

# Ashton House Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY365637
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 May 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Rachel Ruth Britten
<b>Setting Address</b>	Church Road, Ashton, Chester, CH3 8AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01829 751 353
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<b>Registered person</b>	Ashton House Nursery Limited
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care, Out of School 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 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?

Ashton House Nursery and Out of School Club is a limited company. It has been operating since 1988 and became a limited company in 2007. The setting operates from a converted property situated in the rural village of Ashton in Chester. Children attend from local and wider surrounding areas. A maximum of 90 children may attend the nursery at any one time. It is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00, all year round. A maximum of 50 children aged from four to 11 years may attend the out of school club at any one time. It opens each weekday from 07.30 to 09.00 and 15.15 to 18.00 during term time, and from 07.30 to 18.00 during school holidays. All children share access to large outdoor play areas.

There are currently 218 children on roll. Of these, 64 children receive funding for early education. The provision currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities but there are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language.

The provision employs 35 staff directly in childcare. Of these, 26 staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff are working towards a qualification. The

provision has achieved quality awards for standards in food and hygiene, Investors in People and 'Effective Early Learning'.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is excellent because practitioners adopt meticulous and robust hygiene procedures, involve and teach children how to take responsibility for their own health from an early age and promote healthy lifestyles throughout the routines of every day. For example, children are asked if they are comfortable with who is going to change their nappy and colour coded aprons and gloves are worn by the staff to differentiate them from food handling or cleaning aprons, gloves and cloths. Staff clean toddlers' and babies' hands thoroughly after nappy change as well as teaching pre-school children about germs and stomach infections that can be passed on from dirty hands. Wipes, tissues, anti-bacterial soap, and evaporating hand wash and paper towels are all accessible, in good supply and well used to ensure that children can keep themselves clean and minimise cross infection. For example, pre-school children coming to the snack picnic table outside use the evaporating hand wash placed on the table before taking dried fruits, toast and crumpets to eat.

Meticulous attention to individual children's health needs means that toileting and dietary needs are catered for according to each child's needs and their parents' wishes. All staff have first aid and food hygiene qualifications and are regularly given updated lists of all the children in the nursery with allergies and special dietary requirements. Rigorous attention to medicine administration procedures means that parental consent is obtained and administration records are always completed fully. Written parental consent is obtained for the seeking of any necessary emergency medical treatment and for the use of temperature reducing medication if a child becomes ill at nursery.

Children enjoy excellent levels of physical activity and challenge especially outdoors, taking part in climbing, balancing, ball skills, dance, group games and riding activities. Children attending the out of school club walk to and from the nearby school each day and love to play large games and sports on the field most days. The extensive outdoor areas are used in all weathers because children are equipped with wellingtons, coats and sun creams and have ample supplies of clean spare clothes so that children can change out of wet or soiled clothing a number of times a day if necessary to maintain their comfort. Babies often sleep outside in covered prams and are taken for walks outside in the nursery's fields. All this activity supports children's physical health very well.

Children are extremely well nourished and enjoy a healthy diet through varied and balanced snacks and home made meals. They are encouraged to drink water throughout the day and appropriate arrangements are made to ensure that every child uses a clean individual cup appropriate to their level of independence. Menus are displayed in all rooms and written note is taken of every child's intake for relaying back to their parents at the end of the day. Breakfast is not usually supplied in the breakfast club, but mid morning snacks are substantial, consisting of toast, crumpets, and dried fruits on the day of inspection. Lunch is a mince, bean and tomato casserole with peas and sweetcorn, followed by pear and chocolate sauce. Children eat very well, many having seconds, and meals and snacks are orderly, sociable occasions when staff encourage children to take part in serving, clearing and even on occasions washing up. Children

also have their own vegetable, herb and flower garden which they tend so that they have a genuine understanding of where some food comes from.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very well maintained, bright and stimulating environment with a happy and purposeful atmosphere. The six home room spaces are invitingly set out to enable children to make activity choices and provide comfortable and defined spaces to set up and use the stimulating resources. Babies and toddlers enjoy a variety of things to touch, feel and reach for on the walls and hanging from the ceilings and there are various dens and cosy areas. The outdoor areas are exceptional. Children enjoy extensive and varied space with fixed play climbing, sliding, tunnelling and sand pit areas. They can ride along the numerous paths, hide and explore between the trees and bushes and picnic at the tables. They tend and water plants in the garden, have adventures in the woodland and meadow and play sports and wide games in the field.

