

Alonim Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	147495
Inspection date	03 March 2008
Inspector	Hazel McLean / Maureen Edith Sinclair
Setting Address	Southgate & District Reform Synagogue, 120 Oakleigh Road North, Whetstone, London, N20 9EZ
Telephone number	0208 343 8577
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Registered person	Southgate & District Reform Synagogue
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?

Alonim Kindergarten opened in 1982. The setting is a Jewish progressive Kindergarten, which also accommodates children from other religions and cultures. It operates from the Southgate and District Reform Synagogue in Whetstone. Alonim serves the local and wider community.

The kindergarten operates from the community centre within the synagogue. The premises consist of three play rooms and an office. The children also have access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 29 children aged two to five years on roll. This includes 19 funded children. The setting supports children with disabilities and /or learning difficulties. The setting also provides care for children who are learning English as an additional language.

The setting operates each weekday, during term time. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:30. There is an extended day facility until 15:00 on Monday and Tuesday. There are 10 staff, including the manager, who work directly with the children. In addition, students are also engaged at the setting. Most of the staff hold relevant early years qualifications. These include: NVQ Level 2 and 3, the Diploma in Pre-School Practice and Nursery Nurse Examination Board.

The manager holds an Early Years degree. All of the staff hold a current first aid qualification. Staff attend regular training seminars and some are furthering their qualifications.

The setting receives regular support from the local authority, is a member of Barnet Healthy Eating scheme and participates in a speech and language project piloted by the same borough.

They also liaise with the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive excellent support which promotes their physical health and wellbeing. They thrive through regular access to fresh air and a range of varied physical activity. This encourages use of large muscular actions such as throwing, climbing, running, hopping and skipping, and leads to increasing confidence in their hand control skills. Staff make extremely good use of the fully enclosed outside play area to plan informal as well as more learning-focussed activities which promote children's physical involvement. For instance, while some children skilfully ride on bicycles, jump and use balance beams, others have the opportunity to relax quietly under the sheltered area with water or sand and use a range of utensils to promote their hand-eye coordination and language skills. Alternatively, a small cultivated area provides an exciting canvas to enrich early science knowledge and motivates digging, while a very appealing wooden activity structure provides the perfect backdrop to kindle the imagination of young 'pirates', as they heave themselves onto 'deck' with use of a rope, and call out sailor-style greetings to their marooned friends below. While children play, they start to notice the changes in their bodies as their temperature rises, prompting them to stop and rest. They comment on 'feeling hot' and remark on the changing colour of each other's faces. They sometimes say they are thirsty and seek out a drink. This gives them early insight into the working of their bodies and helps them understand the physical effects of strenuous exercise.

Children eat heartily in the setting, enjoying extremely nutritious, balanced snacks and meals provided by parents and supplemented by the nursery. Fruits of all descriptions are available at snack time, and children are encouraged to experience new tastes. Staff work very closely with parents to promote this, giving advice on suitable foods. They negotiate skilfully, to ensure children at least try foods provided. They make helpful suggestions to children who sometimes refuse an unusual dessert, to encourage them to try it again a little later. This promotes continuity with parents who are then able to follow this through at home. Water is always readily available from dispensers and children are encouraged to pour their own water from jugs at snack and meal time. Staff are very aware of children's allergies and keep a check list within each room of foods to be avoided. They provide rice milk, for example, as an alternative to dairy products, and recognise how to address the needs of children who may require an egg-free diet. Older children who remain all day at the nursery are encouraged to set out their own food on plates at mealtimes, gaining a sense of independence and motivating interest as they discuss what they have brought and describe their liking for it.

