

Abacus Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218399
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Inspector	Janice Rizvi
Setting Address	Park Cottage, 162 High Street, Chasetown, Walsall, WS7 3XG
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Registered person	Audrey Goodsir
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Abacus Day Nursery opened in 1993 and is run by a partnership. It operates from a detached house and mobile unit in Chasetown, Staffordshire. The nursery serves the surrounding areas.

There are currently 78 children from birth to four years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.15 to 18.00 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 11 staff who work with the children, of whom 10, have an early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The nursery makes excellent provision to promote the good health of children. Children are protected from the risk of infection because adults act as meticulous role models to the children on hygiene practice. Adults use imaginative methods to remind children of the importance of personal hygiene and the sequence they need to follow. Good use is made of photographs of children washing and drying their hands. These are displayed over the sinks to prompt children. They have great fun pointing themselves out as they undertake the task, they know they need to wash the germs off or they get sick. Staff have also composed a lively washing hands song as children go into the bathroom. This helps children to develop a very good understanding of how to keep healthy. Older children carefully explain to younger ones that they must use soap to wash their hands and show them how to use the dispenser. Babies receive excellent care as individual needs are met. Babies have regular nappy changing and associated records ensure that parents are well informed. There are comprehensive procedures in place to ensure children's physical care needs are met such as toileting, weaning and sleep routines to maintain consistency between home and nursery.

There are efficient procedures in place to care for children who are ill. If children become ill in the setting, adults ensure they are made comfortable and cared for sensitively while waiting to be collected by parents. Adults are trained in administering first aid and all permissions and records are in place to ensure children's health and safety.

Children enjoy healthy meals and snacks such as fresh fruit, toast and sugar free cereals that are freshly prepared on the premises. The nursery supports a healthy eating policy and has a very good understanding of food nutrition. The menus are fully displayed on the notice board. Children are encouraged to be independent. More able children concentrate on pouring their drinks of milk and water and child monitors help to distribute plates and cups. Snack and meal times are sociable occasions where children can sit and talk to each other and eat at their own pace. Adults use this time to help children to think and learn about the origins of their food. Drinks are offered regularly to ensure children's fluid levels are maintained.

All children regularly enjoy outdoor activities. They develop control of their bodies through games, such as balancing on beams; they negotiate obstacle courses and use their hand and eye coordination through bats and balls. They experience rhythm through musical action rhymes and musical instruments. Very young children are also given excellent opportunities to enjoy fresh air and exercise twice daily when weather permits. Learning activities are taken outside and children experience a different concept of the space around them. Older children use large stubby chinks to write on the paving and roll balls and hoops. They use the wildlife garden to explore and hunt for bugs. Children are developing an awareness of the effects of healthy exercise on their bodies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children receive a very warm welcome from adults that ensures the environment is interesting and relaxing for them when they arrive. The resources and equipment are of good quality, clean, safe and appropriate for the age of children using them, are displayed in an exciting and interesting way throughout the nursery.

Overall children are secure. Indoor and outdoor space is extremely well organised which enables children to explore and take risks while being appropriately supervised. However, the exterior doors to the outside play areas do not have permanent fixings to secure them when open. In addition, the vinyl flooring in the baby room has begun to buckle; these hazards are potential health and safety risks to children. Adults are appropriately deployed, ensuring children experience consistent levels of supervision and support.

Visual and written risk assessments relating to indoors and outdoors are undertaken daily. Activities are risk assessed and adjustments are made where necessary. Access to the premises is monitored by adults who take extra care to protect children's safety by ensuring that all persons collecting children are authorised to do so. A visitors' book is used to establish a record of who is on the premises at any one time. Children develop a strong sense of responsibility from an early age as they are involved in the risk assessments and are encouraged to report potential dangers such as trip hazards to staff. They enjoy visits from the fire brigade who bring the fire engine to the nursery. This is linked to the planning and the theme of 'people who help us' as children begin to learn about keeping safe and fire safety.

