

Abington House Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	226353
Inspection date	21 March 2007
Inspector	Alexandra Brouder
Setting Address	Guthlaxton Community College, Station Road, Wigston Magna, Leicestershire, LE18 2DS
Telephone number	0116 288 1611 X 125
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Registered person	The Board of Governors of Guthlaxton College
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care, Crèche

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

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

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

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

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

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

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Abington House Pre-School opened in 1978. It is one of two settings run by the provider. It operates from the ground floor of a Victorian house situated in the grounds of Guthlaxton College. The pre-school predominantly serves the South Wigston and Wigston Magna areas of Leicestershire. There is also a crèche that operates from this site.

There are currently 18 children from three to five years on roll, all of whom receive funding for their nursery education. Children attend a variety of sessions. The pre-school currently has a number of children on roll who have learning difficulties and disabilities. The pre-school has current experience of working with children who have English as an additional language.

The group is open five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:30–12:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 12:30–14:45 on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Four staff work with the children on a regular basis. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level three. The playgroup is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and has an Investors in People accredited award. Staff also receive support from the Leicestershire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's personal hygiene skills increase as they wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating their snack. This is further promoted as children help themselves to tissues without being prompted. Children question staff about the need to clean surfaces before eating, which staff clearly explain is 'to wipe away the germs so that you don't get ill', helping children develop an understanding of healthy practices. Staff also encourage them to place their hands over their mouth when coughing to prevent the spread of germs.

Children's immediate first aid requirements are met as sufficient staff have an appropriate first aid qualification, and are aware of the procedures in place to record accidents, and the importance of informing parents and carers. Parental permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment is obtained to allow staff to act in the event of an emergency. Satisfactory procedures are in place for the storage, and administration of medication, although clear procedures for obtaining consent from parents has not yet been established.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities to support their developing small muscle skills as they paint, mark make and construct using a variety of equipment. They confidently negotiate space as they move around the familiar environment. This is further promoted as staff ensure that resources are spaced appropriately, enabling children to move freely around them. They enjoy a range of ring games and have opportunities to use balancing beams, a trampet and a small slide to increase their large motor skills. However, opportunities for more able children to extend and develop their large motor skills are limited and lack sufficient challenge.

Children's nutritional needs are well met as staff provide a balance of healthy snacks such as fresh fruit and vegetable sticks. They are also offered a choice of milk or water to ensure that they remain hydrated. Children are able to help themselves to fresh water at any point during the session, promoting their health. Information on children's dietary requirements is obtained before they begin and recorded appropriately. Staff consider and meet these needs before any foods are offered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive and settle well in the warm and welcoming environment. They begin to play with a suitable range of age and stage-appropriate and accessible resources as soon as they leave their parents. Their confidence and independence grows as they make choices in their play. They use a range of child-sized furniture which is suitably arranged, enabling them to move freely and safely as they access their resources.

Good systems are in place for the safe arrival and departure of children. A member of staff stands at the entrance, greeting parents, carers and children. Parents sign the child in and out of the session and staff call children's names when parents collect them to ensure that children remain safe and protected at all times. Children do not currently have access to the outdoors area as this is not safe. However, this is to be rectified enabling children to extend their abilities. Relevant policies and procedures are in place that contribute to children's safety. However, the fire drill is not consistently practised to ensure that all staff and children take part on a regular basis, which impacts on their understanding of what to do in the event of an emergency.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are clear about current child protection legislation and have relevant procedures in place to follow should the need arise. A policy is in place ensuring all are fully informed about protecting children from harm and the leader has attended training enabling her to act appropriately to any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, settled and enjoying their time at pre-school. Their independence and decision-making skills develop well as they access an environment in which they can make choices regarding their play. They access a range of activities that promote their age and stage of development well. Children greet staff by name and seek out familiar peers to play with. For example, children were seen to arrive and begin to play in the 'vet's' immediately, sorting out specific roles for each other as they played. They persevere at activities for chosen periods of time, for example a child was observed to access the craft table and spend 15 minutes making a collage with the prepared materials.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage, ensuring that children are making satisfactory progress in all six areas of learning. Staff are continually looking at ways to increase children's learning to enable them to reach their potential. They use appropriate questioning skills in the main, particularly in relation to imaginative play, and a range of mathematical language such as big and small, as well as introducing shape as children play. Staff regularly observe and assess the children to ensure that they are making sufficient progress and to provide activities appropriate to the needs of the children. However, the system that staff currently use to evaluate and plan for the needs of children does not offer sufficient challenge or focus to sustain children's individual learning over the six areas, particularly in mathematics, creative development and children's large muscle skills. Therefore, some children are unable to fully extend their learning because activities are not always developed from staff's observations of how activities are managed or what children need to do next.

