

Alpha Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219921
Inspection date	05 June 2007
Inspector	Kristin Hatherly
Setting Address	Westfield Terrace, Higham Ferrers, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 8BB
Telephone number	07966 512389
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Registered person	Alpha Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

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

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

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

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

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

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are 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?

Alpha Pre-school is a committee run group, which has provided a service for approximately 40 years. It operates from the adult school premises in Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire. Children have access to a main group room and the toilet facilities. There is an outdoor area adjacent to the premises for children's physical play and activities. The setting serves the local community

There are currently 58 children on roll, of these 39 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school is open five mornings and three afternoons a week during school term time. Morning sessions run from 09:00 to 11:30, Monday to Friday; afternoon sessions from 12:30 to 15:00, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Children attend a variety of sessions each week. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

Four part-time staff work with the children. One holds a level three qualification and two have level two qualifications. The pre-school receives support from an advisory teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted by staff who follow clear health and hygiene procedures and ensure they have appropriate medical information such as details of any allergies. However, there is no consent for emergency medical advice or treatment. Children learn about their own personal hygiene as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times such as before snacks and after messy play. This sustains the level of hygiene and helps to prevent the spread of infection. Children's welfare is safeguarded because all staff have up-to-date first aid knowledge in the event of any accidents and appropriate procedures are in place if children are unwell.

Children gain an awareness of the role of healthy eating in developing their good health and growth as they are provided with a variety of nutritious well-balanced snacks. Children have access to fresh drinking water at all times. As a result children are thoroughly hydrated and comfortable.

Children have regular opportunities to obtain fresh air, enjoy physical exercise and learn about the importance of activity in a healthy lifestyle as they play in a secure outside area. There is a paved area for running, riding on bikes and taking part in a variety of activities. There is also a lawned area where children have the opportunity to learn about planting and watch flowers grow. Children move spontaneously with increasing control and co-ordination, developing an awareness of space around them and the close proximity of others.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and well cared for in a large room in a community hall that is secure and suitable for its purpose. They have access to a good range of equipment and resources that promote their development. Children are able to play safely and move freely between activities in a play environment where space is organised and used effectively. They have access to toys, resources and equipment appropriate to their age and development which are regularly checked.

Children's safety is promoted as effective procedures are in place within the setting and proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents. For example, there is a good ratio of staff to children to ensure that children are well supervised at all times and clear entry and exit procedures. Children understand and practise fire drills regularly which are carefully recorded. Children are further kept safe as there are clear procedures for outings. Children are protected and their welfare promoted through regular risk assessments of equipment and premises which includes an annual comprehensive risk assessment. The required procedures and documents are in place to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

They are further safeguarded and their welfare well-promoted because staff have a clear understanding of their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, settled and enjoy coming to the pre-school. Children's self-confidence is promoted by staff who build warm positive relationships with the children and have consistent expectations and clear routines. Staff demonstrate a caring attitude towards the social side of the child and encourage children to share and play together. Children develop their independence as they express their ideas during play using a wide range of resources which capture their interests, for example during imaginary play in home corner, grocery shop and during craft activities. Children begin to understand their own needs, and with adult support, become aware of the needs of others. Children behave well, for example, they take turns and share resources. All of these promote their emotional, physical, social and intellectual development. Staff are able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. There are long, medium and short term plans which are based on the six areas of learning and the 'Birth to three matters' framework is being implemented. This shows that staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and are developing their understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Observations and assessments of children are clearly used to link into the planning to ensure individual children's progress is maintained. Detailed child profiles are kept which include samples of work and photos of children engaged in activities. Staff are friendly and caring and form good relationships with the children which help them to feel secure. However, there is limited use of extending questions to further help the children to progress. Children receive regular encouragement and praise which develops their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, they behave well. Throughout the setting, children's personal social and emotional development is promoted by the staff's caring attitude towards the social side of the child. They encourage children to respect each other and to play co-operatively. Children work well together, sharing and helping each other.

