

Inspection of Play Aloud Cowper

Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School, Birch Green, Hertford SG14 2LR

Inspection date:

7 August 2025

**The quality and
standards of early
years provision**

**This
inspection**

Met

Previous
inspection

Met

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

This provision meets requirements

Children settle quickly and transition smoothly into the club. Staff greet them warmly and invite them into play, with a range of engaging activities already prepared. Children have the option of eating breakfast on arrival, where they independently serve themselves cereals and fresh fruit, which supports their self-help skills. Staff build positive relationships with children at the club. They treat all children with respect and consistently model kindness, which children replicate in their interactions with both staff and peers. Older children show care and consideration by supporting younger children. Clear rules are displayed, and staff's positive role modelling helps children understand and follow expectations.

Staff provide a wide variety of activities throughout the day, which supports children's interests and development. Themed daily activities have been well received by both children and parents. For example, on a themed 'Space day', children enthusiastically create rockets using cardboard boxes and tape. They explore creative techniques such as marble painting to represent planets. Staff actively play alongside children during these activities, which encourages creativity and imagination. This planning approach enables children to anticipate and look forward to specific experiences, which fosters their engagement and excitement.

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

- Settling-in procedures are robust. Staff ensure that key information is obtained about children when they first start, including their likes, dislikes, family set up and any health needs. Families are offered a visit to the club before their child starts, to help them familiarise themselves with the environment and support a smooth transition.
- Children enjoy free-flow access to outdoor play after breakfast. They make full use of the school field, climbing equipment, and personal scooters, supported by staff who engage positively in their play. Older children collaborate with staff to build a themed obstacle course, while others enjoy football and chasing games. These activities provide children with high levels of physical activity and enjoyment.
- Early years children are supported, with senior staff acting as their key person. Staff ensure resources are age appropriate and share 'wow moments' with parents. This helps celebrate achievements and gives parents a meaningful reference point for discussing their child's experiences at the club.
- Children are offered a nutritious snack mid-morning. Staff encourage children to serve themselves using tongs and individual bowls.
- Parents speak highly of the holiday club and the quality of care provided. They value the flexibility of the provision and appreciate good communication,

including the recently introduced planning for each day shared in advance. Parents comment their children enjoy their time at the club, and form secure relationships with staff and peers. Parents are confident in the staff's ability to meet children's individual needs, including allergy requirements.

- Relationships with the host school and pre-school are positive. Leaders meet regularly with headteachers to review the provision and share resources. Staff ensure they have regular contact with teachers in term time to share any important information regarding the children. Behaviour strategies used in school are mirrored in the club to provide a consistent, holistic approach.
- Thorough recruitment procedures are in place to ensure that suitable staff are recruited. All staff receive an in-depth induction process to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities from the outset. Staff are supported with regular supervision and have access to training via an online platform. Leaders in the wider organisation provide regular support and actively implement strategies to continually raise the standards of the club.
- The provider shares policies and procedures to help parents understand how the club operates. Key information is also shared, such as menus, and how to keep their children safe online.

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:

- enhance methods of sharing key information with parents to promote a clear understanding of the provider's responsibilities.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY549374
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10399240
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Out-of-school day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	3 to 11
Total number of places	36
Number of children on roll	95
Name of registered person	Play Aloud Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP545792
Telephone number	07535390823
Date of previous inspection	25 November 2019

Information about this early years setting

Play Aloud Cowper registered in 2017, and is based in Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School. The club is open five days a week from 7.30am until 8.45am and from 3.15pm until 6pm, during school term times. During school holidays, the club operates Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8am until 5pm. There are eight members of staff employed at the club, of whom three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Emily Woodhead

Inspection activities

- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing while at the club.
- The inspector spoke to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The provider showed the inspector the premises and discussed how they ensure children are safe and suitable.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation. This included evidence of staff suitability, staff records and training certificates.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection to gain their feedback.

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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