

Ashby Castle Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	223187
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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?

Ashby Castle Day Nursery opened in 1996. The nursery is one of two privately owned establishments and is located in the centre of Ashby-De-La-Zouch in Leicestershire. It operates from a purpose-built single storey building with an annex to the rear and includes seven rooms and associated facilities. All children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery serves children from the local and wider areas and children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently 146 children from six weeks to five years on roll and this includes 65 children who receive funding for early years education. The setting currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery opens for 50 weeks of the year and sessions are from 07:30 until 18:00.

There are a total of 31 full and part-time staff currently working with the children. Of these 17 hold an appropriate childcare qualification and almost all the remaining staff are working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from a

teacher/mentor and the local early years services. The nursery has Investors in People status and has just achieved an integrated Investors in Children quality award from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is very well promoted through the excellent opportunities they have for regular play outside in the fresh air where they are dressed accordingly so they can enjoy all weathers. An exciting range of different activities such as games with streamers or the parachute encourage the development of their physical skills and co-ordination. There is an extensive choice of sit and ride toys and children enjoy balancing on the bowls or playing different ball games. They also take regular walks into the local community, for example to the soft play facility at the leisure centre or the shops and babies confidently explore their space as they practise their crawling and early walking skills. All procedures for maintaining a clean and healthy environment are rigorously carried out throughout the day by staff who are fully aware of the importance of this in protecting children's health. For example, the soft shoe policy is routinely maintained for all visitors and staff, with easy access to shoe covers in the entrance area and in the rooms. Children themselves are learning the importance of protecting their health through the daily routine such as hand washing and frequent discussion, poster displays made by the children and related activities serve to continually remind them. All baby routines such as nappy changing are very well maintained with all children having their individual boxes and linen bags to prevent cross-infection. Staff routinely offer face and hand cleaning items for younger children who enthusiastically join in their 'germs are not for sharing' song. Children's health is well promoted in the event of an accident or illness as nearly all staff hold current first aid certificates and these are routinely updated. All medication and accident recording is thoroughly maintained and information about infection control and diseases is shared effectively with parents through notice board displays and '10 top tips' leaflets.

Children's health is very well promoted through a balanced and nutritious diet and a wide range of home cooked food which are all nutritionally checked. Children enjoy lots of fresh fruit and healthy options such as raisins and rice cakes. They examine the differences in foods and explore unusual tastes through activities where they make smoothies, prepare vegetables for soup-making or sample sweet and sour chicken and noodles for Chinese New Year. Staff talk regularly to the children about foods that are good for them and activities around this and other related topics such as dental care continue to re-enforce its importance. All baby routines are carefully discussed and recorded and staff ensure they follow parents' wishes, with all baby foods appropriately stored and prepared according to their individual needs. All food preparation is well carried out and all staff have attended food hygiene training and follow rigorous procedures for food distribution. Meal times are very sociable occasions where staff sit with the children and encourage them to relax and enjoy their food. Staff know that some children have dietary requirements and talk carefully with parents and record these so that there are fully respected.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety at this nursery is a priority and all staff are vigilant in safeguarding children in all areas and at all times. Consequently, all hazards are thoroughly addressed. This is because staff are always alert and operate a very efficient risk assessment system with each room taking

responsibility for their own daily and weekly checks which are rigorously monitored by the Health and Safety officer. A full opening up and closing down check is undertaken and staff are excellent at clearing away resources and setting up before the next session. This means that children are learning the importance of tidying items away and storing them safely so they do not pose a tripping hazard. The nursery building is fully secure and there are appropriate safety checks for any visitors. Children take part in regular fire drills and all staff are fully aware of their responsibilities as regards safe evacuation. Throughout the day staff are constantly talking with children so they develop their own sense of personal safety such as asking them what they need to remember before they descend the stairs. Many varied activities appropriately link into safety and there are lots of children's displays to re-enforce and remind. The nursery have very rigorous safety procedures when children are taken out on trips and both they and their staff are instantly recognizable in their florescent tabards. The condition of all resources and equipment is superb and fully supported by efficient monitoring as they are put away. They are carefully selected to ensure they are suitable and age-appropriate and the balance of adult supervision and children's independence is accurately gauged by knowledgeable staff. Children's choices are very well supported by easily accessible storage of items in low units which means they can independently access additional items to support their play and learning. Children handle equipment such as scissors very skilfully because staff routinely remind them to do so and explain the potential risks. For example, a child carefully uses the coloured pins when making a design while confidently advising the adult which way to hold it so they will not get hurt.

