

Amber's Attic Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY271791
Inspection date	18 July 2007
Inspector	Christine Marsh
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Registered person	Amber's Attic Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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?

Amber's Attic Day Care Nursery and Family Advice Centre opened in 2004. It is run by a limited company and is based in a detached two storey commercial unit which has been fully converted into a children's centre. It is situated in a residential area in close proximity to Radcliffe town centre which is a suburb of Bury. A maximum of 111 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 for 51 weeks of the year. There is also a before and after school club and a holiday club. The children have access to five play rooms on two levels and a sensory and light room. There are toilets, a kitchen, laundry facilities, an office and a staff room. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery serves families from the local community and the wider community.

There are currently 111 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 28 children receive funding for early education. Children attend a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 27 members of staff, 23 of whom work directly with the children. Of these, 21 hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. The group receives support from the Bury Childcare and Extended Services and is in the process of gaining the Bury Quality Award.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an attractive, clean environment. Children stay healthy because staff encourage them to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Staff follow an appropriate nappy changing routine and staff rotas for cleaning help to make sure that children's health is protected. Where children have any dietary allergies these are catered for by making sure that all meals, snacks and baking activities in their base rooms, exclude any ingredients that upset them.

Meal times and snack times are sociable occasions where children and staff sit and talk together. The babies and youngest children sit on low chairs at round tables where they smile as they watch each other eating. Older children develop their independence as they serve themselves under the supervision of staff. Nutritious meals are cooked from fresh ingredients on the premises. Children have fresh fruit as snacks. Timings are flexible so that older children can choose when to have their snacks to fit in with their games. Children in the after school club make healthy fruit drinks. During sessions, fresh drinking water is continually available and accessible to children; this makes sure that they stay refreshed.

Children draw, glue and paint. They also develop fine motor skills by using peg boards and cutting paper. Children have opportunities to benefit from fresh air, exercise and restful periods each day. Children who attend the before and after school club walk to and from school escorted by staff. Babies are taken out to the local park in double buggies. Older children go out on trips further away. Children develop gross motor skills by balancing as they tread on shapes on the ground moving from one to the next. They also enjoy playing football and riding bikes in the outdoor area. A sports specialist visits regularly and does sports activities with the children in small groups. Children enjoy these activities that contribute towards a healthy lifestyle.

Children's needs for rest are catered for by the provision of cots for babies and younger children and mattresses with individual bedding for older toddlers. Babies follow their individual routine for sleep. Toddlers have a sleep after lunch, but any children who do not need a sleep are engaged in quiet activities while others sleep. In this way children's needs for active and quiet periods are successfully met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are safe and secure. Children benefit from staff creating a welcoming environment with information displayed for parents and a wooden horse for children to play on in the reception area. Parents sign in at reception then staff register children when they arrive in their base room. A key pad system on internal doors helps to keep children safe within the building. However, the key pad on one door is broken currently which means children in some rooms are less well protected. Internal gates are kept shut and bolted which protects children from stairs and keeps them within specific areas.

An extensive range of toys and equipment, that are in very good condition, are available to support children in their learning and play. Toys are out ready for children to play with at the beginning of sessions. Children, including the babies, are able to select other equipment to support their activities. Materials are labelled and most are stored at a height that is accessible for children. Children are developing independence through their choices.

Staff undertake risk assessments on toys and activities noting hazards and taking appropriate action. Outdoor risk assessments are undertaken before children go outside. Children who attend the holiday club go out on visits each week to different places, such as ten pin bowling and to the cinema. This helps to extend children's experiences by providing enjoyable activities in the company of their peers. When they go on a trip to the local park, staff check the area, and remind children of the rules, before they go off to play. On trips further away, children wear wrist straps with nursery phone numbers on. Good staff ratios ensure children are very well supervised during these activities.

Staff are well trained in emergency evacuation procedures which are undertaken with children on a regular basis. Staff are aware that some of these drills are going to take place in advance, but others are unannounced, so that staff are used to helping children to evacuate the building quickly to keep them safe. Staff are trained in child protection and have a good knowledge of appropriate procedures. This promotes children's welfare and safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, settled and confident in the setting. They engage in a range of activities most of which are self selected. Children concentrate and are well motivated to play and learn. Staff have a good understanding of young children's needs. Children enjoy exploring malleable materials such as jelly with objects set inside it. They have access to a range of materials, such as ribbons and shells. In the sensory room moving lights and sounds create a calming environment where children can relax.

