



Ash House Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	306341
Inspection date	17 January 2007
Inspector	Elizabeth Margaret Grocott
Setting Address	29 Withens Lane, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH44 1BB
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Registered person	Ash House Nursery Limited
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 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?

Ash House Day Nursery has been registered for 17 years and operates from a converted building in the residential area of Wallasey on the Wirral peninsular. Care is provided on two floor levels. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area. The nursery is open from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year from 07.30 to 18.30. The setting is registered to provide care for children from six weeks to under five years and there are currently 78 children on roll, of whom, 20 receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 21 members of staff, of whom, all but one hold a relevant childcare qualification or are working towards one.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and well-maintained environment. Robust policies and procedures are consistently followed by staff to prevent children's exposure to cross infection. Children's health is protected because the staff are well informed about their health care needs. Clear and concise documentation ensures that their individual needs are discussed and recorded with parents and vigilantly carried out by staff. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-organised activities. Well-established hygiene routines ensure children wash their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating, which helps them to understand the need for good personal hygiene. Children are further protected because staff are first aid trained and the first aid box is stocked appropriately. Medication administered and accidents that occur are recorded carefully and consent to emergency medical treatment has been requested, ensuring parents are fully informed about their children's care.

Older, more able children are able to decide for themselves when they are hungry, and can usually sit down and enjoy a morning snack at a time convenient to them, as there is a free flow snack system in operation. Fresh water is available to all children at all times from named water bottles, and children confidently help themselves, which encourages them to think about their personal needs. A good balanced diet is provided for all children during the day, which includes breakfast, lunch and a light tea. Children eat very well and have main meals, such as minced lamb with gravy, roast and boiled potatoes, cabbage and carrots. For their afternoon tea on the day of inspection, children had scrambled egg with spaghetti and a choice of wholemeal or white sliced bread, followed by fresh fruit, with a drink. All food is home-cooked using only fresh produce. Children enjoy cooking and regularly visit the shops to buy ingredients to make items, such as spicy stew, as part of the celebration of the Islam festival of Eid.

As outdoor play is part of everyday, including visits to local parks, children's physical development is well promoted. Children enjoy a range of energetic activities that contribute to a healthy life style. They develop self-confidence in their physical skills as they use a range of indoor and outdoor equipment to increase their dexterity. They gain control of their bodies as they confidently pedal and steer wheeled toys and eagerly join in action songs to increase their coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The nursery is appealing to children and parents, as it is clean, bright and decorated with information and children's work. The playrooms provide many interesting activities with easy access to toilet and hand washing facilities. Children benefit from good organisation of resources which facilitate table and floor activities and increase their confidence as they make active choices about their play.

The children choose from a broad range of good quality play equipment for both indoor and outdoor play. These are stored at a low-level so children can select them themselves. Careful

thought goes into the purchase of new equipment to ensure it meets the needs of the children as well as complying with the appropriate safety standards. Children benefit because the resources and play materials are cleaned and checked regularly for safety and hygiene.

High regard is given to ensure children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. They benefit from a comprehensive risk assessment, which is effectively maintained by staff to identify and minimise any possible hazards both inside and outside. However, the risk assessment does not cover the possibility of the front door being left open as parents leave. This poses a risk to children. Children are kept safe on outings because risk assessments are systematically carried out on all venues. Vigilant procedures, including taking first aid equipment and mobile telephones, ensure any incidents can be dealt with efficiently. A robust procedure for children's attendance is effectively maintained. Parents and carers take children to their base rooms where clear systems record their arrival and departure times to further contribute to their safety and welfare. Children practise regular emergency evacuation and know why this is important. Practises are recorded and reviewed for effectiveness. Children who use the stairs walk carefully, holding on to a low-level banister rail. They are supervised by staff at all times.

Children are further protected by the staff's good knowledge and understanding of the child protection procedure. This ensures they quickly recognise when a child is in danger and can act in their best interests. Those with management responsibility understand the clear procedures in place; they have a very secure knowledge of the wider issues, such as recruitment and effective liaison with other agencies.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy their time at the setting. They achieve very well because staff are skilled and use their excellent understanding of early years guidance, such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, to provide a wide range of imaginative activities for the children.

Children take part in a wide range of activities where they develop excellent skills in most areas. The effective use of 'Birth to three matters' provides a solid framework for the care of babies and younger children. Babies are sensitively cared for in a warm, caring environment where bright toys and wall displays stimulate their visual development. A wide range of resources assists them as they learn to crawl and walk. Young children are confident and relate warmly to positive staff interaction. They explore with cold custard, glittery sand and coloured shaving foam from a very young age to stimulate their senses. This level of stimulation promotes their intellectual development very well.

