



Alphabets Private Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	310364
Inspection date	05 December 2006
Inspector	Sheila Iwaskow / Judith Anne Kerr
Setting Address	37 Poplar Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 3AX
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Registered person	Valerie Brookes
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 satisfactory. 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?

Alphabets Private Day Nursery opened in 1994, is privately owned and located in Sale. Children have access to five rooms, an outdoor play area and associated facilities. The nursery serves the local area and further afield.

There are currently 58 children on roll; of these, 18 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting operates from 07.30 to 18.30, five days a week, 51 weeks of the year.

The nursery supports children who have learning difficulties and those who have English as an additional language. The setting employs 18 staff who work directly with the children; of these, 16 hold an appropriate early years qualification. Support is given to the nursery by the early years advisory teacher in Trafford.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Appropriate health and hygiene practices are implemented to protect children from cross-infection and to help keep them well. A cleaner is employed and staff routinely wipe down surfaces during the day with anti-bacterial spray. Good nappy changing routines are in place and clean bedding for children is provided on a daily basis. A sick child policy is securely in place and available to parents. If a child becomes unwell, parents are contacted straight away, ensuring that individual needs are met. Children are starting to learn about hygiene and cleanliness. They are encouraged to wash their hands after going to the toilet. Staff talk to the children about germs, helping them to understand the reasons for good hygiene practices. Children receive acceptable levels of care because staff have a suitable awareness of first aid procedures, and first aid boxes are strategically placed around the nursery. All aspects of documentation regarding accidents and medication are in place and of a good standard.

Toddlers have sufficient opportunities to engage in physical play in the outdoor play area. They exert lots of energy as they run around in the fresh air, pedal bikes and climb on the climbing frame. Such opportunities allow children to position their bodies in different ways, whilst having fun. Babies pull themselves to standing and staff support young children as they learn to walk. Babies' routines with regard to meal and sleep times are recognised and respected. Children's self-help skills are, generally, developing well as they put on their own shoes, are encouraged to feed themselves at meal times and put tissues in the bin.

Children enjoy a varied and healthy diet. Dietary needs are recorded and considered when planning menus. Individual needs are catered for with vegetarian options available. Many of the meals provided are cooked on the premises, using fresh ingredients. On the day of the inspection children enjoyed home-made fish cakes, potato croquettes and spaghetti. Daily menus are clearly displayed, keeping parents fully informed about the food provided by the nursery. However, drinks are not always available or accessible to allow children to quench their thirst.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in bright and stimulating surroundings. Lots of effort has been put in to making the nursery aesthetically pleasing. Paintings of Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, children's art work, posters and friezes create a purposeful learning environment and give children a sense of belonging within the setting. Children move around their immediate environment with ease and confidence. There is a sufficient range of play materials which are safe, clean and meet the needs of the children who attend the nursery. However, not all resources are easily accessible to the children, which limits their ability to make choices and develop their independence. Furthermore, there is a lack of domestic style furniture in the baby room to meet the needs of both staff and children.

All reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. An intercom system is available at the entrance, which prevents most unknown persons entering. Detailed risk assessments are in place which cover all areas of the nursery. Particularly noteworthy is the outings policy, which is extremely detailed and well thought out to ensure children's safety. Fire drills are clearly displayed and practised with the children. This helps them to become aware of defined procedures to be followed in the event of a fire or emergency evacuation. However, an issue has been identified that may pose a risk to children's safety; there is a large patch of ivy in the outdoor play area, which is accessible to the children.

Children are well protected because staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of abuse and procedures to follow if they are concerned.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a positive and supportive environment, which enhances their confidence and contributes to their well-being. They are happy and relaxed in company of staff and are nurtured through soothing words and a sensitive approach. A relaxed atmosphere and the staff's cheerful manner encourages children to be self-assured and good humoured. As a result, children settle well into the setting.

