



Abkats

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	224025
Inspection date	12 December 2006
Inspector	Anne Georgina Phillips
Setting Address	The Bungalow, Catherton, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY14 0JH
Telephone number	01746 718400
E-mail	
Registered person	Abkats Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Abkats Nursery is privately owned and managed. It opened in 2000 and operates from a pre-fabricated building positioned behind the owner's bungalow. It is situated in Catherton Common, a rural area of South Shropshire not far from the village of Cleobury Mortimer. The nursery is accessible to wheelchair users. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 until 18:00 for up to 52 weeks of the year except for public holidays. Actual days of operation may vary depending on the demand for places. There are morning and afternoon sessions with a lunch club, full day sessions and an after school club. Children can access a variety of sessions. Children over eight years are also cared for out of school hours.

There are currently 15 children aged from two to under eight years on roll. Of these, nine children receive funding for early education. Children may be transported to and from local schools and pre-schools. Children come from the local rural community. Many of their parents travel to work over a wide area. The nursery is able to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities or who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery holds the Working Together Quality Assurance Award and is awaiting final accreditation to the Effective Early Learning Programme Quality Assurance Scheme. It belongs to the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from a local authority mentor teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities that contribute to their good health. They have frequent opportunities to improve their physical skills. They use good quality sturdy bicycles and tricycles that are very suitable for their age and stage of development. They enjoy building their prowess on increasing levels of climbing equipment. They take regular walks with staff in the adjacent fields. They develop their co-ordination by moulding and cutting play dough, and putting on the dressing up clothes. They competently spread their own toast, cut with scissors and draw with felt pens.

Children are well nourished. Their individual dietary needs are known and respected. They are beginning to understand the benefits of a healthy diet when talking about good foods to eat at their coming party or eating fruit at snack times. Staff have a good knowledge of food hygiene and use this to ensure that food is stored and presented safely. Children are offered regular opportunities to have a drink and are able to ask an adult for one at other times. They are able to use a dispenser when playing outdoors in hot weather but they are not presently able to independently help themselves indoors when they are thirsty.

Good daily routines and written procedures ensure that children are well protected from infection and accidents. They are appropriately cared for if they become ill and are starting to learn the importance of good personal hygiene. They independently wash their hands after using the toilet or handling animals, and before eating. They learn to take off their outdoor shoes if they are muddy and independently wash their hands after doing this. Children are able to enjoy quiet times or rest and relax comfortably when they are tired.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally safe and secure. They enjoy stable care that protects them from harm well, overall. They are cared for in a welcoming, child-friendly environment where toys and resources are readily accessible although sometimes a little crowded together. Low level drawers enable children to take responsibility for looking after their own art work or possessions.

Colourful posters and displays of children's pictures make it attractive to children and parents and help them feel valued and develop a sense of belonging. A large space with separately fenced play area with play equipment is very attractive to children and provides lots of opportunities to develop their physical skills, and enjoy fresh air and exercise. Children use safe and suitable toys and equipment that stimulate, excite and challenge them. For example, they use the Christmas sleigh to improvise and act out their own games.

Children are secure and mostly well supervised in a clean and well maintained environment. Staff are able to see visitors arriving and ensure that the premises are secure with a sturdy bolt at adult level on the inside of the entry door. Staff ensure that the outdoor area is safe for children to play by securing the gated driveway and fixing a sturdy cover to the small pond. Children learn to keep themselves safe. Staff encourage them to do this experientially, for example, by talking about the risks of falling over and hurting themselves or others. They learn to respond to the whistle if there is danger and regularly take part in emergency drills. Children play out what they have learned, for example, by pretending that food on the toy plate is hot and talking about being careful. There are clear rules which include not throwing which they mainly respect well but brief lapses in supervision when children are playing outdoors potentially poses risks to children's safety.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures which are shared with parents. Staff have recently updated their understanding by completing a distance learning course. There is good access to first aid materials and all staff have a current first aid certificate to ensure a prompt response to any accidents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are making very good progress. They are busy, settled, and secure. Staff have very good understanding how young children develop and provide a very warm and emotionally secure environment in which children flourish. Sensitive settling of children and the valuing of their attachment to personal comforters helps younger children to become confident and involved. They build warm and responsive relationships with the staff and other children.

