



# Alphabet House Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 253140   |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 26 January 2007                                |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Georgina Walker                                |
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| <b>Registered person</b>       | Anthony and Marie Brentford                    |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Integrated                                     |
| <b>Type of care</b>            | 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](http://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?

Alphabet House Day Nursery (Beeston) opened in 1996. It operates from two floors of converted premises in the town of Beeston, Nottinghamshire. There is a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

The day nursery serves the local area and surrounding villages.

The setting opens five days a week all year except Bank Holidays and the week between Christmas and New Year. Sessions are from 7.30 until 18.00.

There are currently 52 children from seven months to six years on roll. This includes 18 children who receive funding for nursery education. The setting currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine full-time and three part-time staff who work with the children. Over half of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two members of staff are currently working towards a level three qualification.

The setting receives support from Nottinghamshire local authority and is a members of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. They hold the Investors In People award. The day nursery is one of three owned by the same family, who delegate day to day responsibility to the staff.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's needs are inconsistently met if they have an accident or require medication as the potentially comprehensive record sheets are not fully completed at the relevant time by all staff. However, the prevention of accidents is reduced as staff are vigilant and aware of stages of children's development and the majority of staff hold appropriate first aid certificates and maintain first aid boxes which are readily accessible. The seeking of permission for administering medication and treatment in the event of an emergency is sought for all children on admission. Significant injuries received prior to arrival at the setting are recorded confidentially. In the event of children becoming ill staff instigate the well-documented procedures and parents are contacted with the utmost priority to ensure any distress is limited.

Children's good health is generally promoted through them learning the importance of personal hygiene. The children follow appropriate daily routines, such as washing their hands before snacks and after toileting or messy play, such as gluing or when painting. Younger children's awareness of good hygiene practices is not consistent as staff do not wipe babies hands after play or before snack and meals, even though they are meticulous in doing so after meals. Children become increasingly independent in their personal care and older children have access to tissues in the playrooms and competently help themselves and dispose of the tissue afterwards. The risk of cross-infection from used linen is not always prevented as the over-blankets are used more than once in some circumstances and it cannot be guaranteed the same child will use it. The good practice of only using a 'head sheet' for an individual child is successfully followed.

Children benefit from the healthy and nutritious menu provided. Snack time is enjoyed when milk or water, and a range of fruit, raisins or biscuits, is provided. Older children serve themselves competently when pouring drinks at snack and meal time. They all have access to their own drinks bottle or beaker throughout the day. Children are starting to understand why certain foods are good for them through discussion and programmed activities. Staff ensure snacks and meals are social times and provide encouragement to eat healthily and have related discussions. Individual dietary requirements are shared with the staff by parents to ensure children remain healthy and needs are met. An effective system of information in each room, and the kitchen, regarding children with allergies, special or religious dietary needs, ensures their individual needs can be recognised by all staff. The menu, displayed for parents, ensures an extensive variety is provided.

Children are supported effectively to develop their physical skills throughout the nursery. They move with confidence and an awareness of personal safety throughout the premises. Separate play times outdoors are programmed for the wide variety of ages cared for. Daily opportunities to play outdoors are programmed with purposeful activities to ensure children have plenty of fresh air and effective development of all-round skills. Older children are able to negotiate around each other or resources as they move around the playrooms or run freely in the playground. They pedal wheeled toys with competence and stop carefully. Activities such as chalking and water painting are also provided outdoors with high levels of challenge to develop an extensive variety of skills. They organise their own games with hoops and balls and demonstrate their skills at shooting balls through the hoops. For children who prefer less energetic activities a range of books is always taken outdoors. Indoors on wet days, dance or ring games are included to ensure physical activity is constantly provided. Regular use of small tools such as pencils, scissors and paint brushes, and a wide variety of construction toys, help children develop their fine manipulative skills competently. They spend extended time concentrating to build with 'waffle shapes' or complete a 25 piece puzzle and are proud to share their finished model or puzzle. Toddlers enjoy free access to the Duplo boards which are secured to the walls and create 3D pictures competently with the bricks.

Children under three benefit from the good knowledge and understanding staff have of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have attended briefings and specific training and cascade information at team meetings to all relevant members of staff. Children's development needs are successfully promoted as staff have a good awareness of how to integrate components into the planning and meet individual needs. Plans are displayed for parents to view and discuss the daily activities and how their child is progressing. Staff have developed effective ways to record children's development and plan for individual future development. The records are available for parents to read at any time, with formal sharing at the two open evenings when the child's key worker shares the documents with parents. An excellent range of resources for babies and toddlers ensures they have opportunities to develop at their own pace with the support of the staff and their expert practices. Babies enjoy music, and smile and sway as tunes play in the background. They use the activity centres with increasing dexterity and laugh as toys pop up or drop into the holes. Toddlers become purposefully occupied in themes and topics, currently 'winter' as in the rest of the setting. They learn to share resources with other children, staff and visitors.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Comprehensive policies, procedures and risk assessment documents exist and the staff attend relevant training to develop an awareness of how to promote children's safety throughout the premises. However, staff in the toddlers and pre-school are inconsistent with their vigilance of potential hazards especially with regard to the radiators and children's safety is not assured. Children are secure in the environment. Very good security and collection procedures are maintained, with staff and visitors signing themselves in and out. Staff mark and check registers effectively. Emergency procedure evacuations and subsequent evaluations are undertaken regularly and ensure staff and children develop an understanding of the need for fire safety. This has recently been enhanced as the setting requested an advisory visit from the fire safety

officer and have adopted some of his recommendations to further promote the children's well-being. Children are safe on walks to the local park, pet shop or library to further their learning experiences. Older children have been on outings in the company mini-bus, stored at the Worksop site, and the setting has comprehensive safety procedures which are implemented effectively. The nursery maintains relevant documents and vehicles effectively to promote the children's safety on outings.

Children are cared for by staff who have a sound knowledge of signs and symptoms of abuse and demonstrate an understanding of how to give priority to children's welfare. An ongoing programme ensuring all staff attend training, which includes advanced training sessions, significantly enhances staff's knowledge. The parents are informed of the nursery's responsibility to protect children. The policies do not reflect the changes to local authority procedures from April 2006 with regard to the 'Local Safeguarding Children Board' procedures. A summary of the procedures from the local authority is displayed in each playroom and staff are to attend a briefing on the procedures in February 2007. Children's welfare however, is fully supported by the staff, who are also to obtain contact details and procedures from the neighbouring local authority, when they are produced. A number of children live over the county boundary and staff are aware referrals must be made to the area in which a child lives.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment where the playrooms are decorated with their own craft work, currently 'winter' themes, and photographs of them happily at play, engaged in an extensive variety of activities. The children have access to an interesting range of resources which are changed to promote age-appropriate levels of challenge. These are safe and presented at suitable levels to encourage independence and development and ensure children are supported to progress safely in appropriate surroundings. Children are stimulated in each room as they play and learn with worthwhile activities. Separate baby and toddler units on the ground floor contribute to the safety and security of the younger and less mobile children. Two baby change units are available and staff follow appropriate good practices when changing the children to assist in preventing the risk of cross-infection. Pre-school children have direct access to the toilet area upstairs, where they successfully learn good hygiene practices and use the low level wall mirrors to watch themselves as they brush their teeth.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly in the nursery and have a friendly relationship with the staff, who encourage the children to separate from their parents and access the well presented activities. The children are confident and keen to join in the interesting range of different activities presented each day in the craft and messy play areas of the under three's rooms, such as printing on frieze paper wearing Wellington boots. Great concentration is shown and an eagerness to spend extended periods in something which stimulates and supports children to develop their potential. However, staff do not record, in planning documents, sufficient detail regarding exactly which resources have been presented in the main area of the toddler room to ensure a variety and rotation of resources to prevent children becoming bored with the same activity. This does not assist staff to plan for developing individual needs and intellectual capabilities. Children are not consistently made aware their name is written from left to right on the page

or that their surname is not just an initial when staff write on the craft work. However, children's developmental progress is promoted effectively under the 'Birth to three' framework, due to staff's knowledge of the framework, consistent staff interaction and the monitoring of the children's progress as they learn through play.

The children develop appropriate socialisation skills as they join in group activities and move between the resources. This ensures the children are purposefully occupied and are supported to develop their potential well. Children's physical development is promoted effectively both indoors and outdoors during the day. They have regular opportunities to manipulate malleable materials and learn about textures as they play with sand and water. They learn new words as staff consistently talk to the babies and younger children, who respond with age-appropriate smiles or babbling and eventually words.

The access to an extensive range of messy play activities linked to themes ensures children's development is supported across many areas of learning. Children's access to resources they can independently be creative with, is extensive. Ten boxes of resources are swapped on a detailed rota in the baby room to ensure they have access to an interesting range of suitable baby toys. Photographs of children at play are displayed to show how they are enjoying themselves, with paint, shaving foam, sand and water, plus the wide range of educational activities they engage in. Children's daily activities and developmental progress is documented and the staff share comprehensive written information with parents regarding their child. Children who attend for before or after school care join in with the older children or have access to range of activities stored in the office to ensure their needs are supported effectively.

#### Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as the comprehensive planning demonstrates an increasing understanding by the staff of how to present an extensive range of activities and extend children's learning. However, this is a new staff group. Further development of their knowledge and understanding of how to implement the curriculum guidance, with regard to recording more detail on the focus activity sheets, and evaluate how individual children participate to assist with planning for their future individual progress is to be re-instated in their practices. The evaluation does not currently contain purposeful information about what the child learnt from the activity or if they were just engaged in it. Planning is given the utmost priority and the aspects linked to the stepping stones are used effectively to identify the curriculum is covered to a well-balanced standard. Staff are confident to extend children's learning at every opportunity linked to the practice of having small key workers groups of children, to enable staff to progress specific learning. Children's progress is shared daily with parents. Written reports are shared formally at the two open evenings, which contributes to an overall picture of the child's progress being obtained. Ongoing training and support from the local authority is provided and staff respond effectively to ensure the children benefit from their commitment to development.

Topics, such as 'winter', 'the sea' or 'colour shape and number' are enthusiastically enjoyed by the children who, when introduced to the topic, suggest ideas of how to develop them. This often leads to outings, such as going to the library to collect books on the topic or to the pet shop. The staff present the daily activities and children are eager to share information about

their experiences, such as in the role-play area and 'hairdressers salon', where children sing to themselves as they comb the tangles out of the hair on the model. Activities are developed over a period of time, for example the role play area had an igloo in it and when this was broken blankets were used to make a shelter. Children are challenged to think by staff who generally use open ended questions to stimulate children's recall, such as in relation to a story or activities out of the nursery. They are well aware of the community around them as staff integrate interesting visits into the curriculum.

Children are well behaved and eager to try new experiences. They ask questions about how things work and listen to the responses from staff. They are animated when suggesting their own ideas such as building the 'Happy Town'. Obvious friendship groups organise each other to play together in the role play area, read a story or suggest hoop and ball games outdoors, demonstrating good negotiating skills. After messy play activities they go off independently to wash. They share information about their life outside of the nursery and have confident personalities which is confirmed as they include visitors in their play and talk about their home as they complete a puzzle of a house. Many children can write their own names confidently with recognisable letters and more able children are eager to 'copy write' labelling for their craft. Children have access to an extensive range of books and spontaneously use them from the book rack. At group story time children sit and listen and respond appropriately to questions asked by staff. They particularly enjoy the winter stories and recall how a red hat became stuck on the prickles of the hedgehog.

Children are developing good recall as they listen attentively to instructions and respond eagerly to staff as they discuss numbers. Children have a developing understanding of maths and spontaneously use their knowledge effectively during play. They compare shapes and calculate how many children can stand around the play-tray which contains toy animals and cereal biscuits. The song 'five little speckled frogs' leads to opportunities to develop their calculating knowledge. A good range of computer and technology resources assist to develop children's skills competently. They often share with others how a programme works and enjoy using battery operated resources which supports their learning effectively. Children are developing awareness of the needs of others and creatures of the natural world as they enjoy the varied topics presented by staff. Topics which introduce them to the diversities in society are included and children have daily access to resources which promote positive images and are well used.

Children's physical development is promoted effectively through the use of an extensive range of small resources and a well-balanced programme of activities for outdoor play. They enjoy the opportunity to go outside and eagerly join in the games, often instigated by themselves to push each other around on the wheeled toys, stopping carefully to ensure safety of others. Their pedalling, scooting and mobility skills are developing well and photographs show them climbing, sliding or crawling through the tunnel with increasing confidence. Children inform visitors of how they are out of breath after jumping along the shapes on the safety surface or are cold and their nose is running, as it is a winters day, showing an awareness of how their body changes during exercise. This aspect of learning is included in topics and referred to by staff on an ongoing basis. They enjoy dance activities or ring games indoors on days when it is pouring with rain or too foggy to go outside.

Children are motivated to develop their creative experiences as they have access to an extensive range of craft, role play and musical activities. They eagerly join in and demonstrate a good imagination in the role play areas, and eventually use the blankets as beds, not a cover for creating an igloo. Children are eager to play at the tray with cereals and plastic animals in, as they bang increasingly louder to crush the biscuits and feel the different textures, as a new learning experience. They produce free choice crafts to take home or for displays in the setting with a degree of age-appropriate expertise and co-operation of working with other children, such as the large snowman shapes made by a group or snowflakes made by individuals. Children make reference to the wall displays and proudly point out their work and photographs, demonstrating good recall of previous activities. They eagerly ask to sing 'Twinkle little star', as a solo demonstrating confidence, or in the group, as it is a favourite. A good sense of rhythm and enjoyment is evident.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are very confident in the setting and show a sense of belonging. Supplementary information provided by parents containing such items as children's likes and dislikes, any words spoken and extended family information, provides staff with a starting point to make assessments on children's progress. Staff use their expertise, have ongoing discussions and use information sheets completed by parents to ensure children's individual needs are met. However, this does not include written details regarding the ethnic origin of the child or any languages spoken within the family. This does not always enable appropriate care to be given and ensure anti-discriminatory practice is promoted consistently.

Children are developing an understanding of how everyone positively contributes in society. Resources which promote positive images are consistently available and are well used. Children's knowledge and experiences are extended as craft activities linked to culture and festivals are included and integrated each year. During topics they often taste food from around the world and the menus contain chilli, rice and pasta to develop children's experiences. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively as activities are adapted to ensure children's developmental needs are met, especially under the 'Birth to three matters' framework and children only move up to the next room if they are developmentally capable. Children's understanding of the needs of others are promoted successfully through discussion and inclusion in the nursery.

Information is shared daily and parents particularly like the key worker system so they know who is specifically caring for and educating their child. Written diary sheets give purposeful information to parents of younger children regarding their child's day. Monthly dairies, including photographs of the child at play are taken home and parents are invited to comment as a two-way communication process. Co-operation between parents, staff and outside agencies ensures children's specific needs are met. Parents are provided with a brochure regarding the setting's services and a range of policies and procedures. These assist in promoting the welfare, care and learning of the children. Notice boards and newsletters keep parents informed of the current theme, daily activities and the menu. The poster to inform them of how to contact the regulator is displayed and the complaints policy has been drawn to their attention. Both require updating to include all current detail and the mandatory requirements of registration relating



to the complaints procedures. Parents give very positive comments when asked about how their child is cared for in the different areas within the setting.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. Information about the curriculum and nursery grant funding is comprehensive and children's development records are available at any time for parents to read. Progress reports are produced and the formal sharing of documents is promoted during open evenings. This contributes to working with parents to give an overall picture of each individual child's progress and further demonstrates the open relationship they have with the staff.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are well behaved as they learn to accept the rules and respond to the firm and consistent expectations of the staff. The children develop a strong sense of independence and self-worth as they are encouraged to share, take turns, follow rules and listen to others. Any minor incidents regarding sharing or turn taking are calmly dealt with by the staff to ensure the children are fully supported. These are often related to biting by children who have no language skills. At other times children will inform others of the expectations, such as only four children at the play tray in pre-school at any time. Older children are very competent at tidying up and sing a song, devised by the staff, to help them along.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The welfare, care and learning of the children is generally promoted through the maintenance of records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision. Some changes to regulations have not been included in the documents or the operational plan, especially with regard to complaints. Staff are to make reference to current legislation, the standards, guidance, revisions and addendum to provide consistent information for staff and parents. A number of documents require more detail in recording accidents and medication, to ensure children's health and safety, and the ethnic origin and language spoken by the children, to ensure appropriate care is given. Child protection policies and procedures are to include the 'Local Safeguarding Children Board' information, now it is available. The setting have been pro-active in developing an effective registration system which monitors all persons on site and assists in safeguarding the children. Overall the range of children's needs are met.

Children are in the care of qualified and experienced staff who are fully supportive to ensure they are happy and settled in the nursery. The ratios are maintained to a minimum level, especially at staff meal breaks and recruitment is underway to ensure relief staff are available to consistently meet ratios and registration requirements. Good organisation of room layouts and effectively planned, developmentally appropriate activities, ensures children's time in the nursery is worthwhile and provides good levels of challenge to children. The children are eager to engage in the wide range of stimulating activities presented. Resources are updated to ensure the facilities are welcoming for the children which ensures their learning opportunities are significantly enhanced. The leadership and management for funded children is good. The commitment by the new staff team in the pre-school and by staff who implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework to develop knowledge, contributes to the good judgement in the

enjoying and achieving element of the inspection. The owners leave the day to day running of the nursery to the staff group. They actively encourage staff to seek qualifications and attend ongoing training, often provided by the local authority, who also provide regular support for the staff team during site visits.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the previous inspection the setting agreed to update staff's knowledge and understanding of policies and procedures, particularly with regards to promoting safety within the setting. All members of staff were given, or are provided with at induction, copies of the premises policies and procedures. Some staff have been on relevant training but issues are also discussed at the irregular staff meetings, led by the person in charge. It was felt this was more pro-active than just giving out the documents. Any safety issues staff note on the daily risk assessment sheets are addressed, such as removing the radiator cover in the baby room and staff protecting children, by covering the radiator with a blanket, whilst the cover is repaired. Other rooms have radiators which are too hot or have uncovered fittings therefore staff are inconsistent in their understanding of safety issues and children's safety is not fully assured.

At the previous education inspection the nursery was set two recommendations to: provide regular opportunities for children to make full use of information and communication technology to support their learning, and use the full range of freely chosen and planned activities to develop and consolidate children's understanding of calculation.

The action plan was eventually drawn up with the support of the local authority advisor and planning produced by the company planning co-ordinator. Staff put this into operation but this was non-productive and with the complete change of staff group, working together since June 2006, well-planned activities now ensure children are supported effectively and make steady progress in their learning. An extensive range of information and communication technology resources such as 'V tech' and 'Leapfrog' packages have been obtained and programmed into the detailed plans. The computer, used in the corner of the nursery office which doubles as a quiet activity area for groups of two or three children, provides opportunities for meaningful learning. Children become confident in their listening and response skills as they follow the instructions to competently complete tasks and often request favourites such as 'Tizzy's Toy Box' and the 'ABC' packages.

Children's understanding of calculation has been significantly enhanced as worthwhile maths activities are planned and staff make cross-references in many aspects of the routine and other free-play activities. Children calculate during signing games or respond with the correct answer to questions such as 'How many more pieces do we need to finish the puzzle?' The recommendations have been successfully addressed and provide good levels of challenge to the children.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

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.

Since 1 April 2004 there have been three complaints made to Ofsted, one of which required the provider and Ofsted to take action in order to meet the National Standards. This was in relation to National Standard 2 :Organisation-ratios. The setting was set an action to ensure they met staffing ratios at all times. The day nursery provided evidence they met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

## **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 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 staff consistently take positive steps to promote safety, especially with regard to the radiators
- ensure accident, incident and medication records are comprehensively completed at the relevant time and good hygiene practices are consistent to promote the good health of children
- ensure all children's records contain information which enables appropriate care to be given and anti-discriminatory practice is effectively promoted
- ensure the complaints procedures consistently contain references to current legislation, Ofsted contact details and the log is collated with all relevant documents for potential viewing by parents
- ensure all documentation, including the operational plan, makes reference to current legislation, the standards, guidance, revisions and addendum to provide consistent information for staff and parents and are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision and assist in promoting children's welfare
- ensure planning documents contain more detail to assist staff to plan for developing children's individual needs and intellectual capabilities, especially with regard to mark making.

#### **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):

- further develop staff knowledge and understanding of how to implement the curriculum guidance, record more detail on the focus activity sheets and evaluate how individual children participate, to assist with planning for their future individual progress.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)