

Alpha Kindergarten School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY284159

Inspection date 11 March 2008

Inspector Paula Durrant

Setting Address 66 Fletton Avenue, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE2 8AU

Telephone number 01733 311080

E-mail

Registered person Alpha Big Sky Limited

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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Alpha Kindergarten School is one of two privately owned settings run by Alpha School Kindergarten Limited, both of which are located in Peterborough. It originally opened in March 2001 and transferred to its current ownership in June 2004. The nursery is located in Fletton, close to Peterborough city centre. The provision serves the local area and operates from a two-storey building. A maximum of 113 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The provision operates five days a week from 08.00 until 18.00, all year round, with the exception of bank holidays.

There are currently 114 children aged from birth to five years on roll. Of these, 35 children receive funding for nursery education and two receive funding for the two year old pathfinder grant. The setting has systems in place to support children who have a learning difficulty or disability and/or whom hold English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 24 members of staff. Of these, 20 are core staff working daily with the children, whilst four are relief staff available for covering absences. Over half of the staff hold an early years qualification to Level 2 or 3 and one staff member is working towards a level

four. The setting receives support from a pedagogical support officer and childcare adviser from within the Peterborough Sure Start Strategic Partnership. The nursery are members of the National Day Nursery Association and of the Peterborough Private Providers Association, a localised networking group.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from infection and are well taken care of if they should have an accident or become ill as practitioners consistently adhere to well structured health and safety procedures drawn from environmental health guidance. For example, the premises is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness, furniture and equipment is constantly cleansed with antibacterial solutions, children who sleep have access to their own bedding and all staff wear protective clothing and gloves when changing nappies or supporting children with toileting needs. All of this good practice ensures cross-contamination is effectively minimised. Rigorous adherence to exclusion periods for childhood diseases and the maintenance of staff's first aid qualifications means that children stay healthy and receive appropriate care in the event of a medical emergency. All appropriate records and consents are in place for the documentation of accidental injuries and medication administered. There are sufficient medical supplies in the first aid box. Although children are exposed to opportunities to learn about the importance of good personal hygiene such as through the hand washing and teeth brushing activities within the daily routine, this is not maximised by staff. For example, limited explanation behind the reason why such action is required restricts children's ability to develop a sound awareness of bacteria and or germs.

Children receive a highly nutritious balanced diet. All meals are prepared on site from raw ingredients by the cook. Consideration is given to individual dietary needs with an alternative option provided each day. Staff are very aware of the children who cannot have specified foods and are vigilant in ensuring children's health needs are met at all times. Children remain well-hydrated as they have constant access to drinking water throughout the day. Whilst a vast majority of the rooms provide labelled cups to ensure children drink from their own beaker this is not consistent throughout the setting. This means that younger children can and do become confused and on occasion drink from the wrong beaker. This is not hygienic.

Children have daily access to the garden. Provision of warm clothes and additional footwear such as 'Wellingtons' means that children can go out to play regardless of the weather conditions. Children receive regular access to fresh air, to exert their energy and to develop increased physical control as they climb, ride bicycles and throw and catch balls. Younger children also benefit in using the garden in addition to taking walks in and around the community. All children are able to rest and be active according to their needs. Younger children sleep in line with home-care routines, whilst older children have the opportunity to lie down on a mat after lunch in order to recuperate their energy levels.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety and welfare is given due attention in this vigilantly monitored premises. Practitioners help keep children safe in the nursery and on outings because they fully understand and comply with safety requirements. All necessary precautionary measures are in place with

conscientious thought to best practice. For example, provision of evacuation cots, ensures the prompt exodus of younger children from the building in the event of a fire. Risk assessments are rigorous and completion of checks frequent. Access to the premises is vigilantly monitored by an effective security system and through the supervision and management of the entrance area by senior management.

Children access an extensive range of safe, high quality, well-maintained developmentally appropriate resources which are effectively organised in child-height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff skilfully explain safe practises such as the need to pick up items dropped on the floor, so that other children do not fall or hurt themselves and to sit with their bottoms on chairs so they do not slip or tumble. Adherence to the nursery rules of being safe, being kind and looking after the nursery helps children to learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Children have a sound awareness of fire safety as they take part in regular practise drills.

Staff protect children well. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well-organised and managed setting. Staff are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. Open relationships between home and nursery ensure that children's needs remain the single important factor. The child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up-to-date and that staff understand their responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive in this inspirational setting where significant emphasis is given to teaching children through purposeful play opportunities. Staff are highly competent in their working roles. They use their wealth of experience and their childcare training to plan a diverse range of inspirational activities linked to themes which children can relate to. For example, a topic about 'diggers' was introduced following extensive interest in the building work adjacent to the nursery. Children enjoy making painted pictures of their large yellow replicated digger vehicles, singing songs associated to such work like 'Bob the Builder' and using their own imaginations to expand on the concept of building in role play and with construction materials such as wooden blocks. Further planned events include keeping an illustrated diary to track the sequence of events from mounds of dark earth to brick built houses.