Staff use their wide experience of children's development to provide a variety of stimulating practical activities and opportunities to promote children's progress effectively. They positively interact with the children to extend their learning and develop their curiosity. For example, they ask children questions to encourage them to think. Children compare the texture and smell of some sugar and flour when making the cakes for their Christmas party.

Children play imaginatively improvising their own games in the sleigh and they delight in wearing their favourite costumes such as the dragon outfit which significantly enhances their enjoyment and promotes their self-esteem. Children are very confident to make decisions, explore and investigate. They independently choose their activity and persist with tasks until they succeed. For example they concentrate when building the road track before going to join the other children for their snack. They are purposeful in their play and are developing independence by managing their own personal care. They are able to make choices about when to relax and be active.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress and achieve very well overall. Children are keen and eager to learn because they independently access a good range of stimulating practical play activities and well chosen resources that are readily accessible to them. Children confidently try new experiences, concentrating and persisting in self-chosen challenges. Staff consistently use children's observations to extend their learning and thinking. Children persevere very well and enthusiastically tell others when they succeed. They hone and revisit activities to consolidate new skills, for example, when repeatedly completing a floor jigsaw or carefully spooning the cake mixture into the individual cases so as not to spill any. Staff are proactive in evaluating their practice to continuously improve the learning experiences for children. They plan to develop the outdoor area to expand learning opportunities further.

Children become very independent and self motivated. They learn to value people different to themselves when accessing good quality images of diversity permeating the resources in the setting and celebrating festivals of a variety of cultures and religions. They learn awareness of the needs of others when taking turns at games or stirring the cake mix. They confidently talk about their families. They are interested and eager to learn. They listen and watch intently as the ingredients of the cake are brought to the table and it is explained what they are going to do next.

Children's early communication skills are well supported by good adult-child interaction either on a one to one basis or at group times. They share songs and stories and learn to value and respect books. Older children confidently contribute their ideas and talk about their experiences at group times, for example, when another child is explaining how a game works. They are starting to recognise that shapes, written words and numbers carry meaning when finding their own name label on the drawer for storing their own things or recognising the labels for the toys when tidying away. Older children choose to practise carefully formed letters in their own small notebook showing that they are starting to make links between marks and communicating.

Children are using mathematical ideas in everyday activities that are meaningful. They enjoy counting with numbers when joining in action rhymes. They spontaneously count and use numbers in their play, for example, when counting the twelve cakes correctly in the tray. They link this to the date they have talked about at registration because it is the same. They explore shape, size and volume in a host of activities including play dough, and sand and water play as well as measuring out the flour with a spoon. They change the number on the computer game to record the times they have played.

Children are observant and interested in the world around them and learn about their local surroundings on walks to the field near the nursery. They notice the changes in the seasons and how the leaves change colour. They talk about the bird's nest and how it was made, and carefully look at the worms that they have found outside. They have good opportunities to experience and use simple technology such as a computer and learn problem solving skills when patiently supported by an adult. They experiment with the felt tip pens to see what happens if you mix the colours and confidently state that the orange play dough was made by mixing the red and yellow together.

Children are active and develop excellent control of their bodies when moving and manoeuvring very confidently outdoors or sitting for appropriate periods at group times. They robustly stir

the cake mix and are developing skills with a wide range of other tools and resources. They competently cut with scissors. They are developing a good awareness of how to keep their bodies healthy when managing their personal care and enjoying frequent fresh air and exercise.

They express their ideas as they join in a good range of exploratory and sensory experiences. For example, they become engrossed when spooning out the cake mix, deciding on the size and shape of each one. They compare the smell and feel the sugar and flour and say that the sugar feels like 'stinging things'. They have opportunities to explore sounds when using musical instruments and notice and use colours correctly when discussing the felt tip pens together. They are imaginative in their role play, acting out being a dragon or imagining what it is like riding in Santa's sleigh.

Staff get to know the children very well when they start. They talk to parents so that they get a clear picture of each child. They use this awareness of their skills, interests and needs to ensure that there are good levels of challenge in activities for most children so that they persevere, concentrate and persist well. They make good progress overall given their starting points but the more able children sometimes become restless in larger group activities that rely on the needs of younger children for pace and involvement. For example they do not weigh the flour themselves or break the eggs for the cake mix.