Children play happily with each other and with staff, and enjoy group and individual situations. They approach staff for support, indicating trusting relationships are built. They develop their imaginative skills in small world play and link home and nursery through appropriate role-play opportunities. For example, pre school children are involved in the decision making of changing their role-play area into a Chinese restaurant. They shop for Chinese artefacts to equip it. As part of the Chinese New Year celebrations, children visit a Chinese restaurant locally and enjoy a banquet to bring their role-play situation to life. Children are competent communicators and

express their delight at being able to demonstrate the skills they have learnt out of nursery, such as at ballet and gymnastics, to an appreciative audience. They independently access toys and resources to instigate and extend their play. Children visit the fire station, the police station and a local dentist, where they learn how to clean their teeth properly and are shown the correct foods to eat to keep their teeth healthy.

As children progress through the nursery, their records pass from one practitioner to another and they spend time settling into their new groups, helping them to familiarise themselves with their new carers and surroundings. This makes children feel secure.

Nursery education.

Teaching and learning is good. The staff plan and provide a broad range of good quality activities that the children access freely. This means that children's confidence and their level of independent learning is very good. Activity plans cover all areas of learning and development with equal emphasis on the outdoor environment. This means that children's individual learning styles and preferences are very well addressed. For example, the children can develop their mathematical skills by estimating how many cakes are needed for each child indoors, or by undertaking a survey whilst out, counting how many aeroplanes, cars and bikes they see on their journey. The staff are confident in their approach to assessing the children and planning for their future individual learning. However, plans do not show how activities will be extended or supported to meet the differing needs of children.

Children have built trusting relationships with staff and their peers. They are very curious about the things around them and constantly ask questions. Staff respond to children's interests, and support children's learning in all areas. They ask open-ended questions, and few opportunities are missed to extend their learning. Children are independent, go to the toilet on their own and decide for themselves when they would like their snack. They help to clear up after activities and are encouraged to work together. Some children take an independent interest in books, and enjoy using notepads to write lists and make notes in the Chinese restaurant role-play. They learn about keeping themselves safe when they are out on walks and discuss recycling and the environment as they take various materials to the local recycling centre. At times, concentration is not sustained, as the way children are grouped makes this difficult.

Resources are stored appropriately to enable children to access paper and writing implements to extend role-play situations. Mark making is encouraged and some children are gaining skills in emergent writing. One child not only writes her own name, but that of her friend. Clear labelling throughout the nursery enables the children to become familiar with words and their meaning. They competently use a range of tools, including glue spreaders, in creative activities and some children use scissors successfully to cut out shapes to put on their Eid cards. They join in conversations about what they can smell and hear when outside. They look at road signs, reflect on past events, such as the Nativity play they recently took part in and learn Spanish as a new language.

The children are developing good counting skills and enjoy participating in counting activities. They enjoy singing number songs and rhymes, such as 'five little speckled frogs' and 'ten in the bed and the little one said', and learn about measure as they weigh out ingredients to make

Halloween fairy cakes. They play snakes and ladders and enjoy printing with fruit, creating different shapes. They search for hidden numbers in the sand play, and make numbers from play dough. The children use information technology confidently to support their learning in other areas and enjoy educational programmes set for them.

Children are encouraged to explore and investigate. They are given opportunities to use construction in various forms, such as building towers and constructing a model with junk. They use various tools for different activities, show an interest in technology, and have a computer available to them throughout the session. They understand that you can use a computer to gather information and can predict what will happen when they press certain icons on the computer. Children use their senses and investigate different materials, such as play dough, cooking ingredients, sand and water. They bake cakes and make bird feeders to look after wildlife in the winter months. Children have opportunities to go on walks around the local area, which helps to develop familiarity with their surroundings. They learn about their environment and how to take care of it by recycling their rubbish. They make 3-D spiders, watch changes in the cake mixture as it bakes and make flying birds, which they test outside.

Children move confidently with a good awareness of space, around the room and outside. They carefully manoeuvre wheeled toys, climb on the climbing frame, throw, and catch balls. They delight in physical activity and run around excitedly, adjusting their speed and changing direction with ease. Some children are gaining an awareness of how to take care of their bodies. For example, they talk about why they need to wash their hands after going to the toilet. They develop movement to parts of their bodies as they participate in a range of action and rhyme songs, play ball tick and experiment with the parachute.

Children have good opportunities for imaginative play as space is allocated to a role-play area. The theme of which changes frequently. Currently, the role-play is a Chinese restaurant with authentic dishes, a kitchen to prepare food, tables for dining and a till to pay at, on the way out.

