

Alphabet House

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY235589
Inspection date	12 July 2007
Inspector	Sally Wride
Setting Address	St. Richards Church Hall, Mayfair, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 1JJ
Telephone number	01386 423207
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Registered person	Helen Nightingale and Tracey Godbold
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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Alphabet House opened in 2002. It operates from two rooms in St. Richards Church Hall in Mayfair, within the Fairfield district of Evesham. The setting serves the local area and has strong links with local schools. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Monthly forest school sessions are also offered.

A maximum of 36 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 65 children from two years six months to four years old on roll. This includes 47 funded children. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and has procedures in place to support children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 08:30 until 15:00. Children are able to attend for a full day or for morning or afternoon sessions only. A lunch club is also available.

There are three full-time and eight part-time members of staff who work with the children. Over half of the staff have early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualification level

2 or 3. There are three members of staff currently working towards a recognised or higher level early years qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Local Authority. The group has completed a Quality Assurance Silver Award through the Worcestershire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from a care environment that is clean and well maintained. All equipment and resources are regularly cleaned to ensure that they remain hygienic for the children to use. There are excellent procedures in place if children become unwell whilst in attendance at the setting and a well stocked first aid box is readily accessible. Children are well protected from the sun. They wear sun hats and sun cream when they play outdoors in the warmer weather. They dress in their outdoor coats and wellington boots to play outdoors and visit the off-site forest school in the poorer weather. Children independently access clean and well-maintained toilet facilities, which promotes their self-care skills. They use good quality hand washing resources and have a clear understanding that they wash their hands to remove the germs and keep them healthy and well. Children benefit from daily opportunities to enjoy the fresh air in the outdoor play area. They use an excellent range of toys and equipment that promote their physical development well.

Children have excellent opportunities to learn about the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. Daily conversations about healthy and less healthy foods, in addition to the importance of taking regular exercise develop their understanding. Staff use props such as puppets, to develop imaginative and fun stories as a means to developing children's knowledge of the importance of regularly cleaning their teeth and sleeping well at night to ensure that they are well rested and to allow their bodies to grow. Children are provided with fresh drinking water after engaging in physical activities and are informed by staff that this is to put the water back into their bodies to keep them well. Children have an excellent understanding of the reasons for wearing sun cream. They explain that this is 'to keep us safe from the sun'.

Children are well nourished during their time at the setting and enjoy eating meals and snacks provided by their parents. This ensures that their individual dietary needs and preferences are well catered for. Staff have a clear understanding of these needs as a result of working in direct partnership with parents. Information is provided to parents about the sorts of foods that are appropriate to provide to their children for lunch and snack times and focus on healthier options. Children are well hydrated because fresh drinks are regularly offered and fresh drinking water is readily available. Children have the opportunity to learn about the benefits of eating a healthy diet through planned activities and events. They engage in healthy living topics where they develop an understanding of the nutritional benefits of foods and those which are more or less healthy. Informative and colourful displays of different food groups are popular with children, who often refer to them as they sit and eat their meals and snacks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit greatly from a care environment that is safe, secure and very well-maintained. They have the use of a large base room and a smaller room which are both used throughout the course of the day for play and learning activities. Attractive displays of their artwork create

an inviting feel. Excellent use of room dividers provide different areas of play for children that focus on different areas of learning, for example, arts and crafts and role play. Children's independence is fostered as they make decisions about what they would like to play with from the extensive range of toys that is available. Clever use of mobile storage units create different areas of play for children, as well as providing children with the opportunity to self-select and make decisions about how they would like to spend their time. All toys and equipment are very well-maintained and are regularly cleaned to ensure that they remain hygienic for the children to use.

Detailed written risk assessments are in place and are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they identify all perceived risks to children. As the setting is used by other users when the group is not operating, staff are vigilant in their daily visual checks to ensure that the environment is safe and free from hazards. The premises are secure and children are well supervised at all times. There are excellent procedures for the safe arrival and collection of children, including information regarding named persons who are able to collect the child. Photographs of these people are held in children's individual records to ensure that they are easily recognised by staff. The outdoor area is checked for its safety prior to its use and is secured with fencing. The children use a well-maintained grassed area for their play and also a paved area, which they use when riding around on their wheeled toys.