Children's robust good health is maintained through the regular cleaning and maintenance of facilities on the premises and the development of their own knowledge of how to keep germs at bay. Staff encourage this by example, for instance, wiping down eating surfaces before snack is served, and through gentle guidance and prompting, as children wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Children learn about minimising the spread of infection as they

are encouraged to cover their mouths when coughing and throw away used tissues. Children are starting to learn about dental hygiene as toothbrushes are made available and the older children particularly, embark on a new topic about dentistry. If children are unwell, a clear policy informs parents of the need to keep them away from the setting until the main symptoms and side effects have passed and relevant time limits have expired. Children who are tired can rest on a small bed within a playroom, or use a separate room which is made available for children who are taken ill and need a quiet space until a parent arrives.

All staff are trained in first aid, hold current certificates and demonstrate profound understanding of how to cope with minor emergencies. They have access to fully stocked first aid boxes and are therefore effectively prepared to administer first aid according to immediate need. Permission for emergency treatment is sought from parents, thereby enabling access to emergency services.

Staff's good practice is founded on clear policies and procedures which require completion of accurate records regarding accidents and medication, should this be needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The nursery offers an ideal environment for children's learning and play. The extremely warm and inviting atmosphere is enhanced by friendly staff who have an instant knack of making children feel at ease. This enables parents to relax in the knowledge that their children feel confident in these new surroundings. Rooms are organised to provide spacious areas for children to spread themselves out and find the most comfortable 'niche'. For instance, older children extend their play naturally into the corridor and in and out of the messy play room where they can access an additional range of activities. Younger children are protected by the known perimeters of a large playroom, where the vibrant range of materials and colourful, interesting displays capture their imagination and encourage their ongoing engagement.

Steps have been taken to ensure users' safety on the premises, for instance, emergency evacuation procedures and fire notices are displayed, fire equipment is checked and regular fire drills are practised with the children. Staff understand the need to deal with emergencies promptly and put procedures into practice, thereby safeguarding children. In addition, the positioning of a full-time security guard, and the strict adherence to the security of entrance and exits, ensures children are well protected while they play. Visitors are greeted on arrival and escorted to the building's main entrance before admittance. A visitors' book is available and everyone is requested to sign this on entering and leaving.

Risk assessments are carried out physically prior to the daily use of the premises, indoors and outdoors. Potentially hazardous areas, such as the climbing frame and garden perimeter, are given priority as they are checked every morning. Toys and equipment are regularly checked for faults and disposed of, if necessary. Resources throughout the nursery are in good condition, well organised and easily accessible, mostly at child height. Additional facilities available to the nursery include the use of modern, well furnished meeting rooms and a well-equipped kitchen which has recently undergone rearrangement to include an access door from the nursery corridor. The handle on the door is positioned within child height which enables access to the kitchen. The manager recognises the immediate need to make the kitchen inaccessible to children and has taken steps to organise this. In the meantime, children's safety is assured through close supervision of the area.

Staff give priority to children's welfare and protection. Overall, they demonstrate a good understanding of the nursery's child protection procedures and know where to seek immediate advice within the nursery should a concern arise. They are sensitive in their approach to such matters and understand that ongoing work may be involved to support children and families. Despite some inconsistencies in their understanding of the role of the local authority, there are plans to consolidate their understanding through further discussion and training. The nursery has a comprehensive policy document and statement of intent that is shared with parents as part of the welcome pack. This reflects Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures and is available for staff reference.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely happy. The setting exudes an ethos of sincerity, warmth and joy which strongly reflects through the welcoming nature of staff and rich enthusiasm of the children as they interact cooperatively with each other and adults, in small and large groups. Staff expertly plan an exciting range of activities. This results in older children contentedly engaging for long periods in structured and incidental opportunities as they freely move around between play room, messy play and corridor. Younger children benefit from planning linked to Birth to three matters and specialised topics in celebration of the Jewish and other faiths. They develop their creative skills as they paint and draw, express increasing language skills and communicate their feelings as they handle interesting specimens, such as, play turtles lying in a mixture of sand and soil. A wealth of other resources, including Zoo and farm animals, are readily available to promote imaginative play, and a selection of dressing up clothes positioned close to the home corner, projects inviting props to foster their imagination.