Children explore media and materials through activities provided. They make pumpkins and practise their threading skills, explore with orange, sparkly play dough and play with ice cubes. They make pictures with pasta and enjoy free painting. They have opportunities to role-play, make music and act in the Nativity play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop positive attitudes towards others and are able to play a full part in the setting because staff value their individuality. Children's likes, dislikes, fears and learning difficulties or disabilities are discussed and recorded before they start at the nursery and so they settle well and enjoy their time there. Children take part in celebrating different cultures, to aid their understanding and acceptance of similarities and differences. Their knowledge about the wider world and community are helped through activities and a range of resources that show positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. Staff have appropriate training in identifying and assessing learning difficulties and disabilities. This is used effectively to ensure the provision

of appropriate care is maintained so that all children can reach their full potential. All children develop positive self-esteem, due to the caring environment provided.

Children are well behaved and learn responsible behaviour through the boundaries and consistent approach of staff. Fun ways are used to encourage the children. For example, a large egg timer keeps the children on target as they tidy up, causing great excitement. Staff take children's level of understanding and maturity into account when managing behaviour and work in partnership with parents where this is needed, to establish desired behaviours. Praise and encouragement is offered regularly.

Partnership with parents is good. Information is shared through the comprehensive prospectus and information boards. Effective communication is maintained through a newsletter, open evenings and arranged and informal discussions. These work effectively to ensure children's individual care needs are met. Parents are fully involved in the initial assessment for nursery education to ascertain what children can already do. This equips staff with a clear acknowledge of each child's starting point to plan for their individual learning and progress. Parents are pleased with the service they receive and feel that they are kept well informed. They especially like the good organisation, the friendly and approachable staff and the cleanliness of the nursery. They like the fact that they can discuss their child's progress at any time and are formally invited in to discuss profiles. They are provided with good information, especially in preschool, where they get a weekly breakdown of what their child has been doing and ideas for them to continue at home. Children's spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is appropriately fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced through rigorous recruitment and employment procedures. Diligent induction training ensures that staff are fully aware of the settings comprehensive policies and procedures to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. Staff training is provided which is linked to appraisals and professional development to support the ongoing improvement of the setting.

Clear contingency plans ensure there are sufficient staff to care for children. Staff are effectively deployed to support children's care, learning and play. Play and learning activities are organised well to provide interesting and appealing opportunities for children, which contribute to their enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution.

Leadership and management is good. The manager and staff have a clear vision with a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children attending the setting. There is strong team spirit with staff who have worked there for many years. The outcomes for children are met well as the manager sets clear directions leading to improvements. The manager is actively involved in supporting staff to improve the provision for nursery education. There are appropriate opportunities for staff to spend time working together to establish a consistent approach to monitoring, assessment and planning for children's learning and development.

All staff are involved in evaluating the setting, being required to grade the level of care provided under the five outcomes. They are required to qualify their judgements, giving reasons and ways to improve the level of care for children. The manager leads the team effectively by supporting their working practice. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the provider was asked to: ensure the safety of the windows on the first floor; extend resources in the baby room to reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability; and implement practice throughout the nursery that ensured bedding could not be used by more than one child.

Since the last inspection all windows in the nursery have been renewed, and therefore are double glazed and fitted with locks. The nursery in general have continued to build their provision of resources, which help children to understand more about the wider world. These are provided in each room. Bedding, which is used for children who sleep during the day, is now named to prevent the risk of cross infection.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to develop a system to build on what children already know and to share this with parents. They were also asked to improve the program which develops children's communication language and literacy skills, and provide more opportunities to write. The provider also needed to adapt the program for children to learn mathematical skills in simple problem-solving and give children more opportunities to be creative, initiated by the children themselves.

There is now ongoing communication with parents, by way of weekly sheets of information about what the children have done under the six areas of learning and how they can become involved with their child at home. Parents are regularly invited in to look at children's progress and to discuss their profile records. The planning and assessment has been altered to plan next steps very individually for each child. All six areas of learning are covered well, giving children many interesting and exciting opportunities across the whole range of learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been two complaints made to Ofsted.

The first complaint related to National Standard 13; child protection. The provider was asked investigate and provide a report on the findings. The internal investigation was found to be satisfactory and the provider continued to meet the National Standards and therefore, remained suitable for registration.

The second complaint was in relation to National Standard 11; behaviour management. Ofsted investigated the concerns by carrying out a visit on 10 December 2004. Records examined demonstrated that the registered person had conducted an internal investigation on the concerns raised and that appropriate and effective action had been taken. However, the evidence examined demonstrated that National Standard 11 was not met at the time of the concern. Discussions with staff confirmed that they did not fully understand the contents of the nursery's

behaviour management statement. As a result of this, an action was raised. The registered person is the designated person responsible for behaviour management and at that time she had not completed a relevant course. As a result of this, an action was raised.

The provider meets the National Standards and therefore continues to be suitable for registration.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- develop risk assessments further to ensure that children are safe and secure particularly as parents leave the building.

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):

- develop planning further to show how activities are supported and extended to meet the learning needs of all children
- consider adapting grouping of children so that learning from activities when they are together in a large group, is effectively developed and children's concentration is sustained.

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