Young children enjoy investigating and exploring the range of play opportunities. They play along side each other as they build models with building blocks, learning to play cooperatively, sharing and taking turns. Babies and toddlers begin to make connections as they delight at the sounds made by cause and effect toys, and develop a sense of self as they use a low-level mirror to look at their reflection. Story time is a popular activity and children happily participate, making animal noises. Children enjoy a sufficient range of sensory experiences as they make pictures from chalk, holly wreaths from rice, glue and glitter, and explore the texture of sand and water. They develop imaginary skills as they play with small world toys and dress up as a variety of characters for Halloween.

However, play opportunities are sometimes restricted because not all staff have yet accessed training on the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Daily plans are displayed and children's progress is assessed. However, clear learning intentions are not identified in planning, focused activities are not evaluated and information gained from children's assessments is not used to plan for the next stages of their learning. Furthermore, there is no information available to parents on the framework, which prevents them being fully involved in their children's learning.

Children enjoy outings such as walks in the local area and visits to Chester Zoo and Heaton Park. This allows children to observe the different animals that live in their world and gain an appreciation of their local environment.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The pre-school room leader is a qualified teacher and has a good awareness of the Foundation Stage. As a result, children benefit from interesting and meaningful activities and make good progress towards the early learning goals. There is a

good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The staff use a variety of effective teaching methods, which has a positive effect on children's learning. Staff make good use of books to support themes, such as the current topic which is Christmas and shapes; for example, they read 'Kipper's Christmas Eve'. They also plan activities, which are based on children's interests, such as a trip to see Father Christmas. Observation and assessment systems identify what children know and can do. Children's next steps of learning are clearly identified and used to inform the planning of activities.

Children are very confident in making choices from the well organised learning environment and through directing their own play. They are learning to show care and concern for each other as they wait their turn at the computer or to have individual time with the teacher. This helps children to explore their feelings and think about how they should behave towards each other. Children are developing friendships and choose who they sit next to at snack time. For example, children comment to each other 'are you my friend?' They respond well to the music and songs which are used during the daily routine. The children join in and follow instructions for jingling their bells. Children are interested and motivated to learn. They show great interest and enthusiasm when sounding out letters. Children explain, 'it's m for my mummy' and 'm for monkey'. They sound out the letters of their name and are beginning to form some recognisable letters.

Children are developing their speaking and listening skills, taking turns at circle time to share their news, such as a recent visit to see grandparents at the weekend. Children freely practise their mark making skills and write for a purpose in the home corner. They confidently use number during their play. Children spontaneously count that there are four children in the construction area, and others count 12 pegs that have been put on the board. They learn about shape and develop problem solving skills as they complete puzzles. Mathematical language, such as 'big' and 'middle', is promoted spontaneously as children play.

Children learn about change through the seasons and the weather. They collect items of interest such as leaves. Children visit a local garden centre, where they ride on the train and take their letters to Father Christmas. Children confidently use the computer to support their learning. They use tools, such as pencils, cutters, cutlery and scissors, with increasing skill and control. Children enjoy a wide range of creative activities using a variety of media, which allows them to express themselves freely and develop their imaginative skills.

Children enjoy a good variety of activities which contribute towards their good health; they benefit from regular fresh air and exercise as they engage in outdoor play on a daily basis, weather permitting. Older children particularly enjoy weekly visits to the swimming baths where they splash in the water and are starting to learn to swim. Children jump over obstacles, manoeuvre round skittles and develop coordination skills as they run, jump and practise ball skills, such as catching, rolling, throwing and kicking. They practise balancing on different parts of their bodies, such as two arms and two legs, one arm and one leg or hopping. They also practise balancing in other ways, such as carrying a bean bag on their head. However, there is no large outdoor equipment for balancing and as a result there are limited opportunities for older and more able children to fully develop their balancing skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into the nursery. Consideration and sensitivity is shown to most children's individual needs and staff divide their attention well. Staff create an environment where children feel valued. Each child receives a personalised Christmas present and birthdays are acknowledged and celebrated. Words meaning 'welcome' are displayed around the nursery, ensuring that those who do not have an understanding of the English language feel happy and secure. Newsletters are made available in other languages, if required. Meaningful experiences, such as celebrating cultural festivals and the availability of a satisfactory range of resources that reflect equality of opportunity, allow children to appreciate the diverse world in which they live. Children with learning difficulties are supported as staff ensure that they are welcomed into a sharing and inclusive environment and that parents are actively involved. Advice from outside agencies is sought, as and when appropriate.