Children are consistently well behaved and considerate towards each other. For instance, a child riding a tricycle stops and apologises to another child as she almost runs into him. Children playing on an outdoor climbing structure are careful not to push against each other as they balance at the top of the slide. Staff give children constant encouragement and reassurance in all that they are doing while also maintaining sufficient distance, to allow for children's own autonomy and independence.

Children's individual needs are supported effectively through good settling in procedures and keyworker systems which promote close liaison with parents. Staff are extremely sensitive to children's needs, gently supporting them in their early days, as they become familiar with nursery routine and accustomed to the busy surroundings. Staff recognise that while children often appear to settle straight away, at a later date their confidence sometimes wanes and they become distressed as other parents come and go with new children. Staff are fully prepared for this and ready to support children and parents accordingly.

Staff record children's achievements through brief spontaneous observations and longer, more detailed accounts of their activity. These are used to evaluate children's progress, and later shared with parents.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are making excellent progress towards the early learning goals due to staff's very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. The learning environment and activities are planned to take account of children's interests and to ensure that they are progressing across all areas

of learning. Staff make and evaluate observations on the children and use these very effectively to guide planning and ensure that children's individual needs are met.

Children are motivated learners; they are able to work effectively on their own or with others. Their behaviour is very good and they are learning to share and take turns through very effective strategies put in place by staff.

Children have access to a very wide range of easily accessible mark making materials. They are developing early writing skills and some children can write their name independently. They use the materials in everyday activities and make lists and appointments in the role play area set up as an office. Children enjoy looking at books for pleasure and listen intently to stories. They join in enthusiastically when the story requires them to.

Children have excellent mathematical knowledge. They confidently count up to 10 and beyond. They use mathematical language such as less, more and confidently compare shape and size.

There are excellent opportunities for children to explore technology. They use the computer independently and, with staff support, are learning about e-mail and how to research for information. They are learning about the local community as they entertain senior citizens from the local lunch club and visit care homes. They are learning about the wider world through well planned themes that acknowledge festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. They have close contacts with the local school.

Children have very good opportunities to develop their imaginations and creativity through a wide range of mediums. They paint freely and have a wide variety of tools to make patterns in the dough. They thoroughly enjoy role play situations and have regular opportunities to attend drama workshops. Children listen to music and move around confidently. They sing and play musical instruments.

Staff make very good use of time and resources to provide children with opportunities to engage in physical activities. They go outside to play everyday and use an excellent range of large physical equipment to jump, climb, slide and balance which develops their large muscles and coordination. They handle small tools such as pencils, cutters and scissors with increasing skill.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The setting provides a strong commitment to inclusion and a truly welcoming atmosphere, perpetuated by the manager and all staff. Children have very good relationships with staff and each other. They value each other, play together sociably and are kind to each other. Children of all faiths are valued and welcomed into the nursery. Festivals occurring throughout the Jewish calendar are incorporated into long-term planning and used to enhance children's learning, knowledge and social awareness. For instance, the story of Purim is adapted to children's level of understanding. The use of props such as male and female dolls are featured in the story to depict positive images and acknowledge the triumph of good over evil. Children playing with the same dolls at other times are seen to re enact the story and demonstrate responsible moral attitudes through their play. On a weekly basis, children participate in activities to prepare food and the home for Shabbat when the focus is on working together and participating in this amiable social event. In rotation, different children are given the role of 'helpers'; on these occasions, parents are invited to join the nursery and take pride in their child's involvement. Children are also encouraged to learn about the wider community and

other cultures through festivals, such as Eid, when cooking activities such as making sweets, gives children an initial introduction to new and unfamiliar customs.