Children are protected from harm. Adults have a thorough understanding of child protection issues and of their responsibilities in this area. There is a clear child protection statement based on national and local child protection procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enter with excitement and confidence demonstrating they are very familiar with the routine and eager to learn. New children are reassured and supported by staff. Once they become familiar with the setting they become interested in the wide range of activities provided to support their learning. The environment is thoughtfully prepared and set out by staff to provide a wide range of exciting learning activities for children of all ages. Most children fully participate in all the activities and particularly enjoy registration time, answering to their name, choosing their animal and making sounds to develop their early learning of phonics. They sit attentively as adults inform children of the activities for the day. They are encouraged to recall their experiences and share their feelings and emotions. Children's self-confidence is increased by having a sense of belonging. Staff know the children well which is reinforced through key worker groups, where children have the opportunity to contribute their ideas, be aware of their own needs and show concern for others. They listen to adult instruction and behave appropriately. Very young children develop very well because adults understand how children learn and develop. They know how to engage their interest, ensuring that activities are attractive, developmentally appropriate and challenging. Young children's interest is stimulated through family photographs, these are laminated and made into individual children's own 'family book' that provides an excellent link between home and nursery. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is used consistently for planning their activities and assessing their progress. All children's independence and confidence is promoted through everyday routines.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress through the stepping stones towards all areas of the early learning goals because most adults have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. More knowledgeable staff and key workers have a clear aim of what skills they are trying to help children learn and what children are expected to gain from their activities. Planning is completed to cover the six areas of learning. Staff expect

children to take part in all the activities, but on some occasions are unaware of the need to monitor their participation or plan ways to involve more timid three-year-olds. Daily plans do not routinely identify inclusion of children who need extra help or support, or show how activities will be differentiated. Overall children enjoy a good range of resources and activities. Initial and ongoing assessments are dated and clearly show how children are progressing. Each child has their own individual file with dated samples of their work and assessments. Staff record children's achievements and use these to identify the next steps in their learning. These are available on request to share with parents.

More able children's concentration spans are very good. Some will persist at an activity until completed. They play well together, being able to take turns and knowing what is right from wrong. For example, when another child upsets them they do not retaliate but wait for staff to manage the situation. Children enjoy talking about their activities with staff and each other. Older children negotiate with staff and are confident in expressing their own ideas. Children confidently choose from the activities available and initiate their own play, but also ask for additional resources if they have not been put out. Their independence is encouraged as they help at tidy-up-time, wash up their own cups after their snack and act as monitors to help lay the tables for snack and lunch.

Children are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication, speaking, listening, reading and writing. Less able children enjoy making marks in a variety of ways and regularly use paint. More able children write their names whenever they complete a piece of art work and have good access to a range of writing materials. Younger children use large 'stubby' chinks to make patterns and shapes on the paving stones during outside play. They have freedom to use their imagination and communicate their ideas and thinking during pretend play in the home corner.

Children have opportunities to use numbers and counting as they play. They begin to develop the language of shape, space and measures and early calculating skills. For example, during nursery rhymes they hold up their fingers learning one to five and begin to learn to 'take away' when they try to work out 'how many are left'. They count in everyday routines as they line up for the bathroom. They demonstrate their knowledge, when asked to search for big and small circles around the room. They have great fun re-enacting number rhymes, pretending to be frogs jumping in and out of the pool, they count to four and know they need one more to make five.

Children are encouraged to find out about and explore the world around them, to make models, use technology and begin to understand about their own past. Children freely sit at the computer and have developed good mouse control as they follow educational programmes. They concentrate carefully and use the cursor to choose objects to 'click' drop and drag. They go on many outings in their locality and visit the library, the pet shop and the park. In the warmer weather they have picnics on the large grassed area nearby and visit the duck pond to feed the ducks.

Children have many chances to use tools for a purpose. They enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills both when using large and small apparatus, tools and equipment. They are developing a positive attitude towards physical exercise and a growing awareness of how it can help them to stay healthy. Children are very active and really enjoy balancing through obstacle courses and show an awareness of space when moving their bodies to music.

Children use a widening range of paint, materials and tools to help them to express their creativity. They enjoy watching the dry sand trickle through their fingers saying it looks like snow, outside, they use the wet sand saying they are digging holes and making big and little sand castles. They make very good use of the easels for painting and learn how paint changes colour when mixed together during free play. They use their imagination to construct and build as they sit together cooperatively building a wall. They use facial and body movements to express themselves and play out different situations in role play. Children have free access to musical instruments and enjoy all creative activities. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children arrive happy and are keen to embark on their play. The carefully prepared environment and well-organised routine helps children to settle quickly and forge strong relationships with staff. As a result, children have a clear understanding of the boundaries in which they are cared for, helping them to learn right from wrong. In addition, adults deploy themselves appropriately throughout the session to facilitate a free play environment. As a result, children's behaviour is good. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are valued as individuals, treated with respect and encouraged to show kindness and respect to one another. Children learn about differences in lifestyle, culture, belief, tradition and the wider world through the celebration of festivals from around the world. In addition, children have access to a range of resources that reflect diversity in a positive way.

Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Any additional needs of children are recognised and met sensitively. As a result, adults demonstrate a strong commitment to providing an inclusive service that meets the needs of all children attending the setting. Staff are innovative in using various methods to help all children communicate from an early age. For example, babies are using simple signs to communicate their needs, which are supported with picture prompt cards, such as putting their hands together and opening them like a book to say they want a story or rhyme.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are greeted warmly by adults, they speak highly of the provision and the care provided. Parents know their child's key worker and they feel well informed of their children's progress, both through the informal verbal exchange of information and regular access to their children's developmental records. Parents of children in receipt of funding for nursery education are provided with good information relating to the Foundation Stage curriculum. In addition, most parents feel involved in their children's learning because the staff team are approachable and responsive, demonstrating a keen interest in the children and their well-being. Details of the group's policies and procedures are included in the group's prospectus and are available to parents upon request. In addition, newsletters and information of topics and themes being introduced keep parents informed of all relevant issues relating to the smooth running of the group.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The day to day organisation of the setting is very good and contributes to the positive outcomes for children. As a result, children are provided with good opportunities to access a broad range

of interesting and stimulating activities to develop and support their learning. Most of the staff hold relevant qualifications in childcare and education. They also continue to access regular short courses and in-house training to build on their skills and enhance their practice in the nursery. Recruitment and selection of staff is the responsibility of the provider who checks to establish the suitability of staff working in the group is in place. There is a strong commitment amongst the staff team to continue to improve the quality of care provided within the group, this is achieved through regular staff meetings and opportunities for all staff to reflect on practice, in order to instigate change and secure improvements. All of the mandatory documentation is in place. The certificate of registration is displayed along with details of the group's public liability insurance; as a result, parents are easily able to confirm details of the nurseries registration.

Leadership and management of the setting is good. The adults work well as a team and benefit from support and guidance of the local authority. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to provide a service that is underpinned with quality and one that is conducive to the needs of the children. Systems for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the nursery education within the setting continue to evolve and the supervisor and staff team continue to build on their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. All staff contribute to the planning, as a result, children receive a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities to help move them on to their next steps in learning. All staff undertake both incidental and planned observations on the children and information gained is used to inform future planning. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of care the provision was asked to: evaluate and improve deployment of nursery management to effectively oversee the setting; improve arrangements for younger children to access the outside play area, to ensure older children are not disrupted and improve staff's knowledge of current legislation regarding disability discrimination.

The provision has introduced a new system of self-evaluation, whereby staff and managers are asked to identify strengths and weaknesses in their practice. The manager has also been taken out of the ratios except for emergency situations. This has resulted in changes to the system of children's observations assessments and identifying 'learning journeys' to identify individual children's next steps. Building alterations have been completed, to construct a new doorway, providing younger children with their own small outside play area off their playroom. The equal opportunity policy has been reviewed to include the disability discrimination act which has been discussed during staff meetings. Children's individual assessments also take account of what children can do. Some play equipment has been adapted and coat pegs have been removed from the corridor to enable wheelchair access.

At the last inspection of nursery education the provision was asked to: further increase children's independence and mathematical consolidation through everyday routine activities.

Children's independence has been further encouraged by giving them more responsibility and acting as monitors to lay the table. They set out the place mats, put out the knives and forks and count them out. At snack time they enjoy pouring their own drinks and washing up their cups. As children line up for the bathroom they learn to count how many children are in line and how many children can go to the bathroom. The settings attention to the above issues has improved the quality of care and outcomes for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- continue to ensure that hazards are minimised to children, with reference to securing the external playroom doors leading to the outside play areas and uneven vinyl flooring in the baby 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):

- continue to develop the system of planning, to ensure information gained through observation is used effectively to inform daily activity plans, that these are sufficiently detailed to guide inexperienced staff ensuring that children are being included and challenged at their appropriate level.

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