Staff act as good role models and their frequent use of praise supports children's efforts. Good manners are promoted and children are encouraged to be kind and respectful to adults and their peers. Age-appropriate strategies, such as distraction techniques and simple explanations, are used to deal with any instances of unacceptable behaviour. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents receive a booklet which provides details of all relevant policies and procedures regarding their children's care. Discussions and written daily information keep parents up-to-date about how their child has spent his or her day. Newsletters, a notice board and access to developmental records keep parents informed about events in the nursery and their children's progress. Parents expressed their overall satisfaction with the nursery, commenting on how the setting meets children's 'early years needs so enjoyably', as well as making their time at the nursery 'happy and memorable'. Effective procedures are in place to deal with any concerns or complaints expressed by parents, in line with recent changes to the National Standards.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funding for nursery education is good. They are warmly welcomed into the pre-school room at the beginning and end of the day and receive daily feedback about their children. Written reports and a parents evening further contribute to keeping parents fully involved about their children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents are actively involved in their children's learning, providing items from home to support the current topic. The teacher talks to parents informally about the components of the Foundation Stage, however, there is no written information available on this curriculum to allow parents to consolidate this information at their own pace. This hinders parents' ability to be fully involved in their children's learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery demonstrates a commitment to staff training and development. A significant number of staff who work with the children have an appropriate early years qualification and their certificates are displayed in the reception area of the nursery. Attendance on short courses

enables staff to enhance their skills in specific subjects, such as behaviour management and exploratory play for babies.

Children express themselves freely in the friendly environment of the nursery. Space is organised within each play room to provide children with a balanced range of activities. A key worker system is in place and children are grouped according to their age and stage of development. High staff-to-children ratios are maintained and children clearly enjoy the level of attention that they receive. Acceptable systems are in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff. However, procedures are not in place to monitor their on-going suitability to work with children.

Most policies and documentation relating to the continuity of care for children are up to date. However, an omission has been identified; times of children's arrival and departure are not accurately recorded. Most records and information are stored securely to protect confidentiality.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff work well as a team and demonstrate a strong commitment to providing a service that is underpinned with quality and is conducive to the needs of the children. The well-organised and carefully prepared environment and expertise amongst the staff team ensures all children receive a broad and balanced programme of activities that promotes all areas of development and learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection the provider agreed to address some issues regarding the privacy of the toilets used by the pre-school children; resources and equipment for babies and toddlers; the accessibility of play materials, particularly for role-play; and equal opportunities, safety issues and documentation.

Progress has been made. Toilets for pre-school children have been improved to afford children privacy. There is now a sufficient choice of suitable play materials and chairs to ensure that the needs of babies and toddlers are met. The outside gate leading to the storage area is now secure and the trip hazard outside the dining room has been removed. A risk assessment is now in place for escorting young children up and down stairs to the dining room. These improvements ensure that children are cared for in a safer environment.

However, matters relating to the accessibility of resources and the recording of children's arrival and departure remain outstanding and have been highlighted at this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take action 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):

- ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water at all times
- provide more domestic style furniture in the baby room; conduct a risk assessment on the ivy in the outdoor play area and make all resources easily accessible to children
- further develop staff's awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, ensuring that learning objectives are clearly identified, that activities are evaluated and that assessments are used to plan for the next stages of children's learning
- record children's times of arrival and departure accurately.

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):

- provide written information for parents on the Foundation Stage so that they become fully aware of all aspects of their children's learning.
- increase resources to ensure that children's balancing skills are fully challenged. (also applies to care)

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