put on sweatshirts and cardigans that will be part of their uniform at school. Staff encourage children to be confident with their self-care and help them learn to open the food items in their lunch boxes.
- Leaders and staff support parents effectively. They listen to parents and build positive working relationships that contribute to children receiving a consistent approach to their care and learning. Staff give parents ideas about how to continue their child's learning at home. They encourage parents to borrow story sacks that contain books and props that relate to the story and support children's language and listening skills. Parents like the detailed information that staff share with them each day about how their children have been and about what they have learned from the activities.

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

- strengthen staff's skills to ensure all children receive purposeful interactions during play and group activities to fully support their learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY390532
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10407758
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	25
Number of children on roll	15
Name of registered person	Soham Playgroups Windmills Under Fives
Registered person unique reference number	RP528796
Telephone number	07432810688
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2020

Information about this early years setting

Soham Playgroup registered in 2009. The playgroup employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold early years qualifications at level 3. The playgroup opens term time only from 8.45am until 2.45pm on Monday and Friday and on Wednesday from 8.45am until 11.45am. The playgroup provides government funded places for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Melanie Eastwell

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the playgroup and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with the manager, the deputy and the chairperson of the committee about the leadership and management of the playgroup.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager and discussed the teaching and learning.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views. The inspector also took account of written feedback from parents.

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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