Exceptional consideration is given to promoting age-appropriate activities. This is supported and underpinned through excellent planning systems. For example, staff follow the 'Birth to three matters' framework for younger children and the Foundation Stage curriculum for older children. This promotes a unified curriculum for children under the age of five years. The group purposefully use their key worker system to monitor children's progression. Children are frequently observed and their achievements recorded. Staff regularly alter children's key objectives in line with their current abilities. A cohesive planning cycle ensures children make rapid progression as staff purposefully use assessment profiles to set greater challenges and to inform their planning systems.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an exceptionally competent understanding of how children learn. They consistently deliver an inspiring range of practical

purposeful activities which promote optimal challenge for each child in line with their age and stage of development. Highly innovative teaching methods and exceptional use of quantitative quality resources, enhances the execution in delivery of the educational programme. Children truly relish their time in this provision. They have an excellent attitude to learning because they are settled, happy and purposefully engaged. Children consistently rise to the challenges set and are confident in voicing their thoughts and ideas. They listen with considerable levels of concentration to stories and can recount favourites, remembering the order sequence of events. Many children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are becoming adept at writing their own names. Children are highly imaginative and are able to use this in a range of contexts. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they access resources that reflect diversity and celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. Children make collages, paint freely and draw pictures many of which are displayed. Exceptional emphasis is given to opportunities to promote physical development. For example, children gain plentiful opportunities to access the outside play area which has its own resource centre and planning. This means children benefit from the variation of activities in addition to periods in which to re-visit and practise skills already acquired with different mediums such as balls, bean bags and frogs for throwing and catching.

Practitioners have an extremely sound and secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Highly detailed plans provide an excellent balanced across all six areas of learning. Children access a extensive range of practical activities, which are well-planned and exceptionally well executed. Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills interests and needs and effectively build on this information to help children achieve as much as they can. A flexible approach to planning and an excellent balance between adult and child-led learning allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are highly perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions very skilfully and successfully to challenge children's thinking and language skills. They plan first-hand experiences that help children take the next step in their learning. Teaching highly motivates children. They consistently remain intent and focused in their activities. Children are making rapid progress through the stepping stones due to the rich and inspiring curriculum in place and the consistent enthusiasm and engagement of exceptionally well-trained staff. Assessment is rigorous and the information gained is used very effectively to guide planning. This supports promotion of an exceptionally cohesive planning cycle.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are warmly welcomed in the nursery. Practitioners ensure that resources positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. Highly skilled staff implement excellent systems to ensure that children with specific needs receive appropriate support in the setting. This enables them to join in with all activities and make very good progress given their age and starting points. Children are extremely well behaved, and very polite in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. Children take turns and show concern for others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is outstanding. Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. There is a wealth of information which is easily accessible which includes general care and educational literature. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided. Staff

encourage parents to actively contribute towards their child's learning such as through inviting the sharing of a 'core' story book at home and through access to individual assessment records. Children, therefore, benefit from a two-way sharing of information between parents and practitioners to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the setting and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Robust recruitment procedures underpin the stability of a mature and highly skilled staff team. The nursery are extremely in-tune with high-quality provision and in ensuring children remain central to all that they do. This is evident from the constant updating of their self-evaluation profile and the minimal areas identified for future improvement. A majority of staff are qualified and all, gain frequent opportunities through their personal development plans to access short courses. This enhances their knowledge and understanding of current childcare practices. For example, some staff have already attended the new Early Years Foundation Stage training and are beginning to plan against this in readiness for its implementation in September 2008. This is extremely proactive practice. Staff demonstrate a real affinity with children; they respect their feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. This is reciprocated.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. Planning and assessment systems are superb, appropriately detailed and ensure a clear focus to secure and progress children's learning. The group continue to access qualified teacher input and their pedagogical support worker to continue to enrich their already strong educational provision. They regularly review their systems and the quality of their curriculum, always reaching to embrace new ideas. For example, they are presently working towards adapting their curriculum to incorporate the Early Years Foundation Stage, in readiness for September 2008. Children benefit from the exceptional range of practical activities and guidance of staff who continually draw and make exceptional regard of incidental learning basing, their emphasis on learning through play. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were required to consider how the layout, and accessible storage, within the baby room can be developed. Younger children benefit as they access a wide variety of different types of furniture and low-level storage units to aid them in their physical development and decision making skills. They were also required to ensure that exact times of arrival and departure are recorded for all staff. This is now in place.

This is the first inspection for nursery education.

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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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):

- revise hygiene practices to ensure consistent application, this refers to access to drinking cups and explanation behind the hand washing process.

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