Children are fully safeguarded as all staff are very aware of their roles and responsibilities as regards child protection which forms an essential part of induction and on-going training. There is a comprehensive policy covering all required elements and this is shared appropriately with all parents at registration and through additional information displayed throughout the nursery. Staff fully understand the importance of recording existing injuries.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children benefit immensely from being part of this vibrant nursery. They thrive in its bright and attractive environment where each room is set out with exciting areas of opportunity and challenge for them to explore with an extensive range of resources to support their development. All staff respond exceptionally well to the children, providing lots of eye contact and engagement with the youngest children as they explore the unusual contents of the treasure baskets or express themselves as they enjoy paint and cornflour play or try and look for different animal figures in the shaving foam. Others create different buildings out of boxes and then paint them, showing pride in their achievements and explaining the different sizes. All children have a wide range of sensory experiences and enjoy both listening and making music with a variety of different instruments. They all enjoy regular outdoor play sessions which include both physical and other activities like chalking and sand play. The day is very well planned to ensure all areas of development are covered but it is also flexible and encourages children's individual choices well, allowing them to direct their own play which staff support very well, skilfully adapting these to match children's abilities and interests. Staff are always alert to the children and clearly enjoy sharing activities with them and extending these through various prompts and questions. All children respond very well to the routines and confidently engage in their play choices playing happily with friends or on their own. Babies' individual needs are extremely well met by attentive and caring staff and this means they settle easily and soon develop the confidence to explore their surroundings and the different resources set out for them on the floor. All

children's progress is very well monitored by staff who are constantly alert, taking regular observations, either planned or spontaneous, which are all carefully discussed and evaluated in each room's weekly working lunch when staff incorporate these into the planning for their next steps. This means that staff are able to plan around children as individuals and extend and support as appropriate. All children have their own development folder to record their progress through the nursery which contains a wealth of photos, comments and items of children's work for families to treasure in the years to come.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. All children are making exceptional progress towards the early learning goals. All those who work with the older children have a wonderful rapport with them and know exactly how to engage their interest and extend their natural curiosity and enthusiasm. The nursery day includes lots of small group and individual discussion times which help children to engage, share their ideas and extend their learning. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and have created a very attractive and vibrant learning environment which is superbly supported by an excellent range of resources covering all areas of learning. There is a clear routine to the day and children regularly come together in their small groups to talk about the plan for the day and its focus activities, confidently making their own suggestions and incorporating their ideas into the session. This mind-mapping is an ideal opportunity for children to input their own ideas into the sessions which are regularly revisited throughout the day to re-enforce what was said and review what has happened.

There is an excellent balance of independent, free flow play, small group time and focused activities. Children are able to choose from a range of different focused activities where staff always explain that they may change their choices after a time, but only if they want to. Children concentrate extremely well at their chosen activity and fully engage with enthusiasm in these, moving confidently between the different areas as they, for example, make marks and drawings on their clip boards or search out the number fans to help them count. All staff are very skilled at utilising the opportunities to engage and extend young children's understanding and know exactly when to challenge and support. All children's progress is competently evaluated through both spontaneous and planned observations and staff use key group sessions very well to spend individual time with their children. These are discussed carefully at the weekly team meeting where staff share ideas and agree on a consistent approach for each child, identifying action required for assisting or extending. The use of the 'spider graph' shows staff the links which emanate from the chosen activity and there are many laminated sheets in the different areas to clarify what the learning initiatives and outcomes are which staff can refer to if necessary. Observations and assessments are clearly recorded and very effectively linked to the stepping stones and future planning which ensures that there are always appropriate challenges for the more able children.