Children feel a sense of belonging as they quickly leave parents and carers and settle into the pre-school environment. They greet each other, and staff, by name and soon become engrossed in the activities available. They are confident and most children persevere at self-chosen activities for extended periods. They separate well from their main carer and show care and concern for each other. For example, three children were discussing a child that was not at the group, stating that he could be 'poorly'. Another child stated 'he is poorly. I know because I took a card to him yesterday, and told him to get better soon.'

Children's communication skills develop well. They sit and listen as requested and begin to question, and respond appropriately, as they play. For example, a group of children were playing sound lotto with a staff member, listening intently to the sounds and guessing correctly each time that a sound matched a picture on their board. Children enjoy books and have an area dedicated to books that is comfortable and easy to access. Children spend time each day looking at books and begin to understand that print carries meaning. This is further supported using labels around the room and through the use of self-registration as children arrive each morning. Children begin to practise their mark making skills as they scribe in notebooks in the role play area and use activities such as shaving foam to increase their dexterity. More able children

begin to recognise initial sounds and letters in their own and others' names, although they are not always challenged effectively.

Children show an interest in number as together they count the number of children present each day, are introduced to a different number each week and have resources, such as compare bears and scales, to consolidate their learning. However, staff miss opportunities to extend more able children's learning in this area. For example, the number for the week is '4' and children were asked to show this number using an appropriate number of fingers on their hands. A four-year-old held up three fingers on one hand and one finger on another hand and stated 'I've got four, look'. This was not acknowledged to be different by the member of staff and therefore the opportunity to link this to calculation was missed. Children show a sound awareness of size and quantity in a range of planned activities. For example, children playing in the sand used terms such as 'full' and 'empty' to describe how much sand they had in their pots. They look and talk about shapes as they play and in a range of planned activities.

Children are beginning to make sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first-hand experiences. They have opportunities to observe, explore, question, and be curious in a broad range of activities. For example, children made play dough and manipulated this to create a desired form, patting and prodding as they did so. They develop their skills in technology as they operate simple programs on the computer, use electronic tills and a small synthesiser. Their awareness of other cultures and lifestyles increases as they explore festivals such as Diwali, Chinese New Year and Bonfire Night. This is further extended through positive images displayed in the pre-school and resources such as dressing-up clothes and dolls.

Children engage in a range of experiences to develop their creative skills. They manipulate materials to achieve a desired effect, and use a variety of media, such as paint, play dough and shaving foam, to explore their senses, and take great pleasure in these activities. However, there are few opportunities for children to create their own designs as there are limited materials freely accessible. Children's imaginative skills are good and they use a variety of equipment to organise their play. For example, in the 'vet's' today children used dressing up to take on specific roles, such as the 'vet' and 'patient'. Staff support children's ideas as they play, offering appropriate questions to enable them to extend their ideas, for example, 'who needs to go to the vet's today?' and 'how will you make the dog better?'. Children think about their responses and answer well. Children take part in music and movement sessions and have some opportunities for music making in adult-led activities. However, there are few opportunities for extension in this area, which limits children's abilities to create their own sounds.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's sense of belonging increases as they are warmly welcomed into the caring environment. Their individual needs are met well as staff take time to get to know children through speaking to parents and recording a range of information to enable them to settle the children in quickly and effortlessly. They begin to gain an awareness of other cultures and lifestyles as they look at festivals from around the globe, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, as well as receiving visits from members of the community. This area is further promoted through their access to a range of appropriate resources such as puzzles, small world equipment and posters within the room that reflect the varied society they live in. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs fostered well at the setting. This is supported and promoted through the extensive and secure knowledge of the setting's Special Educational Needs Coordinator, who has completed a range of appropriate training and developed additional methods to support the children that currently attend the setting. This has enhanced their progress and development.