Parents are consulted to find out about their children's current interests at home. Staff then plan activities based on children's interests and suited to their developmental needs. Staff are knowledgeable about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use this in their observations of children's learning. Evidence of children's paintings and photographs of them playing, are stored in folders that are shared with parents and carers. This helps parents to value their children's progress, whilst children's self-esteem is increased through their carers recognising their achievements.

The children in the before and after school club enjoy their sessions where they choose activities playing happily with their friends concentrating on building high towers and models with construction materials, and playing traditional board games. They sometimes do their homework in these sessions. Stickers and certificates are awarded when they choose to do this, as parents comment that children are often too tired to do homework later at home. During the holiday sessions they visit exhibitions. This reinforces their leisure interests and stimulates activities when they get back to the club. For example, a visit is planned to an exhibition based on characters in a popular television programme. Through these activities children enjoy a breadth of experiences that extend their learning and play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals and this is recorded in their individual records. Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and of the ways in which children learn. Activities are suited to children's needs and cover the six areas of learning. Children are observed on a regular basis and this information is recorded in their development record. Planning includes long, medium and short term plans. However currently, short term plans do not include what children are expected to learn. Activities are not currently evaluated to suggest the next steps in children's learning. Children regularly work with staff on a focus activity, but there are also lots of opportunities for free play where children choose activities. This helps their concentration and motivation as they follow their own interests.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is developed through helping children understand their feelings and those of others, for example, through stories. Singing games incorporate actions that require two children to cooperate with one another. For example, singing 'Row, row, row your boat' and, 'Round and round the garden', require children to hold hands, and trace their finger round the palm of the other child's hand as they sing. In these ways children learn to enjoy positive physical contact with other children.

Singing sessions and story times are regular activities that help children to increase their understanding of spoken language. Word banks and flash cards are used to help children realise that print carries meaning. Staff emphasise the initial letter of each child's name realising that this is something very personal and meaningful to them. Children choose to make marks from a variety of writing materials. Opportunities for mark making are available in the mark making area and also within role play situations. In these ways children write freely expressing their thoughts and ideas. Head phones are used by the children to listen to stories to supplement the group stories read in circle time. This gives children the chance to listen to favourite stories several times so they can relive their enjoyment.

Children use the number line and show a good understanding of numbers up to ten. Some children understand higher numbers and can predict the number before and after particular numbers accurately. Counting songs and discussions during daily activities, such as threading laces, further support their concepts of number. Colour mixing is undertaken through practical activities such as spinning paint in containers and looking at the colours that are made. Children name colours as they make patterns with pegs in peg boards. They learn to recognise similarities and differences through picture lotto and matching games.

Children enjoy creative activities such as painting and playing in the home corner. Children wear animal masks as they play with toy animals on a mat with grass areas and enclosures that they place the animals in, as they act out their games. Children sing 'I'm a monkey, I'm a monkey' as they wear monkey masks and join in the floor play. They use the computer regularly which helps to consolidate their learning. Children learn about different religions and festivals are used as opportunities for children to try different foods, such as having a Chinese buffet at Chinese New Year. An Easter egg hunt and an Easter bonnet competition were enjoyable activities that formed part of the Easter celebrations. In these ways children learn about different elements of the wider world.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop high self esteem due to the caring environment of the setting. This is shown by the positive images of different groups of people. There are lots of photographs of children

and adults engaging in everyday life. These include people with disabilities and posters that provide information, for example on sign language and systems for supporting children with additional needs. Staff work in partnership with parents successfully seeking advice and information from other agencies where this is necessary. Inviting other professionals into the setting, and working with them, is a strength of the provision. Several children have additional needs, such as learning difficulties, disabilities and behavioural difficulties. These needs are well catered for enabling children to access the environment and benefit fully from their experiences.

Additional support is provided to support the inclusion of individual children and a range of behaviour management strategies are tried and incorporated into the routines. These strategies are proving effective and beneficial for all children. For example, there is a rainbow chart that encourages good behaviour. Children are divided into three groups and the competitive element is between the groups rather than on an individual basis. This is helping children to cooperate and see the impact of their behaviour on others. Similar reward systems are used in the pre-school room and the out of school club. This provides continuity for those children who come back to attend the club when they leave nursery to go to school.

A doll is used to discuss feelings to help children develop empathy with others, and a toy dog is taken home to share children's home experiences with other children back at the nursery. Resources, such as dolls, books and jigsaws, provide positive images of other people and represent different cultural groups. Children dress up in clothes representative of other countries and hear stories related to religious festivals. Children are learning to use sign language in some of their group singing sessions. This helps to develop an inclusive atmosphere whilst supporting a multi-sensory approach to learning. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The before and after school club caters for children of a wide age range which helps them to relate to other children of different ages. Older children support younger ones and they play together gaining self-esteem and developing firm friendships. Children's views are consulted, for example, questionnaires after the holiday club visits help staff decide which trips were most enjoyed by the children. This information is used in future planning.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Gradual admission helps children settle effectively and settling in procedures are well thought through. Initial visits are for short periods. This helps children to adjust to the change. Similarly, when children change rooms, for example, from the baby room to the toddler room, they have a transition period to help them to adapt. In the pre-school room, the theme over the summer is 'moving to school'. This helps children to discuss the changes ahead, including any concerns they may have. Relationships between staff and parents are very good. Parents state that staff are very friendly and professional and they feel able to discuss any issues about their child and their progress openly and honestly. Several parents have had longer term connections with the provision as two of their children have attended the nursery. This helps to ensure relationships are positive and supportive for the children who attend.

Parents and carers of funded children are informed in detail about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the six areas of learning at the parents evenings which are held twice a year. They receive regular newsletters which inform them of the topics children are learning about and invite them to send in any items to support the topic. For example, for the current topic on holidays, parents have been asked to find an item of clothing which their child can bring in to pack in a suitcase. Currently however, although parents and carers are regularly informed

about the topics their children are learning, this is not directly linked to the six areas of learning. Parents are invited to look at their child's progress folder whenever they like and these folders make reference to children's progress in relation to the stepping stones backed up with evidence of their work and photographs of them playing. In these ways parents are informed about their children's activities and are beginning to become more familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parents feel they are well informed about their children's achievements and progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management within the setting is good. Thorough policies and procedures are readily available for parents to keep them informed about the setting and their children's care. Policies are reviewed annually to take account of any changes needed. Records provide details of each child's needs including consent forms and contacts. Documentation required by the National Standards is appropriately in place. This promotes the safety and well-being of the children.

Management and staff are committed to providing a quality service for the children who attend. The ratios of staff to children are appropriately met. The setting has a senior manager, a manager and a deputy, so that there is always someone senior present with overall responsibility. This is important as staff work part time and the setting is open throughout the year. Staff attend training to update and increase their knowledge. Several are undertaking further professional qualifications currently. This commitment helps to promote children's welfare and their ability to enjoy and achieve within the setting.

Routines are organised so that the day runs smoothly, but flexibly enough to allow children time to complete their play and activities. Space and time are organised to ensure children benefit from their experiences. For example, the outdoor area and the sensory room are timetabled to make sure all children have opportunities to benefit from these experiences. During sessions in their base rooms, children freely access resources choosing their activities and selecting materials to develop their play as it evolves. Staff observe the children and join in to provide support when this is needed.

Children benefit from the good leadership of the provision. Children are cared for in a positive and supportive environment which promotes their development. The inclusive ethos ensures all children are valued appropriately and able to develop fully in their learning. Children are supported by well trained staff who are suitably qualified and vetted.

The curriculum is evaluated to see if any aspects need modifying in future teaching. This is especially important as some children attend for several years from being young babies until they go to school. Staff work together well as a team to promote children's health, safety, emotional well-being, and learning.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to conduct a risk assessment on the premises and to consider ways of minimising risks when children use the stairs. As a result, a new handrail has been fitted at an appropriate height for children's use. This provides support which helps them to use the stairs safely. In addition exposed cables which were hanging from a plug socket

on the wall have been cased in making them inaccessible to the children. The provider was also asked to ensure that fire drills are carried out when new staff are appointed. Fire drills are now undertaken on a regular basis in addition to each time a new member of staff is appointed. These measures help to make sure that children are kept safe.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted. This related to National Standard 2: Organisation, National Standard 6: Safety and National Standard: 10 Special Needs. An action was raised that required the provider to register the attendance of children and staff on a daily basis. Ofsted was satisfied that by taking these steps the provider met the National Standards and remained qualified for registration at the time the investigations were closed.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, that 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

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- ensure the broken keypad on one of the internal doors is repaired.

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):

- develop short term planning systems to include the desired learning intentions and the children's next steps.

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