

# Alphabet Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY283423
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 April 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sheila Dawn Flounders
<b>Setting Address</b>	Camphill Centre, Hunsbury Hill Road, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 9UW
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<b>Registered person</b>	Angela Evans
<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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Alphabet Day Nursery is one of three nurseries run by the company. It opened in 2004 and operates from a purpose-built building. It is situated in the Camp Hill area of Northampton. A maximum of 77 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:45 to 18.00 all year round, except bank holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 58 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 26 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local community and beyond, attending a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 15 members of staff. Of these, 13 hold appropriate early years qualifications and 2 are working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have good, regular opportunities for physical play with the outdoor area often in constant use. Each group within the nursery has allocated time outside when the children are able to play with a range of toys, for example, wheeled toys, bats and balls and a large parachute. The babies and younger children have equipment which is appropriate to their age group, such as a small climbing frame and they play mainly on the grassed and safety surface areas. The older children also take some of their classroom activities outside, enjoying role play around the gazebo and sand play adjacent to their room. The daily access to fresh air and exercise helps children learn about healthy living. Inside activities are also used to encourage physical development, particularly in the younger children, for example, tents and tunnels are used inside with the toddlers to promote and develop their newly acquired skills. In the baby room interesting items are situated around the room to motivate the babies movement towards them and appropriate adult-sized furniture is situated for early practice of pulling themselves up or walking along.

All of the children learn simple health and hygiene practices from an early age. Each room has good access to toileting or nappy changing facilities so that the older children are encouraged to be responsible for their own personal hygiene whilst the younger ones are easily taken to wash their hands before lunch. There are robust measures in place throughout the nursery to prevent the risk of cross infection which ensure that the children stay healthy, for example, each has a named cup or bottle so that sharing does not take place, tables are all rigorously cleaned before eating and disposable gloves and aprons are worn for nappy changing. The sickness policy is part of parents' terms and conditions so children do not attend if they are ill with anything infectious, nor do they attend for the first 24 hours of taking medication, which must have been prescribed. Younger children rest and sleep according to their need, with the setting being very thorough about finding out their routines from parents before they attend and on an ongoing basis. Each child has individual bedding, which is washed at least weekly.

Children are well nourished due to the amount and variety of freshly prepared food provided. The two weekly menu contains healthy options, which are prepared and served daily by the nursery cook. She knows what the children like to eat and serves up portions according to their appetites, so that they are encouraged to eat it all up and have another helping if necessary, rather than give them too much to begin with. A substantial breakfast, lunch and tea are served, on a staggered basis with the younger children served first, so that snacks between are not necessary. Parents provide bottles and food for the youngest babies, which are prepared in keeping with individual routines by the room staff, who have a satisfactory awareness of food handling procedures. The food cannot be made at home, to avoid the risk of any ingredients entering the nursery which other children may be allergic to. Many of the staff involved in food handling have undertaken food hygiene training. All of the current children have their health and dietary needs met because the setting works with parents to ensure any allergies are known, then all staff are made aware of what they are and they do not introduce new foods with the babies until parents have confirmed this in writing. Drinks are given to children with their meals and also after exercise to ensure that they are well hydrated.

Those children who are in receipt of early education are making good progress with their physical development. They move with confidence, imagination and in safety when playing in the outdoor area and also within the classroom. They demonstrate control and co-ordination, for example,