Children's behaviour is good. They begin to understand the importance of working together and what is right and wrong. This is consistently and appropriately promoted through the boundaries applied by the staff team and the use of praise and encouragement of children's achievements, as well as positive behaviour. For example, a child had completed a drawing in the role play area and took this to show a member of staff who praised her and told her 'what a lovely picture you have made'. Children show care and concern for one another and begin to take an interest and listen to what others say. They enjoy the routines that are in place.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are greeted warmly and staff take time to listen to any concerns that they may have. Children's needs are identified through discussion with parents before their child begins at the setting, to ensure that staff can meet their needs appropriately. This is supported by a range of documentation. Parents speak favourably of the setting and the committed staff team. They find all staff very approachable and feel they are good at their job. One parent was particularly pleased with the leader as she felt that she had supported her child well. The child had been at the setting for some time and the parent had felt they were not challenged effectively. This has been rectified and further opportunities for this child have been offered. However, there are few opportunities for parents to receive formal feedback on their child's progress, which impacts on their learning and parents' opportunities to support them at home. Records are kept for individual children and these are made available to parents upon request.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled and enjoy a range of activities in an environment suitably organised to enable them to play effectively. Staff know children well and show genuine care and concern for them, which promotes their sense of belonging and well-being. Suitable staff ratios are maintained, although due to the layout of the rooms, staff are not always able to spend time equally with the full range of activities on offer, which leads to weaknesses in some areas of development. All staff are appropriately cleared and records of their training and qualifications are maintained well. All legally required documentation is in place, which contributes to children's health and safety, although some aspects do not fully reflect the provision.

Staff observe and assess the progress that children are making towards the Early Learning Goals and plan for their individual needs. However, this system is not robust, which impacts on the effectiveness of children's progress at times. There is a new staff team in place, who are working hard to ensure that their systems can develop to promote all areas of children's learning and development.

The leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. The manager is new to her role at the setting and is working well with the staff team to improve outcomes for children. The Board of Governors supports the setting, although there appear to be gaps in their understanding of the National Standards and roles and responsibilities regarding the provision.

Systems that support the induction and appraisal for staff are not fully established which may impact on the efficient and safe management of the setting.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were required to: improve the outings policy to ensure it refers to procedures for staff to follow for all types of outings; ensure practice in relation to the consumption of hot drinks is consistent with the health and safety assessment and to ensure procedures, in the event of an allegation against a member of staff abusing a child, are consistent with the Local Area Child Protection Committee guidance.

The outings policy has been amended to ensure that this clearly outlines how staff will meet the needs of children and their safety at all times, which helps to support their welfare. Children's safety is supported well as staff ensure that hot drinks are not consumed whilst children are present. Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have amended the Child Protection procedure to ensure that it is consistent with local legislation. In addition to this the leader has completed training in this area.

At the last inspection, the quality of the nursery education was judged as very good. The setting were given points for consideration linking to two areas: further extend children's learning through a greater use of open-ended questions to support their explorative and investigative skills and further improve the partnership with parents by providing them with more information on how they can support learning in the topic areas at home.

Staff support children's learning well as they question them appropriately in all that they do, which enhances their learning. Partnership with parents has improved as staff supply them with a range of information regarding the topics that are to be completed each term, although this is minimal and does not effectively extend their learning at home.

Complaints since the last inspection

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

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

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- improve staff and children's awareness of fire safety procedures by ensuring regular fire drills take place, and that the outside area is made safe and free from hazards
- formalise links with the governing body to ensure they are familiar with their roles and responsibilities, that fair and effective systems are implemented to assess staff's competency and training needs and review documentation in relation to policies and procedures to ensure they are reflected in practice
- review documentation, in relation to policies and procedures, to ensure that these are reflective of practice, particularly in relation to medication records.

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):

- revise the planning of nursery education to ensure all aspects of the Foundation Stage are fully represented and that evaluation systems are in place to monitor the effectiveness of the focused activities, taking into account the ages and stages of children's development
- ensure opportunities to increase children's mathematical skills, physical skills and creative skills are more inclusive in everyday practice, particularly with regard to calculation, developing large muscle skills and creating freely with their own purpose in mind
- develop more formal opportunities for parents to gain information on the progress that their child is making towards the Foundation Stage.

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