Children's welfare is safeguarded through comprehensive child protection policies and procedures. All staff have an excellent understanding of the known indicators of child abuse and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) referral procedures. The child protection policy is openly shared with parents which ensures that they are well informed of the action that would be taken in the event of a concern. Children have frequent opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe. They regularly practise the fire evacuation procedures to ensure that they are aware of the action that they should take in the event of a fire. Children learn about road safety as they use the 'stop, look and listen' technique when crossing the road as they go out for short walks around the local community or when walking to their off-site forest school location. Through forest school activities children learn agreed rules and acceptable behaviours that help to keep them safe during these fun activities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are confident and enjoy their time at the setting. Their independence is developed as they make decisions about what they would like to play with from the wide range of resources that are available. They are keen and eager to take part in all activities and events and readily involve their peers in their play. Close and trusting relationships have been developed between the children and staff and children benefit from their involvement and interaction in their play. They ask the children questions to encourage their thinking and extend their learning. The children are involved in a broad range of activities and events, which support their development and overall learning. All play opportunities and activities come from what the children want to do and where the day takes them. Staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use the framework to plan and provide activities for the younger children attending the setting. This ensures that children are working at a level best suited to meet their individual needs.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Both managers and staff have an expert knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn and progress. The learning programme and activities provided are planned to provide a consistently inspiring, broad and balanced range of activities which challenge all of the children very well across the six areas of learning, according to their individual needs and progress. Planning documents are well detailed, informative and cover all areas of learning. They clearly identify learning objectives for individual children. Staff use their skills to effectively support children's learning both in adult-led and child-initiated activities. An effective key worker system ensures that staff know the children very well, using this knowledge to help support and challenge children in activities and as they play. A clear picture of children's learning and progress is identified through the effective use of on-going written observations and assessment records that are linked to the stepping stones, and which are used to plan experiences that support children take the next step in their learning. In addition, children's achievements are also recorded and illustrated with photographs and examples of their work. These records are readily available to parents throughout the year and are more formally shared at meetings held each term. Children's interest is well sustained during group activities and a calm environment is created, with children given time and opportunity to complete tasks in an unhurried way. Children enjoy excellent relationships with staff who spend time talking and listening to them and involving themselves in the children's play. Children are busy and occupied in their play, which has a positive effect on their behaviour. Staff provide excellent levels of support to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who speak more than one language. This ensures that all children are fully included and well supported in their learning and progress.

Children show a strong sense of belonging and develop good self-esteem. They enjoy looking at photographs of themselves and proudly point to their completed art work on display. Children are interested, keen to learn and actively and purposefully engaged in activities. They play co-operatively together, show concern for others, and are able to take turns and share tasks such as tidying up at the end of the session. They respond well to clear instructions given to them by staff and sit very well for circle time activities, absorbed and involved in conversations.

Children interact very well with both the staff and their peers. They eagerly engage in conversation whilst they play and also in group activities. Children often ask the staff questions, such as 'why is this sand so dry' and staff respond and develop children's understanding in their replies. Children listen, with keen interest, to stories read by enthusiastic staff who read the stories in a way that engages and interests the children. They actively join in with familiar rhymes and songs and act out the associated actions. During circle time activities, children have the opportunity to recognise their full names. They are asked to name the initial letters of their names and sound them out well. Many of the older children also recognise the names of their peers. Children are openly and warmly praised which develops their self-esteem very well.

Children show a keen interest in numbers and counting and most children confidently use and understand numbers up to 10 and above. They enjoy numerous number songs, games and puzzles and continuously use mathematical language in their everyday play. They explore the concept of volume as they pour sand and water from one container to another.

Children make very good progress in their physical development. They access the outdoor area each day and benefit from exploring the changing seasons throughout the year. They pedal their bikes and trikes up and down a paved area, manoeuvring well whilst successfully avoiding objects and their peers. They successfully climb up the steps of the slide and have fun sliding down. They balance as they walk in circles around a large tyre and explore the concept of

heavier and lighter as they rock on seesaw rockers with their friends. They use a range of equipment such as hula hoops and balls to develop new and existing skills, such as throwing and catching. They enjoy group parachute games, play in the water tray or sit quietly to chat to their peers in the fresh air. The outdoor learning environment provides excellent opportunities for spontaneous learning, for example, the care of other living things. Children enjoy occasional forest school visits where they have the opportunity to take risks within a controlled environment. They are directly supervised by staff as they explore outdoor cooking activities and experience the natural environment in a fun and enjoyable way.

Children enjoy constructing with a range of materials. They create tracks for their trains and roadways for their cars. They also build structures using different sized building blocks. They use a range of resources to explore different joining methods such as staplers, tape and glue. Children shown a keen interest in Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment such as laptops, calculators and table top computers. They openly share their past and present experiences with the staff and their peers at circle time, for example, holidays that they have enjoyed. They have excellent opportunities to develop an appreciation for the local environment as they go on short walks to visit local shops and restaurants and explore the changing seasons as they do so. They regularly engage in activities and planned events that develop their understanding of different cultures. They develop an understanding of environmentally good practice as they recycle their fruit and vegetable peelings after their snack each day. They experiment and investigate as they create mud pies in the garden and explore ice cubes as they begin to melt.

Children have excellent opportunities to independently initiate their own creative learning. They have easy access to a wide range of art and craft equipment, which they freely use for their own purpose. They also enjoy structured art and craft activities when they create models and pictures to link with the current theme. The well resourced role play area is popular with children. They use their imaginations very well as they dress up and recreate familiar roles. They mimic staff's actions as they warm their bodies up for a dance session. They move in time to music, creating their own dance moves and respond well to actions, rhymes and songs. Children explore through their senses as they use jelly, cornflour, peat and sawdust for sensory play activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are valued and fully included in the life of the setting. They participate in a range of activities and events that promote their understanding of others within the group and the wider outside community. They regularly participate in activities that help to develop their understanding of different cultures and festivals through a range of practical activities. The displays and equipment provided create a colourful, enriched environment where children can see an extensive range of images that promote positive images of diversity. There are excellent procedures in place to identify and support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Strong partnerships between staff, parents and external agencies effectively promote children's well-being and help each child develop their full potential. Well detailed individual education plans are produced to identify short-term targets for children. These are regularly reviewed in partnership with parents in order to assess the progress of the child. As a result, children make significant progress in their learning and development.

Children are enthusiastic to play and learn and are busy and well occupied during their time at the setting. This has a positive impact on their behaviour, which is exemplary. They are well

settled and happy and eagerly participate in play with both the staff and their peers. They are very well supported by staff as they play and work together during games, developing an understanding of agreed rules, fairness and sharing. Children benefit from the calm and supportive approach of staff, who take time to develop children's understanding of desirable behaviour through careful explanation and consistency. Warm praise and encouragement develops children's self-esteem. They are delighted to receive a sticker to stick on their sticker card to take home and share with their parents. The sticker card details the reason that the children receive the sticker and ensures that parents are able to celebrate their success from home. Children display good manners and thank staff as they provide them with their drink, snack or lunch. They make choices and decisions about their care and play activities which develops their self-confidence, self-esteem and helps them develop a sense of belonging. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Excellent, open and honest relationships between parents and staff ensure that everyone involved in children's care are well informed of children's changing needs. Daily exchanges of information occur at the start and end of each day and staff are always available and eager to talk to parents. Parents are provided with a well written prospectus and have easy access to the setting's operational plan and range of policies and procedures. This ensures that they are well informed about how the care of their children is organised.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents receive excellent information about the setting and how the planning for nursery education is organised. Planned activities and events are displayed on a notice board along with other useful information about child care and development. They receive written information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the six areas of learning and have easy access to more detailed information that is prominently displayed for their attention. They receive regular newsletters and benefit from daily discussions with friendly and approachable staff about the care and progress of their child. Parent induction evenings are held three times a year and provide the opportunity for parents to develop an understanding of the way the setting is organised, to view the range of policies and procedures and discuss how their child will be helped to progress in their learning. A flexible induction programme ensures that parents are welcome to stay with their children as they settle into their new care and learning environment. Upon the child's placement, staff and parents work together to complete a questionnaire of children's starting points. This information is then used to plan for individual children's needs to ensure that they are offered activities and learning opportunities suitable for their age and stage of learning and development. Observation and assessment records are readily available for parents to view at any time and are more formally shared at meetings that are held throughout the year between parents and staff. Parents are always welcome to come in and play with their children or share any particular skills that they may have. Parent's views and wishes are sought through ongoing discussion and through the use of a suggestions box. An in-house book library encourages both children and parents to read stories together at home. Children are encouraged to share items from home with their peers. They bring in their favourite books and photographs to share and objects that link into a theme. This encourages parents to support children's learning from home. Parents are invited to attend the Christmas Nativity play and carol concert, in addition to a summer sports day. A graduation event is also held at the end of each school year. Children dress up in their graduation gown and cap and are awarded certificates of achievement as their parents watch. They receive a well presented folder of their work and enjoy a fun party after the graduation to celebrate their success.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care is enhanced due to the exceptional organisation of the setting. They benefit from a committed, enthusiastic and highly motivated staff team, who work together very well and support children to the highest level in their play and learning. They actively engage in children's play, asking them questions to encourage their thinking and implementing new and enjoyable ideas. Space and resources are very well-organised and children benefit from this. They have easy access to their playthings and can freely and easily move between the available play space. Robust recruitment, vetting and induction procedures are in place, ensuring that children are cared for by suitable and well informed members of staff. Students on placement at the setting receive excellent support and direction from staff, who act as positive role models. As a result, they are busy and occupied throughout the course of the day and enjoy their time at the setting.

All of the required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place, carefully stored, very well-organised and maintained. They are frequently reviewed and are only accessed by staff to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The range of policies and procedures work very well in practice and are frequently reviewed to ensure that they continue to reflect current good practice and professional advice. They are fully understood by staff and are openly shared with parents to ensure that they are aware of the organisation of the setting. Children's observation and assessment records are well detailed and are continuously updated to ensure that a true picture of children's progress is maintained.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The leadership of the setting is inspirational and well-organised. The leaders are passionate about their work and act as positive role models to both children and staff. They are actively involved in working with children and alongside staff and carefully monitor their progress. Yearly staff appraisals are undertaken, but are offered more frequently for new members of the team. This ensures that their progress is carefully monitored and also identifies training needs. All staff have excellent opportunities to undertake both short courses and more formal studies. This ensures that staff are able to personally develop and also ensures that children are cared for by well informed and highly trained practitioners. Well detailed evaluation systems are in place for monitoring the strengths of the setting and areas for further improvement. The delivery of planned activities and events are evaluated to ensure that children's needs are recognised and planned for. In addition, careful monitoring of children's individual progress through observations and assessments ensures that their needs are carefully considered when activities are being planned. All staff are involved in the evaluations of both the setting's progress and planned activities and events. This ensures that they are able to influence ideas for planned improvements. Staff work together as a strong and committed team. They hold staff meetings throughout the year and discuss the organisation of the setting and children's progress on a more informal basis each day. All children are supported appropriately to achieve their full potential. Staff know their starting points and work in partnership with parents and carers to support their progress. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider agreed to ensure that all children have access to a healthy diet. Since then, themed activities and events have been undertaken with the children to develop their understanding of the benefits of eating a healthy diet. Posters and wall displays have been created to show the nutritional benefits of different types of food and are often

used as a discussion point with children as they eat their meals and snacks. Information has been provided to parents about the sorts of foods that are appropriate to provide to their children for lunch and snack times and focus on healthier options. As a result, children now enjoy healthy meals and snacks during their time at the setting.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to develop the system of evaluation. Since then, detailed plans have been developed in line with a self-evaluation form system to ensure that the setting clearly recognise areas of particular strength and those for further improvement. All staff are involved in this process and as a result, both managers and staff are proactive in continually striving to make improvements to the setting. Evaluations of planned activities are rigorously carried out and ensure that children's learning needs are recognised and planned for. Detailed observations and assessments of individual children's progress also ensure that the learning activities provided are tailored to meet their individual needs, which helps them to learn at a rate best suited to their needs. The provider also agreed to develop the use of resources to ensure that children see numerals in sequence. Children now see numerals displayed on wall posters and in their toys each day. They use equipment such as jigsaws to sequence numbers in the correct order.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

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