when using wheeled toys they are able to scoot on one foot or pedal, they are able to throw a ball to another person with some accuracy and together they are able to manipulate the parachute to move it up and down. They have opportunities to travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment when using apparatus such as the climbing frame inside and during their dance lessons. Children show awareness of the space around them, being able to negotiate around the other children and items of furniture to get to where they want to be. They are encouraged to think about a healthy lifestyle, for example, when they bring packed lunches as a pre-starting school trial, they do not bring sweets or chocolate. Discussions take place about healthy eating and they have recently been voting for their favourite fruit, after a tasting session. Funded children use a range of small and large equipment on a daily basis, for example, a knife to spread their toast, cutlery at lunch, pens and pencils, bats and balls, wheeled toys and gym equipment to practise their large muscle development. They use tools and materials, handle objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control, for example, scissors, knives and rolling pins are used accurately with dough and complex models are made with bricks or junk modelling materials.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and mainly safe environment where all accidents that do occur are minor, well recorded, treated with appropriate first aid if necessary, fully shared with parents and reviewed to see if any common causes can be further reduced. The premises are very secure, with a locked door policy, however, parents are always made to feel welcome and each room is brightly decorated and full of displays of the children's work so that they quickly feel comfortable when they start or transfer from another room. The setting is aware of most potential hazards and is able to put suitable measures in place reduce risks, for example, a coded door prevents access to the stairs, all low glass is safety glass, the identification of unknown visitors is checked before entry and hats and cream are used before children go out in the sun. However, there are some trailing wires in the pre-school room and unprotected sockets in the premises which could put children's safety at risk. Risk assessments are in place to ensure that children use only suitable and safe equipment, with a prompt in place for staff to consider risks when planning all activities.

Outings away from the premises are well planned and assessed, with good measures put in place to keep the children safe, for example, a lower ratio of 1:2 is enforced in all age groups, prior permission is obtained from parents, necessary medication like inhalers are taken with them and a mobile phone also. Older children are learning to protect themselves as the staff always talk to them about how to cross each road safely when out, and all children are involved in regular practices of the emergency evacuation drill. These take place at differing times to ensure that all children and staff participate. Children are further protected because the staff know what procedures to put into place if they have any concerns about children's welfare, including those to be followed if allegations are made against adults in the setting.

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

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem as they engage in a wide range of age-appropriate activities which help them to progress in all areas of development. For example, the babies explore with their hands and feet whilst playing in the ball pit, move around the room to handle various tactile objects, experience natural resources in treasure baskets and show enjoyment

during painting or jelly play. The 'Tweenies' like to change activities frequently, going from listening to a short story to painting, using soft play equipment to gluing, or physical play outside or inside with the tunnels. As children move into the 'Robins' room, they are able to concentrate for longer periods and start to talk about colour, number and shape with the staff, alongside experiences which are familiar to them, for example, the current topic of pets, which is then linked into their art work and singing. At all of these stages the staff plan activities for them, following the 'Birth to three matters' framework and make regular observations on their abilities and progress, which are then collated by their keyworker and shared with parents. The wide variety of activities on offer each session ensures that there is always something of interest to each child and for most of the time they are freely able to move between activities.

Younger children ask questions at times during their play, often in connection with practical issues, such as when they are going home or if they can play with a certain item. They are confident about approaching staff for help, for example, to put on an apron or dressing up clothes. Older children are more inquisitive, wanting to know who visitors are, why they are there and what they do, for example, asking the post lady why she had a van and where parcels go. Children use their initiative all the time, because much of the play and activity is child-led. They are able to develop things as they want, for example, when sponge painting, they put the colours where they want and not just on the rabbit they are painting. All of the children acquire new knowledge and skills through quality interaction with each other and especially with the staff, in all the rooms, who are skilled at providing a balance between leaving the individual child to explore an activity, providing necessary support or playing alongside them to show how to do the activities. For example, the staff in the 'Tweenie' room sit on the floor with the children to encourage them to go into the tents or crawl through the tunnel, but it is the child who finds out for themselves what it feels like to actually crawl through. Children respond well to the challenge provided through this interaction and usually take part in the activities enthusiastically alongside the other children, which also enables them to make positive relationships in all the rooms.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Senior staff working with the funded children have a detailed knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, which they ensure is shared with other members of staff who work in the room. They include all areas of learning within the planning, which is effective in ensuring that children experience a broad and balanced range of activities. This is done through focused adult-led activities in age groups, which provide the basis for structured observations, with the rest of the activities chosen by the children each session, which are used to provide ad hoc observations or 'jottings'. The focussed activities planned include learning intentions, based on the stepping stones, so that all staff know what the children are expected to learn, and provide evaluations which also inform the next stage of planning and allow staff to keep an overview of those elements that need revisiting at a later date. These focussed activities also provide staff with opportunities to introduce new vocabulary and challenge for the more able children.

