

Alphabet Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221576
Inspection date	07 September 2007
Inspector	Denise May Smith
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Registered person	Christina Boon
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Alphabet Day Nursery opened in 1993. It operates from brick-built premises on the edge of Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. The nursery has three main playrooms and serves the local area.

A maximum of 54 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 60 children under five years on roll. Of these, 17 children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs 14 members of staff. Of these, 12 hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and welfare is promoted because staff ensure that children are cared for in clean and hygienic premises. They follow a systematic rota for cleaning the toys and resources to make sure they remain suitable to use. Staff understand and follow the very good nappy changing procedures that prevent cross-infection. Staff talk to the children as their nappies are changed and during potty training, helping to make this a positive experience.

Staff ensure they gather a good amount of information regarding children's health care and individual needs. Lists of children's allergies and their food needs are kept in the kitchen and are also displayed in their rooms as reminders to staff; ensuring that children's health needs are met. Information is shared with parents about exclusion and the care of sick children to help keep them well informed. The majority of the staff team has received training in first aid and well stocked first aid boxes are easily available in each room. This enables staff to respond to children appropriately should an accident occur.

Children begin to learn about healthy eating as the staff talk to them about different foods and encourage them to try food that is good for them. Young children eat according to their individual needs. Children in each room are provided with breakfast, if their parents wish, and children confidently ask for more toast if they are hungry. Snacks are varied and promote healthy eating. For example, children are offered a selection of fruit and raw vegetables daily. A cook is employed to cook fresh meals on site. Menus are rotated and contain a range of fresh food; vegetarian options are offered at each mealtime and special diets are catered for, as required, ensuring that all children's needs are well met.

All children have opportunities to play outside, each day, in the fresh air. They enjoy playing on the slides and the small climbing frames and confidently manoeuvre wheeled vehicles around the outside area. Children go on outings to the park where they can use equipment which offers more able children challenge, as they climb on the static equipment. Staff support children as they learn to skip with ropes and play with the hoops. In poor weather children put on their coats and wellington boots and go outside with umbrellas to splash in the puddles, ensuring they have fun and fresh air in all weathers. Indoors, children enjoy dancing with ribbons, using the parachute and join in activities, such as music and movement, which all promote physical exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a bright, well decorated, warm nursery where they have a good amount of quality, accessible and age-appropriate play equipment to use. Children's work is very well presented in colourful displays throughout the nursery. Each playroom is well resourced and supports children in their play and development. Children enjoy use of a safe garden area where there is a hard surface and artificial grass for all-year-round play.

There are good risk assessments and checklists in place to ensure that children are kept safe. However, these are not always effective in identifying potential risks. For example, the dangling window blind cord in the baby sleep room, the accessibility of the washing detergents in the toddler bathroom and the unfixed fireguard in the reception area of the pre-school room. These

pose a danger to children. It is positive that the proprietor is prepared to take immediate action to rectify these issues.

Fire prevention is given appropriate consideration. Smoke alarms, extinguishers and a fire blanket are available and are all regularly checked to ensure that they work effectively. Children often take part in evacuation practises and there are notices in each room about the fire evacuation procedures. These measures help to keep children safe in the event of a fire.

Children begin to learn to take responsibility for their own safety as they are encouraged to tidy up their playrooms with the staff. Staff ask them to push chairs back under tables to ensure that others do not fall over them.

Staff have a good understanding of the child protection procedures so children are well protected. Procedures are explained to new staff to ensure that all staff are able to put the procedures into practice competently.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs and home routines are known and their welfare is promoted well throughout the nursery. All children have a key adult to whom they relate, however, all staff members are effective in supporting all of the children as they work very well together as a team.

Staff plan the children's activities well, in all three rooms, depending on the children's age and level of understanding. Babies are well cared for. Staff responsible for their care know these young children very well. They ensure continuity of care for them throughout their day, therefore, building children's self-confidence and relationship skills. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is understood and recent changes in the planning ensure these young children experience many fun, first-hand experiences, such as exploring the texture of jelly, warm bubbly water and painting with their hands and feet. Holistic play is used in balance allowing children to explore a range of materials both made and natural.

Children in the toddler room are offered a broad range of stimulating activities, such as adding paint to cooked pasta and squishing this through their fingers as they watch the colours change. Children dig for 'treasure' in the sand tray and help themselves to toys as they choose from the many self-accessible storage units. Children play with cardboard boxes deciding they are going to be robots; staff extend this play by offering to cut out holes for their eyes so they can see where they are going.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a suitable knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and of how young children learn. The learning environment is well planned across the six areas of learning, but mainly focuses on the indoors. The outside area, although used for physical play and some aspects of the other areas of learning, is not sufficiently planned so that children can experience an extension of the same rich activities outside as they do indoors.

Children's assessments are linked to the stepping stones. However, children's development is not effectively monitored or tracked. Systems are in place to gain information about children's attainments, but as these are not well-organised it makes it difficult to plan for the children's

next steps of learning and to use them to influence the short term plans. Staff make good use of their time and the resources to support children's learning. They question and challenge the more able children appropriately which helps them to make progress.

Children are given many opportunities to be creative in their art and craft work. Staff ensure that their creations are well displayed, including their free paintings. Children enjoy printing with sections of fruit and undertake observational drawing of whole fruit displays. Children play in the Italian restaurant where they pretend to read the menus and take orders on the notepads provided.