Children concentrate and persist in activities for example two boys completed a difficult puzzle together. They have good relationships with each other, chatting to each other and engaging in play together, a group of children during craft activity helped each other and shared and took turns with materials. Children are confident to speak to and question staff and visitors to the pre-school. They have access to a range of books which they select and read independently and are encouraged by staff who read stories to children throughout the session. However, children are not provided with frequent opportunities to write their name or part of their name and to spontaneously link sounds to letters.

Children are developing their number skills through a variety of construction, games and puzzles although they are not always encouraged to spontaneously count during activities. They enjoy a variety of opportunities to develop their understanding of number, shape, measure and weighing. Children explore and investigate by looking at minibeasts and being involved in planting seeds and comparing textures. They have visitors such as police and firemen to the pre-school which encourages them to develop a sense of community. Children celebrate a variety of festivals to develop their understanding of other cultures and enjoy role play such as Chinese Take Away.

Children have frequent opportunities to develop their physical skills and enjoy moving to music developing rhythms and exploring their feelings through reacting to different types of music. They have a variety of opportunities to explore media and materials and colour during planned activities and during free play. They are encouraged to experiment with colour and use a variety of items to make designs and patterns. Children engage in dressing up in costumes and play independently in role play corners to develop their imaginative play. They respond and express ideas and share feelings during free play and when talking to each other and staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy activities and resources which promote a positive view of the wider world. They celebrate festivals and have access to resources such as dolls, jigsaws and dual language books. This increases their awareness of diversity and their understanding of others. Children learn about their local community through regular walks and visitors to the pre-school. They are valued and respected as individuals and are fully included in the life of the setting. The pre-school understands their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and is pro-active in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken to support children with identified needs. As a result children receive appropriate support.

Staff deal with behaviour consistently that is appropriate to the child's level of understanding and maturity. Children learn to share, take turns and consider others. They receive regular reassurance, praise and encouragement which promotes their confidence and self-esteem. This approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are provided with clear and comprehensive information through notice boards, daily exchanges of information and annual parents' evening. They are also given regular information about the planning to enable them to develop children's interest further at home. However, the complaints policy does not show the correct regulating authority and address and is not clear about parents right to complain to the regulating authority at any time. Parents are encouraged to come into the pre-school on a regular basis. Parents have free access to children's folders and talk to staff which contributes to the consistency of care for the children and ensures that they are able to be actively involved in their children's learning. Parents are encouraged to complete a questionnaire in order that the pre-school can evaluate, monitor and improve their provision. They report positively about the pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the organisation of space and resources so that they can make choices and develop their ideas as they play. Staff support children well during activities and allow them time and space to initiate their play. The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. Resources and equipment are organised to promote children's safety, welfare and development. Staff continue to update their training to improve and develop their work with the children.

Children's care and welfare are safeguarded by clear documentation. However, the register does not include staffs' hours of attendance. Policies and procedures ensure staff are clear about their responsibilities and parents are aware of the pre-school's ethos.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The pre-school has a parent committee and the manager and staff work well together as an effective and committed team. All staff are suitably qualified. There are clear recruitment and induction procedures in place with regular appraisals. Staff are managed well and are encouraged to develop their knowledge and individual skills by attending further training courses. There are regular staff meetings. The pre-school works closely with an advisory teacher. Overall the needs of the children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to ensure fresh drinking water is available to children at all times, there is now water very easily accessible to the children. They were also asked to ensure that newly appointed staff underwent vetting procedures and documentation and discussion shows that recruitment procedures are now very rigorous. The pre-school was also asked to ensure there were operational procedures for the safe conduct of outings and that the child protection procedures included the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. There are clear procedures for outings and the relevant information has been included in the child protection policy.

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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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):

- request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment
- ensure the complaints policy shows the correct regulating authority and address and parents right to complain
- ensure the registration system includes times of attendance of staff.

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 staffs' use of extending questions to further develop children's individual progress
- increase and develop the range of opportunities for children to practise writing their name or part of their name
- develop the use of spontaneous counting and linking sounds to letters during activities.

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