Staff use a variety of methods during the session, with lots of child-led free choice activities, the focussed activities and also adult supported activities often concentrated in a particular area of the curriculum, for example, mathematical development. Some activities, for example, circle time, take place in a large group, which necessitates the younger children sitting and trying to concentrate for longer periods than they are able, although it is of an appropriate length for the older children as they approach school age. Most activities involve small groups of children either independently accessing resources or taking part alongside an adult and

demonstrate good use of time by the staff. All of the staff act as positive role models for the children showing that their choices and opinions matter. Any incidents are quickly noticed and dealt with consistently so that the children are learning how to manage their behaviour appropriately. The children's assessment records are ongoing, with staff making daily contributions towards them via their observations and evaluations. A variety of children's work is also used to back these up so that clear progress can be seen from known starting points in each area of learning.

The children in receipt of early education are making good progress in all areas of their development, with their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills being particularly strong. They are all confident, enjoy their time in the nursery, are interested in what is going on, and are keen to share their enthusiasm and knowledge with others. They choose what activities they want to do clearly, waiting their turn to be asked and readily accept if told that too many children are already doing something. They are keen to talk to visitors, of which they have many, and are articulate when explaining what they are doing and talking about their homes, families and other experiences. The organisation of the sessions and the premises encourages them towards independence and they manage many self-care tasks with ease, for example, pouring their drinks, independent hand washing or changing their shoes. They listen and respond appropriately to stories, songs and discussions with the staff using conventions such as 'please' and 'thank-you' frequently. Through regular activities they have build up good knowledge of the sounds within words and the most able children are now beginning to use this in their writing. Most four year olds can write their names independently and copy a range of other words written for them by staff, using correctly formed letters. Staff ensure that they have reason to practise their developing writing skills in a variety of realistic situations, including annotating their own work and in role play scenarios.

Children use and recognise number in daily activities, for example, discussing how many objects they have in various situations. They play dominoes and take time to look at how many items they have on each side of the card, and where they might put this on the table, considering several places in the developing game before making their choice. They use number rhymes, often to 10 for the older children, to show their ability in adding or subtracting one from any number, with some of the most able children confident with higher numbers. The younger children concentrate appropriately on lower numbers, for example, counting to six when making ladybirds, but particularly thinking about having the same number each side. Through recent activities around floating and sinking, building various houses and symmetrical drawing using a mirror, children have gained experience of shape, size, pattern and measurement. They now confidently use the associated language, for example, smaller, bigger or heavier and are easily able to name basic shapes.

Children explore and investigate the world around them all the time. They go outside to look at insects or seasonal changes, they grow things for themselves and have daily conversations about the weather. They look at differences, for example, when making cakes, or consider how things happen when using magnets or experiencing the various equipment that visitors bring in. They access a wide range of construction, including during the recent DIY role play and use their imagination to create different models, some very complex. They have good experience of technology, demonstrating good knowledge of how to work the computer independently alongside a range of other items. Children also have many opportunities to explore texture, colour and craft materials in two and three dimensions, much of which is then displayed to share with parents. They take part in music sessions at least weekly, often more frequently, and enjoy singing and using instruments to express their ideas. Imaginative play is always

available to them, through the structured role play scenarios or their use of familiar small world resources and is often a vehicle through which they practise things they have learned elsewhere.

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

The provision is good.

Children have their individual needs met well, including those with additional needs due to language or ability, as the nursery has experience and very good systems in place to identify what each child's needs are, discuss them fully with parents and put appropriate systems in place. For example, babies are fed, changed and sleep according to their individual routine, children only change rooms when they are developmentally ready and after having several trials sessions in the next room and parents are consulted about all changes. When new children start routines are discussed at the settling in visits, and for older children details of their first few days put on the white board for all room staff to easily consult. Children quickly develop a sense of belonging in the nursery, have close liaison with their keyworker to give them appropriate support, for example, many of the staff have trained in baby signing to help communicate with the youngest children. All of the children are encouraged to make choices and decisions for themselves from an early age, about what activities they want to take part in, how much they want to eat and when they want to interact with others or with adults. This helps them develop self-esteem, and respect for others, as they see their choices being accepted and different children making other choices.

