

# Alexandra Under Threes

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY278148
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jane Pamela Berry
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<b>Registered person</b>	Bolton LEA
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Childcare
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Alexandra Under Threes operates from the purpose built Children's Centre on Blackledge Street in Bolton. The under three's provision is housed in a self-contained unit, with three rooms for children and its own outdoor play area.

The day care centre provides care for up to 41 children under three years, and there are 61 children currently on roll. The centre supports children with disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language. When children reach the age of three years they attend the nearby Alexandra Nursery School, to which the provision is connected. Day care is provided between 08.00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. Children may attend for a variety of sessions.

The centre benefits from advisory teaching staff from the sister nursery and health professionals on site.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Meals and snacks are well balanced, healthy and nutritious. The children's dietary needs are well catered for and are reviewed on a regular basis. Meal times are social occasions where groups of children and staff all sit together. However, the younger babies are not always supported in feeding themselves, as staff spoon feed them and they are not supported to handle drinking cups for themselves. This inhibits their small motor development and personal independence. Staff advise babies are not encouraged to have lidded beakers as these are not good for children's teeth. The children benefit from the 'tooth teddy' helping them to learn how to brush their teeth daily.

Menus are displayed at the nursery, providing good continuity of care. The children thoroughly enjoy making and eating their very own fruit salad. Children are well hydrated as they are able to quench their thirst throughout the day as drinks are readily available. Babies are taken out into the outdoor area, which allows them to benefit from fresh air and plenty of exercise. All children have regular opportunities to engage in physical play. Whilst playing outdoors they have fun as they run around, play ball games and ride wheeled toys. Such opportunities allow children to develop their physical skills and gain control of their bodies.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in an interesting and stimulating environment where they have ample space to move around freely and play in comfort. Children's independent artwork and posters are attractively displayed, around the environment which gives them a sense of achievement. Quality furniture and suitable resources allow children to rest and to play in comfort. They often access, for themselves, resources which enable them to develop their imaginative, creative and intellectual skills. Play materials are safe and are in excellent condition.

Children are mostly safe as they are protected through daily checklists, although risk assessments which cover activities and outdoors are incomplete. This includes potential risks in the outdoor environment not being suitably controlled, such as the worn grass embankment. The premises are secure which prevents unknown persons entering and there are effective procedures for the safe collection of children. Fire practises are conducted regularly, helping children to understand how to keep themselves safe in the event of an emergency situation. Children are protected because staff identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and are aware of the procedures to be followed to safeguard children's welfare. It was discussed with the provider that the safeguarding policy does not include a clear process for allegations made against staff, although it does state that the Local Safeguarding Children's Board's procedures are followed.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

The 'Birth to three matters' framework is implemented very well. Children benefit from activities that are planned with learning outcomes and these are linked to aspects of children's development in line with the framework. The needs of the more and the less able children are considered in their personal learning plans. At the time of the inspection some of the children who are new to the setting, are upset, apprehensive and are unfamiliar with the environment.

These children are in a period of transition and are finding it difficult to separate from their main carers. The arrangements for introducing children to the setting are not robust enough.

Some children wander excitedly around the garden under the supervision of their key adults. They enjoy hiding in the tent and digging in the sandpit. They have opportunities to make marks as they paint and make pictures with chalk. The children are developing fine motor skills as they roll, pat and press tools into play dough and enjoy using colour and various forms of art and craft. This fosters the children's free expression and natural curiosity as learners.

Babies freely explore and investigate their environment. Staff spend time sitting with them on the floor interacting with them as they play. A range of toys are attractively laid out on the carpet or on low-level tables encouraging children to make independent choices. They access resources, such as puppets and cause and effect toys. They develop their senses through exploring household utensils and feeling silk scarves, from a basket of natural materials. A child delights in the sensory bubble tube, she watches it intently as it changes colour. The children work together at circle time in their key group and babies benefit from 'tummy time' with familiar carers.

Assessments are used consistently to plan activities to support the next stages of children's learning. Consequently, this contributes to children being successful. Toddlers move rhythmically, shaking their bottom, to Caribbean music. They enjoy action songs and rhymes and some children can do the actions to the song 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. They like to dress up in hats and a child proudly shows off her favourite 'dressing up' shoes in the quiet room.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children learn from being in a setting with bilingual staff. As a result, they learn new sounds and are supported in developing both their home language and English. They enjoy activities that raise their awareness of other lifestyles, such as celebrating different festivals like, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, (EID), and Chinese New Year. Children access a range of resources that reflect equality, this allows children to appreciate that we live in a diverse society.

Children learn to share the toys in the sand tray and to take turns at circle time. The setting demonstrates a positive attitude towards the care of children with disabilities, understanding that they should be cared for in an inclusive environment. The children behave in an age appropriate manner and as they learn to share equipment conflict sometimes arises. Staff effectively manage children's behaviour using strategies that are appropriate to their age and development. For example, saying to a child, 'I like it when you play with the horses like this'. This reinforces the good behaviour and is extremely helpful to children, ensuring their efforts and achievements are valued. Children receive lots of verbal praise, resulting in their self-esteem being well promoted.

All children benefit from the close partnership that exists between parents and staff. Notice boards, informal discussions at handover times and written reports help to keep parents up to date with their children's activities and events. Parents seek out their child's key adult and staff interact very well, each taking time to listen and respond to parents' queries. Parents are encouraged to telephone to seek information on how their child is doing during the settling in period or at other times. A written complaints procedure is in place and a complaints log is maintained in line with the legislation.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are protected as staff are appointed through effective and secure employment procedures. An appropriate induction system promotes a sound basis for staff. Key worker systems are in place to support young children and parents are clear who to approach regarding the care of their children. Staff are experienced, qualified and work well to support others across the team.

The deployment of children is not fully meeting the requirements for children under two years to be cared for in groups of less than 12 children for significant parts of the day. This is a breach of a regulation. Staffing levels are organised to ensure that children mostly receive good levels of support, throughout the day, although there are exceptions. This is because the areas are extensive and staff's attention is diverted to other children in the group. The routines, whilst offering all children the freedom to explore, sometimes allow children too much autonomy, resulting in some of the new children being overwhelmed. The children are mostly cared for in one group, with babies having access to the cosy room with key staff. This brings with it many challenges, as the children are together for most parts of the day. They are not separated according to their ages, which is in keeping with the philosophy of the nursery.

Space is very limited at meal times. The children sit in family groups eating their meals during these relatively short periods of time. All policies and documentation relating to the continuity of care for children are in place and are well organised. 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 improve the behaviour management policy and the implementation of a key worker system. This has now been satisfactorily addressed providing an improved strategy for dealing with conflict and better information for parents and carers.

## **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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

### 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):

- develop risk assessments for all potential hazards and make the outdoor area safer for the younger less able children
- appropriately assist babies to experiment in feeding and drinking for themselves
- review the organisation of admissions and adjust the daily routines to take account of children's differing needs.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)