Children's opportunities to explore and investigate objects are sound, such as children absorbed as they watch oil and water mills work. They are developing an understanding of numbers, shape and size during all activities. Simple calculating concepts, such as one more and one less, are introduced through books and familiar rhymes. At snack time, staff discuss how many seeds, pips and stones are inside the fruit, this leads onto an activity about what seeds need to grow. Children are then encouraged to go outside and plant the seeds and pips. This develops children's understanding and learning in a hands on, practical way, making it interesting and meaningful for children.

Children communicate well with adults and with each other. They enjoy books, reading together and listening to each other telling stories, using the pictures as prompts. Some children are able to recognise some letter sounds and link these to words. Children's early writing skills are effectively promoted as they practise these skills in a variety of everyday situations. Children are encouraged to self-label their work and are proud of their achievements.

Overall, children make good progress in all areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children across the nursery receive a warm welcome as they arrive at the setting and they enjoy affectionate relationships with staff and each other. They benefit from using a wide range of toys and activities that meet their individual needs. Children are able to select and make choices throughout the nursery because they can self-select these resources and staff support daily routines effectively such as at snack time and lunch time.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are offered appropriate support by the staff team who ensure their needs are identified and met. All children take part in many activities that help them develop a positive view of their local community and the wider world. Resources and activities support children's understanding of difference and diversity and enable all children to be included in the daily routine of the nursery.

Children play harmoniously together and show kindness and consideration towards each other. For example, as they share resources in the role play corner and help each other to tidy up the toys ready for lunch. Children are beginning to learn right from wrong because staff set clear, consistent boundaries which underpin the good behaviour observed. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children have their individual needs met because staff and parents work well together and information is gathered from parents to ensure appropriate care if offered. Staff liaise with parents and develop relationships with them, which helps to ensure children are well cared for.

Settling in procedures are flexible to reflect the needs of the child. Parents are provided with a variety of information, including the nurseries policies and procedures, so that they are well informed about the care provided for their children.

The partnership with the parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. Newsletters are sent home to inform parents of the current topics and plans are displayed so that they are aware of the activities their children are taking part in. Parents receive good information about the Foundation Stage, the early learning goals and the stepping stones children take in order to achieve them. Parents' consultations are offered to discuss children's progress and their needs, and parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's assessments of learning.

The nursery staff share ideas with parents about how they can support their children at home, such as providing them with the words to songs being sung in the nursery. The book sharing scheme is popular with the parents as the children enjoy borrowing nursery books to share at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The management team ensure that the good overall organisation within the day-to-day running of the nursery has a positive impact on the children's care and welfare. The setting has robust recruitment procedures which ensure children are protected from unsuitable people. The good organisation of the staff ensures that usually there is more than the minimum required number of staff on duty to supervise the children. Staff are well inducted into their roles and are supported by senior staff in the early stages of their employment. The vast majority of staff are qualified in child care and attend workshops and relevant courses in order to keep up-to-date with current childcare practice. The regular staff appraisals which are held, identify future training needs and help plan for staff development. The use of space within the nursery is good, but older children are not always able to access the outdoor play space as they choose, limiting this aspect of children's choice.

Documentation is up-to-date, organised well and kept in a confidential, appropriate manner. Policies and procedures are well written and are available to parents for their information. They are reviewed and updated regularly ensuring that they continue to be reflective of the practice at the setting.

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

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory.

The management team within the setting are keen to support the staff and to continually improve the quality of the care and education. They readily take advice from outside agencies and work hard to make changes to the practice where necessary. The staff team work well together and support each other in the day-to-day tasks. The proprietor and manager both work within the nursery which helps them to monitor the quality of the care and education provided. There are systems in place to help with this task, but they are not always effective in highlighting issues. For example, the safety issues highlighted for attention and the weaknesses in the planning and assessment systems.

The management team take into account information gathered from the questionnaires completed by the children's parents and they use this information to inform their ongoing practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the quality and standards of care were judged as inadequate. The proprietor agreed to improve the operational plan to ensure space, time and resources are used effectively to meet the needs of the two-to-three years olds and to ensure that the needs of all children are met in whole group situations. The two-to-three year old room has been the main focus of many of the improvements recently made within the nursery. The room has been reorganised and equipped with many storage units which allow the children to make independent choices from the good range of toys available. Planning has been developed across the nursery, but still requires more attention in order to be totally effective in meeting the older children's needs. Books are accessible throughout the nursery promoting children's interests in books and stories. The registration system now effectively shows who is on the premises at all times and the proprietor has introduced a system of staff appraisals which highlight staff training and development. Overall, many improvements have been made since the last inspection which has improved the outcomes for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

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

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

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- promote safety within the setting. This relates to the dangling window blind cord in the baby sleep room, the accessibility of the washing detergents in the toddler room and the unfixed fireguard in the reception area of the pre-school room.

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 the planning to show how the outdoor area can be used for free-flow play and used as an extension of the indoors in promoting the six areas of learning
- ensure that the observations of children's achievements are used effectively to monitor their progress towards the early learning goals and identify their next steps of learning; use these next steps to inform the short term planning.

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