Most of the time the children get on with each other within their room, or when in mixed groups outside at times. Any incidents are dealt with consistently by staff, with a similar strategy used across the age range, mainly of distraction and talking about the incident at their level so that children come to understand what reasonable behaviour is. The older, or more able children, are encouraged to be tolerant of those younger than themselves, for example, when playing outside to either try and keep their things away from the youngest children or to share with them, if appropriate. They also know that the younger children eat before them. Children of all ages are aware of their own needs and able to communicate these to staff by a variety of methods. They become gradually more aware of the wider society as they get older, through the range of activities, visitors and experiences they have which provide positive images of diversity. Funded children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

All of the parents receive information about the nursery, including a comprehensive prospectus detailing all policies and procedures before their child attends and the nursery obtains all necessary information from them to enable their wishes to be respected. Daily information is given to parents, in written form for the babies, about their child's day and they can access the planning in each room for further detail. Parents are made aware that they can access their child's file at any time and encouraged to take up the opportunities provided to meet with staff to discuss their child's progress. The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education is good. They receive good quality, detailed information about the education provision. They are updated on their child's progress through termly written reports, which are followed up by parents evenings, although daily information is also given. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child at these exchanges and also given suggestions about how to be involved in their child's learning, for example, by attending a breakfast play session or helping to make resources.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

All of the staff working in the nursery have high regard for the well-being of the children in their care. Most of them are well qualified, fully aware of their roles and responsibilities within the nursery and committed to providing quality care and education. Robust recruitment, vetting, appraisal procedures and ongoing training have resulted in an enthusiastic, reliable staff group who work well together as a team. All required paperwork is kept on the children, accurately maintained and stored so that confidentiality of sensitive information is assured. There are comprehensive policies and procedures in place which work to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievements and their positive contribution to the setting. These are shared with parents as part of the detailed information pack they receive. The premises were purpose built and provide the varying age ranges their own rooms, which are well fitted out with resources appropriate to their ages, for example, the baby room has a screened sleep area, the nappy changing room is situated between the baby and tweenie rooms, and the robins and pre-school each have their own toilets. Thus staff and children do not have to make unnecessary journeys around the premises, and all except the baby room have direct access to the outdoor area. Staff within each room are responsible for organising their own timetable, with very few routines laid down, except meal times and some physical play sessions. At times they share resources to provide wider experiences for the children, but some things are also available in several rooms and can be in use at the same time. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the early education provision is good. The registered person is very actively involved in what happens within the pre-school environment, she is qualified in childcare and takes particular interest in this age group. She keeps updated with developments and the latest trends by attending ongoing training herself and passing on all information gained to the staff, as well as encouraging them to attend all relevant training themselves. She knows all the children well and can thus keep a tight overview of the planning, each child's progress and discusses regularly with the staff how to help them achieve their potential. She takes on board ideas that staff present to her, and they work together to provide a child centred environment. Strong systems are in place to identify strengths and weaknesses, and necessary changes made quickly, with strengths further developed, for example, the comprehensive links with the local community and with parents. She liaises closely with the senior staff, who provide strong internal leadership, and together they constantly strive for improvement of the premises, resources and the knowledge of the staff so that the children have a better quality learning environment.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At their last inspection the provider was asked to improve positive images for children reflecting disability and to improve the recording of medication. There is now a written record maintained, signed by parents, of all medicines given to children together with prior consent and an acknowledgement after administration. This has improved children's health and safety. Additional resources, for example, a wheelchair, provide increased access for children to positive images of disability, which is also linked into several of the topics to enhance their positive contribution in the setting.



## **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 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.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### **WHAT 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):

- minimise hazards to children on the premises; this refers to protecting children from trailing wires and uncovered sockets.

#### **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):

- ensure that activities that take place in large group situations are appropriate for the younger members of the group.

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)