Staff have an extremely positive and supportive approach to the care and learning of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, or where the need for additional support has been identified. While all children are encouraged to participate to full capacity in the regular daily life of the nursery, a specialist project is in operation to enable children to have additional support in developing confidence, express themselves clearly and concentrate for increasingly longer periods. This enables them to make valuable contributions within a smaller social group and extends their confidence in the wider environment as staff reinforce messages through use of key phrases and sign language to acknowledge their achievements in daily routines. Staff work closely with parents to share information and support children's individual needs.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. While children display a natural exuberance and enjoy nursery life to the full, their behaviour and concern for others is exemplary. They show respect and kindness towards each other and a high level of cooperation in their interactions with staff and responses to adult direction. They politely ask adults for help when necessary, for instance, to button up coats, and wait patiently, taking turns with other children when a tricycle or favourite piece of equipment is not readily available. The nursery has a behaviour management policy which reflects what is seen in practice.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents are warmly welcomed into the nursery, encouraged to share their knowledge of their own child and become involved with daily nursery life. They take pride in their involvement with recognised acts of faith which link with the nursery ethos, such as, donating toys as part of the Birthday Mitzvot on their child's birthday. Parents spoken to declared a sense of belonging and confirmed their very strong support for the nursery and the highly valuable experiences it provides for their children in their learning and development.

Parents have access to a wide range of information regarding current topics and events. Staff obtain detailed information about the children when they start at the nursery so they can use this information when planning. Parents receive excellent information about their children's progress both on a daily basis and at parents' meetings. Photographic displays of the children at play show parents what the children have been doing. They are fully involved in their children's learning and are given weekly information about the current theme and how the activities contribute to children's learning. They are given advice on how to introduce activities to the children at home and the children are given cameras so they can record their home life and then talk about it at the nursery. The nursery has an open door policy and parents are welcome to visit at any time.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The care and well-being of children is prioritised as careful attention is given to the recruitment of staff who undergo robust vetting procedures to verify their suitability. The staff team present as happy and content, providing good role models for children and demonstrating a high level of commitment to the delivery of a good service. They are keen to extend their knowledge and take up opportunities to engage in further training. Ratios are well maintained and children benefit from the high level of individual attention and staff interaction. The premises provide appropriately maintained facilities to support childcare activity, and sufficient consideration

has been given to the safety of most aspects of the building. The security of children is paramount and staff are well equipped to deal with most issues regarding their protection.

All appropriate policy documentation is in place and the manager is aware of regulatory responsibilities, such as, retention of records, recording children's attendance and notifying Ofsted of significant events. Information is displayed around the nursery and this ensures visitors and parents are kept informed of important policy issues and forthcoming events.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The manager is very proactive in her approach and constantly strives to improve the service offered to children and their families. She plays an active role in the nursery, providing very strong support for the whole staff team. The manager is highly effective in monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the planning of activities for the Foundation Stage to ensure children are progressing. The staff team is strong and well established and they work extremely well together. The manager is fully committed to staff development and actively encourages staff to obtain qualifications and new skills by attending regular training. The setting 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 re evaluate the morning snack time routine.

As a result, the nursery now has a system which enables children to help themselves to a piece of fruit during the early part of the morning, whenever they are feeling a little hungry, and without disrupting the general routine and flow of play. In addition, they have maintained a more formal snack routine which takes place during the later part of the morning. At this time, children choose where they want to sit, engage in conversation with other children, and are joined by staff at each table. This has increased the opportunities for children by allowing lengthier periods for them to engage in social play early in the session and by providing a focussed social occasion at an appropriate time, later in the morning.

At the last inspection the provider was asked to develop staff knowledge of the stepping stones in order that records of children's development are assessed against the specific learning area and ensure that written text presented to the children is always clearly written.

The labelling and text displayed around the building is now clearly written in a variety of styles showing children that text can be written in different formats. Staff have benefited from input from a qualified teacher employed by the local authority and observations, assessments and planning now ensure that children progress across all areas of learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints 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 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 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):

- ensure the kitchen is made inaccessible to children

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