Children have a wide range of opportunities to express themselves and explore creatively as they paint and design their own collages or explore the sounds of different musical instruments. Children really enjoy the role-play areas where they enthusiastically throw themselves into their assumed roles which mirror what they see the adults do. They learn about the wonders of nature as they make their own wormery and watch fascinated as the caterpillars turn into butterflies and capture these moments in their own drawings, words and photos as they assemble their special books. Children are very confident talkers as staff regularly encourage them to talk about themselves and their thoughts and experiences which they share at circle time. They are very confident at conducting conversations and listen very well to the staff who in turn are exceptionally responsive to them. Children show a real love of books as they listen with great

interest to favourite stories and even use ideas from this to plan their own play. For example, the story about the 'Birthday Treat' was so popular with the children that they decided with staff to create their own in the role play corner and design a jungle picnic.

Children have many opportunities to make marks in many different ways and mirror the staff as they carry round their own clip boards to make spontaneous drawings or copy letters and numbers. Each child has their own drawing book where they make pictures and practise their early writing skills and they generally all recognise their own name as they self-register or search for their name label at snack time. There is a wealth of resources to support all areas of learning and the management readily responds to additional requirements to support a specific topic. Children are very interested in watching how things change and work. They are enchanted by the light as it is reflected through the glass and then start talking about rainbows. They handle a range of tools such as scissors and knives with confidence and competently take turns at the computer. Staff cleverly link topics so children can take an activity from start to the completed product. For example, having been to the shop to buy fruit, children cut the different fruit into pieces and use the blender to make smoothies, looking at the colours and how they change when blended and then discuss what the finished drink tastes like. Children are using numbers with confidence throughout the daily routine and join with enthusiasm in the number songs such as 'five current buns' as they count how many are left on the current bun glove. Such props really gain children's attention and bring the activity alive. The use of the number fan is a very adaptable resource which children use readily and staff regularly refer to as children begin to problem solve themselves and understand calculation. Children enjoy sitting at the table with various writing implements and rulers to make different shapes and use a range of positional language as they change places under the parachute. Children have a wide range of construction toys to build and make shapes with and confidently count the places for lunch and then set the table.

Children are very sociable and confident and their attention spans are very good which means they concentrate well on their chosen tasks and listen carefully as other children and staff talk. They are learning about good manners as they take turns on the computer or wait and say thank you before eating their dinner and help in a range of small tasks around the nursery which develops their self-esteem. Children at the nursery have wonderful opportunities to visit the community daily and experience what real life is all about, such as visiting the library to choose their books. For example, they go to the local café to watch the food being prepared and have a drink and a tea-cake, and on their return decide to set up their own café where they thoroughly enjoy passing the time with friends and preparing the food. Children's behaviour is excellent and they all play an active role in the daily programme as staff always seek their ideas and incorporate these in the sessions. Children are very confident talkers with staff and companions and are accomplished at knowing how to dress themselves and what is needed for the different types of weather. They make choices about their play and are able to decide whether they want to continue with their present activity or change to something different. Children are also learning to understand and respect other members of the community, for example, as they go to the monument for Remembrance Day or visit the local old people's home and take items they have made to share. Throughout their time here all children are growing in confidence and social skills and enthusiastically engage in activities of their choice. They have excellent relationships with the staff, work harmoniously with the friends and enjoy being purposefully involved in the daily programme. Throughout this they are superbly well supported by aware and enthusiastic staff who genuinely want to share with them the fun and excitement of learning different things and help support them in reaching their full potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are really valued as individuals at this nursery where staff know them very well and give them the optimum of opportunities to find and develop their own potentials. All information is shared carefully at registration so that staff really understand children's individual preferences and the key worker system is highly effective in ensuring continuous information exchange with parents throughout their child's time at the nursery. Detailed information is taken about babies individual routines and these are carefully followed to help maintain a consistent and sensitive approach, with staff knowing instinctively how to respond to their changing moods. Staff really value children's uniqueness and maximise the opportunities for them to talk about events from home and family. Throughout the nursery all children have their own family albums of familiar people, places and events which they can easily access from the hooks or boxes as the younger ones seek reassurance or the older ones want to share some important news. Children are free to choose from an extensive selection of resources which are laid out for easy access or stored in low-level containers. Babies happily crawl around and explore the many different items set out for them while older children regularly get together for the mind-mapping discussions which help them explore their own ideas which are carefully listened to, recorded and then used and reflected on in the planning of the activity.