Staff are generally very perceptive and responsive to children's self chosen play and use questions effectively to challenge children's thinking, reasoning and problem solving skills. For example, children are asked to predict how many eggs there may be in the box or what might happen next. Planned activities are varied and promote children's progress towards the early learning goals effectively and staff are perceptive and develop children's learning in their self initiated play. They let children make decisions such as tipping rather than sieving the flour and support them in problem solving.

Systems for planning, observing and monitoring children's achievements are effective. Communication in the small team is excellent. Photographs of children's activities provide an informative and attractive record of children's progress for staff and parents. Frequent observations ensure that children's progress towards the early learning goals is monitored and recorded effectively but these are not presently used to full effect in daily planning to highlight where extra support is needed for individual children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. Staff have good knowledge and understanding of how to support children's specific needs. They communicate very effectively with parents to ensure that children's needs are met. Children have good opportunities to learn about the wider world. They learn about other cultures and traditions when accessing good quality resources and that reflect diversity. These include positive images of those with a disability and examples of different languages. They learn about festivals and celebrations of their own and other cultures. They make collages and lamps at Diwali, create Ranpoli patterns, and hollow out pumpkins at Halloween.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. They are made to feel very welcome. Staff make time to talk to them each day and provide very attractive folders for each child with recent pictures of the activities children have experienced to involve them more directly in children's learning and progress. Parents make very positive comments about the care and learning their children experience. They value the flexible, helpful and very approachable staff. They receive good quality written information about the setting and regular newsletters and invitations to social events. The prospectus for parents contains a complaints procedure but the contact details of the regulator are out of date.

Children behave very well because they are encouraged to consider each other and animals. They spontaneously tell other children when they are kind. They learn to respect and understand consistent boundaries such as sharing the toys, helping with the tidying up and standing still if there is a danger outdoors. They have warm and trusting relationships with the staff and each other. Children are very well settled. They confidently make choices about their play, activities and personal care. They have time to relax as well be active. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff demonstrate an excellent commitment to developing and evaluating their practice which positively impacts on the experiences for children. The leadership and management is good. Staff have completed two quality assurance awards. They have used their participation in the Effective Early Learning Programme Quality Assurance Award to thoroughly evaluate the practice of the nursery especially in relation to children's learning. This evaluation has led to the nursery putting in place its own action plan to develop their practice and enhance outcomes for children. All adults in contact with children are vetted and suitable. They organise themselves well to provide a very caring and flexible service to parents and children in a very rural area.

Children are very happy and make good progress overall because the staff are very competent, experienced and well qualified. They provide a good range of interesting activities and a secure environment for children in their care. They work directly with the children ensuring that they are mostly well supervised. This positively supports their care, learning and play. Procedures for promoting children's safety are generally effective. Good, secure relationships with parents ensure that an effective partnership is formed and individual children's needs are well met. Parents speak highly of the care and teaching their children receive.

All of the required documentation is in place. It is mostly well presented and accessible for inspection. Records are well kept and stored confidentially. These are shared with parents who receive good quality written information about childcare practices and children's learning. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Three recommendations were raised at the last care inspection. The nursery was asked to: review the lost child policy; make sure that the premises were secure enough to stop children leaving unsupervised or prevent the entry of unwanted persons; update staff knowledge of

current child protection guidelines and procedures. Good progress has been made so that children's welfare is now safeguarded well. The premises have been made very secure with a high bolt on the inside of the entry door and a double gated system when children are playing outdoors. The policy to be followed if a child becomes lost now includes timescales and the staff have completed a distance learning child protection course to update their knowledge.

There were no significant weaknesses reported at the last nursery education inspection but the nursery was asked to improve the opportunities for children to express themselves using a range of resources and materials. This has been addressed well with the provision of resources and materials presented in a readily accessible manner for children to help themselves and work creatively and spontaneously.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- improve children's access to fresh drinking water
- review the arrangements for ensuring children's safety when playing outside
- improve the information available to parents about how to make a complaint

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- expand the opportunities for children to do things for themselves so that the level of challenge for more able children is increased

- improve the way observations and assessments are used to plan for the next steps in children's learning

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk