



## Alphabets@Hollymoor

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	257171
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 February 2007
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<b>Registered person</b>	Longbridge Childcare Strategy Group
<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 outstanding. 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 at Hollymoor is one of three nurseries run by Longbridge Childcare Strategy Group. It opened in 1995 and is situated within Bourneville College, at the Hollymoor Centre, operating from three rooms in this multi use centre in Northfield, Birmingham. The nursery serves the local area.

A maximum of 35 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 07:30 until 17:30. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 48 children aged under five years on roll. Of these, 10 children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities and is able to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine full time members of staff. Eight staff hold appropriate level three early years qualifications and one member of staff holds a level two qualification appropriate for the post. A number of other staff have begun a foundation stage degree in childcare and education. The setting receives support from a mentor teacher from the Early Years Childcare Development Partnership and the area Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is effectively promoted as the staff take positive steps to promote children's good health and encourage them to begin to take responsibility of meeting their own health needs. Older children are encouraged to clean their teeth after meals and all children are encouraged to wash their hands before meals and after toileting. Activities for children in the pre-school room include creating posters to depict 'germs', which are displayed in the wash room areas as a reminder of the reasons for washing their hands. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures taken when children are ill so that health needs are met. Staff diligently wash tables and keep all areas of the nursery very clean. Additional cleaning is routinely undertaken to ensure all high and low level surfaces are kept clean.

Children enjoy excellent opportunities to experience physical activity and develop their skills. They explore the environment with appropriate resources. Young children can roll, crawl, pull themselves up on the sides of cots and domestic style furniture. This furniture also allows staff to provide children with comfort, as they hold babies whilst they are fed. They access a range of activities such as, musical movement indoors, and in outdoor play, using a range of equipment. They enjoy walking in the local area. This helps children develop the confidence to enjoy moving with control, using their bodies in various ways, for example, dancing to music or meeting the challenge of an obstacle course.

Children are very well nourished. They have nutritious snacks and meals that promote healthy eating. A dietician has been consulted to ensure the meals provide a suitable diet for children. The nutrition policy, shared with parents, includes setting food out attractively, offering a variety of foods from different cultures and encouraging careful eating with appropriate cutlery, in a happy relaxed atmosphere. Children have very good opportunities to learn about healthy eating because the setting provides children with regular drinks and food which comply with their dietary and religious needs. Children are learning about healthy living through a range of first class activities that encourage them to learn about a healthy diet. This includes making healthy choices to lead a healthy lifestyle.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are safe and are very well cared for in premises that are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. This is because they are clean and well-maintained. They employ one member of staff for maintenance and cleaning tasks, who works full time at the setting. Managers can monitor the cleaning log as well as visually check that the work has been completed. The premises are welcoming and child centred because children's work is valued and well presented, as much at child's eye level as is practicable. Children are involved in choosing colour schemes and take part in making the choices for presentation. Children use safe and suitable resources, toys and equipment that stimulate and challenge them. The staff are very aware of safety standards and kite marks; the health and safety officer is well aware of all safety standards and prepares documents to monitor and inform staff of how to safely use them. As a result, the manager and staff give children very good access to a comprehensive range of facilities that successfully promote children's development.

Children's safety is extremely well promoted because the registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings. The provider ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents and minimise identified risks to children. There is an appointed health and safety officer and an appointed fire marshal who both carry out their tasks diligently. Children play safely both indoors and out, due to the high priority the staff place on ensuring all safety features are in place. Risk assessments both visual and written are conducted and some staff have obtained certificates in relation to a health and safety during 2005. The manager also received a certificate issued by Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents in November 2006. Consequently, staff understand how to minimise risks. For the future, in their development plan, they have begun to develop activity risk assessment sheets for all activities children take part in. As a result children's well-being is fully safeguarded.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe. They begin to understand about safety issues both within the setting and outside, during planned and spontaneous activities. Children learn about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe. They learn about fire safety, rehearsing the emergency evacuation procedure regularly with the provider. They learn to keep safe whilst negotiating other children around them, whilst playing in the outdoor area. They learn to adhere to rules of safety in water play. The setting provide appropriate equipment, encouraging children to explore; letting them be involved in clearing up, ensuring children don't hurt themselves or others. They are beginning to understand their rights and what to do if they are concerned or worried in any way. This is conveyed through talking and sharing their feelings with appropriate staff and key workers. Children are well protected from harm because staff have a very good understanding of their role in child protection. They are able to put appropriate procedures into practice. This means children's safety and well-being is fully safeguarded.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy and settled because all children are allocated to a key worker who develops a relationship with the family of the child, and this fosters a rapport which enables children to

feel secure. Staff get to know children in their care very well. The management have sufficiently developed their induction, with good supporting documentation, to allow bank staff to have a good understanding of what the learning outcome for each child will be in the experiences and activities offered to even the youngest children in the nursery. When bank staff are used they are used regularly enough that the children get to know them and they also become part of the familiar adult faces for children in the nursery. As a result, children are confident, independent and are developing their self-esteem.

Children are involved in a broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and overall learning because most activities are child initiated and many decisions are made by children about which resources they want to use. The organisation of the routines of the day and the lay out of the rooms are such that children are able to access a wide range of resources and develop their own play with very good adult support which successfully facilitates their play. For example, children access musical instruments. Staff listen to the sound with interest and encourage them to continue and develop their play. Children also obtain their own apron to engage in corn flour play and younger children make a good attempt to put it on without help. They express their delight as they experience the feeling of the mixture and the staff and children explore and develop language to describe the 'slippery silk' together. Plans demonstrate how staff include all areas of the 'Birth to three matters' framework in promoting children's development. There is a clear evaluation made of activities children have enjoyed and what they need to learn next. As a result, children have fun with a wide variety of interesting activities and experiences, such as, natural materials and both large and small construction resources. They also have access to small world toys, role play resources and resources that promote early writing skills. The role play resources are very exciting and yet provide a calm soothing effect in the baby area, which can also be used to interest and promote emotional calm for children with identified special needs. There are lights, bubbles, music and a net tent, to allow children to feel they are in their own imaginary world in the nursery and safe to develop their own imaginative play. This is very well supported by qualified, fully trained staff and ensures children have a balanced programme of activities which promote their development and encourage a very good disposition towards early learning.

### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff develop activities and themes from children's interests. Learning is exciting and enjoyable. All key staff have a good knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Planning, observation and assessment is used to ensure positive outcomes for children. The staff explain their planning and can explain how they ensure that it provides a broad range of practical activities that cover all areas of learning. Children enthusiastically take part in creative, physical and imaginative play. They talk happily about their play, make decisions about what they want to do and are confident to ask for what they need. Everyone is made aware of the purpose of the activity including parents. Long term planning covers all areas of learning. Long, medium and short term plans include enough detail to show the learning intention, what the activity involves, resources and staffing. The way plans are devised has recently been reviewed and changed. This has affected the way the plans identify grouping of children and what they have learnt. Although the activity is evaluated as to how well it went, there are no direct links made in the planning to inform staff of how individual children's progress is evaluated, to enable them to plan further focussed activities.

Staff do, however, have a clear understanding of the progress of children within their key working groups and carry out a number of very useful observations to enable them to report to parents about their progress.

Plans are linked to the stepping stones. However, they do not sufficiently reference previous learning and children's starting points. Staff ensure all children are included and are able to access all areas of learning. Daily plans take into account specific needs of the children, because staff know their key working group very well. The staff help children to consolidate and extend their learning. They have good relationships with children and encourage them to become involved and to persevere with tasks, such as putting on their own coat and Wellingtons to go outdoors to play. Methods include open-ended questions, encouraging children to try, sensitive intervention in their play, extending activities and involving all children in activities. The staff provide sufficient challenge for all children including the more and less able. However, unclear recording of how effective activities are at moving these children along provide an uncertain picture for bank staff to follow in the absence of regular key working staff, and are ineffective in enabling staff to organise short term plans to best meet individual children's developmental and learning needs.

Children have very good opportunities to develop their attitudes and dispositions that enable them to achieve in their learning. They are motivated to learn through exciting and interesting activities. They are developing their self-confidence and self-esteem and are beginning to learn right from wrong using rewards for achievement and behaviour on a star chart and in giving responsibility to children, which promotes a sense of belonging and ownership of their space. Effective behaviour management ensures that children are developing an understanding of right and wrong, rules and boundaries and how to be considerate to others. They are developing an awareness of their own needs and those of others and begin to understand that their actions and that of others have consequences. They form good relationships with adults and other children and are beginning to understand they are a part of their families and the setting. Children are able to become increasingly independent when dealing with their physical needs. They also learn to help others in dealing with those needs, such as, in laying the table and helping to tidy up. They begin to take the initiative and to be self-sufficient within their learning by choosing activities and accessing resources for themselves. Children affirm their own presence as part of the group marking their presence as they sign in on the white board each day.

Children are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication, speaking, listening, reading and writing. Children use speech to organise and explore real and imagined experiences, ideas, feelings and developing story lines from pictures in a book. Children recount their version of a story in the book, identifying how the book is organised, reading from left to right, interpreting pictures and recognising some small words and letters. They are recognising the letter which begins their name, out of context. They can identify the letter as it appears in a word as the initial letter for their own name. They are beginning to write names and punctuate simple captions and sentences, using phonic knowledge for spelling. Younger children attempt writing for a variety of purposes using different forms. For example, they make lists and enjoy taking a teddy home to share with their parents. They recount his adventures on his return to nursery.

Children begin to see connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They match and sort and are using mathematical language such as more than, one more, one less to help them to solve problems across a wide range of practical activities such as stories, rhymes, games, puzzles and in their imaginative play. They show a developing understanding of addition and subtraction through practical activities and use correct vocabulary. Children begin to relate addition to combining groups of objects and subtraction to taking away. They consider how many children are present and look at how many boys or girls there are, using a number line to calculate. They begin to use number in a meaningful context and understand that numbers represent sets of objects. There is a display which allows children to group one blue, two orange, three red and four green pieces of construction to compare how many more pieces there are within each group. Plans for maths being used in the outside area include counting small apparatus each time it is used. Further plans include making an outdoor height chart with an outdoor abacus, growing plants and sunflowers for children to measure using non standard measure, such as, hand spans. Whilst the weather has not improved sufficiently to develop these ideas they have provided some activities indoors to begin the process by growing bulbs and measuring their growth.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences in a very interesting environment. They have opportunities to observe, explore, question and be curious in a broad range of activities that form the foundation of later learning in history, geography, science and technology. Highlights include a trip on the 'Severn Valley - Cracker Express' at Christmas time, as well as enjoying Chinese New Year and Valentines Day. Children look at the natural environment with a focus on mini beasts and in considering seasons. Children identify days of the week and months of the year routinely every day. Children build and construct with a wide range of objects, select appropriate resources and select tools and techniques to shape, assemble and join materials, together, choosing which construction toys they wish to put on the mat in the room. This includes planned wood work sessions. They look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change. They ask questions about why things happen and how things work. For example, in cookery activities where the mixture changes and becomes a delicious lemon drizzle cake as it comes out of the oven.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills both when using large and small apparatus, tools and equipment. Children recognise the importance of staying healthy and recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. For example, they are becoming aware of their heart beating during the activity. They learn to recognise the importance of staying healthy by talking at snack time about what they are eating and why it is important to drink milk and why it is good to have fresh air. If children cannot go outside for any reason, they enjoy exercise within the nursery where space is made for activities such as musical movement and action rhymes sessions. Physical education sessions include the use of a musical tape as staff introduce a warm-up with stretches before moving on to dancing to songs such as 'Head shoulders knees and toes'. Children also enjoy sessions with 'Fidjits' musical movement. They are developing a positive attitude towards physical exercise and a growing awareness of how it can help them to stay healthy.

Children are able to be creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play. They use their senses and imaginations to create their own work and to communicate their feelings. Children use a widening range of materials and

tools to help them to express their creativity. Responding to experiences and expressing and communicating ideas. Children respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel. They express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials, tools, imaginative play, movement, songs and musical instruments. Children were excitedly returning to tell other staff of the number of ducks and how many people were feeding the ducks on return from a trip out. They organise their own space and play opportunities very well in an environment which promotes free expression and independence very well.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent arrangements are made to ensure all children are included. There are sufficient suitable resources and activities to help children learn about a diverse society through their play. The staff provide interesting topics which help them to promote children's appreciation of the wider environment. For instance, in enjoying the topic Chinese New year, children visited the Wing Yip shop and purchased the ingredients which staff cooked for the children's lunch. They all tried some familiar and some unfamiliar tastes and textures. Children benefit from activities and resources that help them to develop an understanding of diversity and learn about their local community. Children are becoming aware of their own needs and respect the needs of others. They make choices and decisions about their care and play activities, which develops their self-confidence and self-esteem and helps them develop a sense of belonging. This includes consideration given to children who use sign language and consideration for those who use wheelchairs, or simply have to use spectacles. This means children have a balanced view about the wider world.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage. They clearly explain how they support children's learning through a wide range of play experiences, both in and outside. For example, children are able to compare, print and consider how different print for different people carries meaning for them. For example, staff purchased a Chinese newspaper on their recent trip to the Chinese quarter in the city. Plans show that children are able to take part in activities that aim to help them explore, experiment and solve problems and appreciate their environment. All children are valued as individuals which actively promotes inclusion.

Children are developing good self-esteem and respect for others. There is a written behaviour policy which is understood and implemented by staff and shared with parents. There are good positive strategies to promote children's behaviour very well. For example, children are encouraged to help one another, such as in doing up a coat and finding Wellingtons. There is an ethos of care and respect which staff have for one another and in the way they speak to the children which encourages the children to behave similarly to each other. Star charts and areas of responsibility are given as rewards for older children and this generates feelings of ownership of their space, encouraging children to respect all adults and children who share the nursery resources. Children are well supported to deal with the separation from parents and carers and are developing close relationships with staff caring for the age range. The staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of younger children and provide appropriate activities



and resources to support children's physical and emotional development. There are good opportunities for children to be valued, cuddled and comforted and their individual needs and personalities recognised and affirmed.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Children benefit from the strong partnership between the setting and their parents and carers, who act together and give consistent messages which promote children's development and learning. Staff canvas parent opinion in making an evaluation of the quality of the care they offer. An attractive, good quality, well written prospectus and displayed information, as well as good quality verbal information, is made available for parents when children first start. Parents have responded with written opinion of where staff can make improvements and the staff have also received a number of cards of appreciation of the work that they do in the care of children. Staff take time to get to know children and parents well. Right from the start, they find out about their likes and dislikes, what they can and cannot do and their individual routines. This is an ongoing process. There is a parental involvement policy which includes a statement which encourages parents to contribute their own skills and knowledge and interests to the activities of the setting. Parents are also well supported in gaining skills and in joining in with training opportunities. For example, parents are offered training opportunities in healthy eating and in gaining computer skills, both of which enable them to support, and encourage them to participate and enjoy learning with, their children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The management and organisation of the setting is pro-active in ensuring the practice of all staff contributes positively to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Children are protected because the recruitment and vetting procedures are rigorous, robust and thorough and ensure that all staff and committee have been vetted and are safe and suitable to be in contact with them. The manager is well aware of the need to ensure unvetted staff or applicants whose vetting process has not been completed, remain supervised whilst in contact with children.

The leadership and management is outstanding. Children are well cared for in a setting where the staff are committed to continue to update their skills and knowledge by attending training, having a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. Staff have recently met to reflect on and evaluate their own practice as part of their participation in improving the service they provide. They have shared ideas from other settings within this group and are taking best practice from each setting to improve their own. The staff are actively engaged with children and ensure all ancillary tasks are organised outside of the time when children are cared for. The nursery is cleaned by ancillary staff employed for the purpose, the group employ additional staff whose task is to see that health and safety are monitored. Sufficient staff have training in food hygiene and bank staff are employed to ensure continuity of care for children, whilst other staff take up opportunities to update their skills in further training. Where weaknesses are identified the management are already in a position to, and are committed to ensuring steps are taken to put measures in place to improve. This is particularly evident in the improvement of providing further training to enable staff to deliver the Foundation Stage

Curriculum effectively. Some staff have identified a need to have further training in the stepping stones and some staff have indicated a need to further develop planning. All policies and procedures protect children sufficiently and are effectively implemented to promote all the outcomes for children. Overall children's needs are met

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

At the last inspection the provider agreed to: ensure that all pre-existing injuries are recorded; ensure that mealtimes are a social occasion, allowing staff time to sit with the children, and ensure that parents are given the opportunity to discuss children's development reports without the children being present. The provider also agreed to ensure that staff's management of children's behaviour is consistent.

The provider has reviewed documentation to ensure processes include a record of all pre-existing injuries. This further safeguards children's well-being. Additional staff have been employed, who undertake ancillary tasks, which enables nursery staff to sit with children to encourage social skills. The office space is clear with seating for parents and staff to talk in confidence about children's progress. A named member of staff has been appointed who ensures behaviour management is consistent across the nursery. As a result, parents and children are made further aware of the positive methods used to correct unacceptable behaviour, including the introduction of an anti-bullying policy.

The provider also agreed to: improve children's nursery education by providing opportunities for children to independently access Information Communication Technology; increase opportunities for children to write, match and recognise their names, and increase the challenge for the more able children in all areas, with support for children who have English as an additional language. The provider also agreed to: improve management of children's behaviour; improve storage and organisation of toys equipment and resources, and improve recording of children's development and progress and sharing information with parents.

Since the last inspection where two previous settings were merged, space and resources are now improved to ensure children have free access to Information Communication Technology, areas for children to write, draw, match and recognise their names. There are also further plans to change where pre-school children hang their coats to also encourage their independence and recognise their name in collecting and hanging up their belongings as well as in finding their own drawer and name on the star chart or on their place mat. As a result, children's access to resources and their development of independence has been improved.

The assessment of children's needs and methods of observation within key working groups informs staff and parents of the progress children are making which allows more or less able children's individual needs to be addressed. Recent changes to the planning process, however, have created a gap between the observation of children's achievements and delivery of future planned activities. As a result, there remains room for further improvement in the planning of activities to promote children's progress.

A number of successful methods are used to support staff in encouraging good behaviour in the pre-school room, including the use of praise and reward with star charts and children being

given responsibility for their achievements. The pace of the sessions suitably ensure children are actively engaged at all times preventing opportunities for children to become listless or bored and thus preventing opportunities for poor behaviour to occur. There are very good systems for sharing information with parents about their children's progress including opportunities for parents to become involved in activities and share their own expertise in programmed topics throughout the year. As a result, children can see parents and staff working together to give consistent messages.

### **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 the last inspection there have been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action in order to meet the National Standards. Ofsted received a complaint about the care needs of a child in relation to arrangements for sleep and hygiene routines. The concerns related to National Standards 1, Suitable person, 3, Care, learning and play, 7, Health and 8, Food and drink. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit on 02 June 2006 to investigate these concerns. No evidence was found to suggest a breach of National Standards 1, 3, 7 and 8 however concern was raised in relation to National Standard 12, Working in partnership with parents and carers. Ofsted issued the provider with the following action: Standard 12, ensure that a record of all complaints is maintained and appropriate information from that record is shared with parents on request. A satisfactory response to the action was received on 29 June 2006. The provider has made the appropriate entry in relation to these concerns in a log, having made notes of the concerns raised at the time. The entry is worded with discretion, confidentially and made available to all parents and carers. The log has been improved to ensure parents and carers are aware of the complaints process should they have any concerns to raise about the quality of care offered to children. The provider remains qualified for registration.

## **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 outstanding. 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**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

### **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):

- continue to develop ways of recording children's progress to plan the next steps for their development and learning through play.

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)