Children enjoy a selection of different visitors to the nursery who share with them their own roles such as the fire and police services or the environmental artist to inspire their creativity. Staff ensure that the nursery's close location to many community facilities such as the library, shops and leisure centre are used frequently to give children many real and different experiences which they can talk about and link to their current topics. Children enjoy learning about different cultures and their exciting celebrations as they make Chinese dragons or learn how to make Christingles from the local vicar. Children also enjoy many opportunities to go on trips to such places as Twycross zoo and Dudley Castle. These special occasions are captured by children in pictures and photos and collected together in memorable folders. Staff have excellent links with the early years services who visit regularly to advise and support which means a range of professionals share their expertise to fully support all children. Staff are aware that some children have special needs and, as with all children, they liaise carefully with parents to find the best ways to engage and encourage them. The manager is the Senco has had training and experience in supporting children. Staff understand how to ensure all children are involved appropriately and also regularly use lots of visual tools such as the visual timetable which helps all children to feel included.

Children's behaviour is very good and all staff focus on providing a happy and positive environment where children flourish. They provide excellent role models and always find time to talk and respond to children and offer constant praise and encouragement. Children's choices are respected and their involvement in activity planning makes them engage enthusiastically and feel valued. Staff in the baby room smile warmly and spontaneously engage with the children which helps them feel secure and content and regularly offer cuddles and soothing attention. There are clear routines which the children soon learn well due to daily discussion with staff about what their programme offers which means they can look forward to the next sessions with enthusiasm. The recent introduction of the 'pink book' with its appropriate stamps and stickers to record each child's day is an ideal way of sharing achievements between home and nursery. It also allows children to discuss their behaviour in an open way and fully understand the benefits of their efforts. Staff regularly meet to discuss their children which means that any issues regarding behaviour are quickly identified and addressed as staff work effectively together. All children are happily engaged, receptive and excited to explore new ideas and

opportunities. They also have excellent relationships with the staff and their companions which means they are very comfortable in this environment and therefore benefit fully from all the opportunities they are offered. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is central to the work of staff at this nursery as they fully respect the essential role parents play in children's learning and development. Therefore staff strive from the outset to establish very positive relations with parents and keep them fully informed about the nursery and their children's time there. All information is shared effectively at registration through the parent handbook and attractive welcome pack and which includes lots of relevant information, for example, a typical baby room routine with photos of what they do in the day and useful advice on baby talk. Parents are encouraged to settle their child in which ever way is best for them both. All staff know the children in their room very well and the effective use of the key worker means there is always someone who knows each child in an extra special way. There is a constant flow of information to parents through the very informative displays on the notice boards, through regular newsletters and the personal sharing of the day through discussion and the daily report. For example, the use of the 'you know your child best' posters encourage parents to share any special events with staff so they can be appropriately recognised. Staff, however, always prioritise the importance of personal discussion with parents and always spend as much time as possible doing so. Parents are fully involved in their children's time at the nursery and invited to share in trips, fund-raising and social events. They are often asked to find items at home to support focus activities and to share their own experiences and roles with the children. Parents are invited to regular parents' evenings where they can discuss their child's progress and plans for their next steps which helps them continue this at home. Parents comments and suggestions are regularly sought in many ways such as questionnaires which helps support an open relationship as staff really value parents' input and actively want to work with them in the best interests of the children.

Partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. All parents receive detailed information to prepare them for this stage of development and explain the way the curriculum is structured to support their play and learning. Comprehensive information is given about the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals along with useful information about the learning opportunities from a variety of everyday events. There are many displays around about to show how children are learning with lots of informative photographs and links to the stepping stones. Regular information sheets and newsletters inform parents of the focus activities and offer suggestions of useful books and resources which parents can use at home. Parents receive a range of '10 Top Tips' leaflets which make suggestions for a variety of topics such as developing children's mathematical awareness and also have simple activity packs to use at home. This creates an excellent link between nursery and home and along with the pink books provides many opportunities for parents to be fully involved in their child's learning. The weekly plan is displayed and the daily use of the mind map and all the children's associated learning links often interests parents and invites them to look. Parents are invited to contribute items to support the daily programme, for example, the children seek an animal from home to bring to their jungle picnic. These regular links foster a cohesive approach to children's learning. Staff meet regularly with parents to discuss their child's progress where any next steps are identified and clearly explained so they can effectively work together to support these. Their development folders are always available to look at and any assessment records would be willingly shared. The parents are given a report at the end of the year which summarises their children's achievements and parents are invited to make comments on this. Parents are also invited to attend certain training sessions such as behaviour management or an information evening about how to encourage reading at home. All these initiatives give parents a clear

insight into children's learning and development which all serves to cement an excellent partnership between parents and staff so they work effectively together to promote the best possible outcomes for the children.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children at this nursery benefit immensely from the exceptionally well-organised routine and the stimulating and engaging programme of activities. The owner and manager are very active within the nursery supporting and inspiring staff and are passionate in their commitment to providing a quality setting for young children. There is a very good team of enthusiastic and experienced staff who form a very happy and harmonious group whose positive approach succeeds in inspiring and supporting all children as individuals. There are clear procedures to ensure that no unchecked adults have unsupervised access to the children and there are rigorous recruitment and selection procedures to ensure the suitability of those working with the children. These are very successful in choosing a range of staff with different skills and experiences who are genuinely interested in the children they care for and are very responsive to them. All induction is carefully carried out to ensure that not only are staff suitable as regards experience and required checks but also have the right motivation and dedication to fit into the team. New staff are well supported as they settle in and receive comprehensive information about the nursery and helpful mentoring. Well-managed appraisal systems which involve self-evaluation and colleague monitoring ensuring their on-going suitability and there are many opportunities to develop staff's knowledge and practice through relevant training. There are regular weekly room meetings to share information between staff and discuss future planning for each child and the full monthly team meeting is very effectively managed to raise any issues and to cascade training and knowledge so that all staff are fully informed.

All documentation for the efficient and safe management of the nursery is in place and regularly reviewed to ensure it is up-to-date. All staff are fully aware of the daily records needed and carry these out very well, storing them effectively in each room. Staff are aware of the need to respect confidentiality but are eager for parents to have access to their own children's development files and assessments so they can share in their successes. The management team fully understands their responsibility to keep Ofsted informed of any significant events, such as notifiable diseases. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery is outstanding. All staff involved in the Foundation Stage have very good understanding of how children learn and work very well together to ensure children have many different and exciting experiences from which they learn and develop. They display a total commitment to helping all children achieve their potentials and support and include all appropriately, providing an excellent balance between independent learning and staff support. The owner and manager play a very active role within the nursery and keep themselves very well informed of all the latest childcare developments. This means they are always there to monitor practice and to support and inspire their staff. Consequently all staff have a clear understating of the new initiatives and are already building this into their planning and assessment methods. The staff are very well supported by a passionate and committed curriculum leader who works closely with the management to ensure that the curriculum is exciting and appropriately challenges and supports each child. Staff are constantly evaluating their programme to ensure this is effective for the children and are very clearly able to demonstrate how they use their assessments to plan for children's next steps. The nursery has established good links with the local schools who send teachers to visit and invite the

nursery children to attend events such as Christmas concerts. The nursery has regular visits from the early years services and has established a central place for itself within the local community offering a fully inclusive service. All staff work together to provide a very good quality provision where every child is valued and where they in turn thrive in this highly inspiring environment.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there was one recommendation set relating to parental consent for emergency advice. All parents are required to give their consent for emergency action and the nursery has reviewed its policy in light of this recommendation and has amended it accordingly.

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