There is good security to the two public entrance doors because parents use a combination number key pad and all other visitors must be allowed in by staff, showing identification and signing in the visitors book. Parents sign their children in and out and staff check that this is done. Staff liaise together throughout the day to ensure that they know where children are in the extensive outdoor play areas and make sure that they know when staff come indoors with children to play or address care needs. However, the challenge of this is ongoing because the outdoor area and numbers attending are so large.

Children enjoy very good resources and equipment. Rugs, trays, low level furniture, light colours and comfortable seating create a tranquil but stimulating atmosphere. In addition, there are photos of children at play and displays of their trips or art and craft work all around which help to reinforce their new learning experiences and relationships. Many play materials are kept organised in low, labelled storage boxes and baskets. A wealth of everyday objects, such as large boxes to make dens or treasure baskets of fabrics, stones, cones and shells are used to support creative and exploratory play. Paint, foam, sand, coloured water, shredded paper, cardboard tubes and tyres are also well used for children to experiment and discover how things work. As a result, children find challenges all around the rooms.

Children's safety is supported well through documentation and staff's practice. Regular monthly fire drills are held and records are kept of these. Electrical appliances, wiring and fire equipment are checked and documentation about what to do in the event of any emergency is posted. Risk assessments are undertaken to manage areas, such as the outdoor gates, the play house and den, and paddling pool, and occasions, such as the bonfire party. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they play outside among the trees and bushes with spades, barrows, slides and climbing equipment and as they learn to handle cutlery and scissors. They know that they must not run indoors and always hold the banisters. They also undertake projects on road safety and learn through role play and dressing up as patrol officers and police, using traffic lights and crossings. Broken equipment, including bikes and a sticking entrance door are promptly reported and fixed by the nursery's own maintenance man.

The protection of children from abuse is satisfactory. Staff are aware of the child protection policy and have some understanding of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. However, they quickly defer any concerns to the manager who is the child protection named person and no one is clear about where and how to record any child protection concerns. In addition,

information about child protection is not clearly displayed for staff and parents to be aware of procedures and few parents read the policy to know about the nursery's responsibilities to report child protection concerns.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are outstanding because the nursery is a stimulating, exciting place for all children to play, discover and develop. Children make excellent developmental progress because the environment and staff offer them optimal challenge, choice and independence. The outside play space offers outstanding opportunities for children of all ages to develop a wide range of physical skills as well as space for them to pursue all aspects of the curriculum outside. For example, children attending after school play fancy dress football on the large field or set up a golf driving range, while others use large card and pens to make pictures outside. Babies are stimulated by an array of materials, toys and equipment to touch, smell, hear, see and reach for so that they quickly want to pull themselves up and become mobile. Walks in the field and sleeping outside also help them to quickly become aware of their surroundings.

Staff offer ideas and question and challenge children to discuss what they are doing and thinking so that they can extend and develop this in appropriate ways. As a result, children persist in activities and seamlessly move to related activities developing excellent social and communication skills as they go. Staff are led by children's choices and they come alongside and play with them, constructing, role playing, reading, coming outside, or using the paint, sand and water with them. Staff always talk and listen to children and have high expectations of what they can all achieve for themselves. They help children to extend their knowledge and develop their natural curiosity through real experiences, for example, as they go for nature walks in the woods and fields or as they help to serve and clear up their meals.

The routines of the day are simple and group times are used by the staff to skilfully tell stories and link ideas to the general themes of the term. Children are not forced to come and sit down or leave their chosen activities. Instead they complete what they are doing, perhaps painting the doors with water, and come to the group when the attractiveness of the story being told captures their attention. When it is time for snacks and clearing up, ample time is allowed for children to do as much for themselves as possible, with full adult help and support and time to talk about what they have enjoyed doing. Each child's preferences and achievements are sensitively noticed and praised, noted as evidence, sometimes photographed, displayed or taken home. The 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage are fully utilised to provide and demonstrate children's rounded development.

Nursery education:

The quality of the teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are inspiring in their ability to provide a stimulating atmosphere and foster good social behaviour. A vibrant, constantly evaluated and adapted, child-centred play environment and simple themes on which to base some activities ensure that all the areas of learning are seamlessly covered. Staff's superior skills and commitment to each individual child enable them to promote each one's development in all areas through choices that the child themselves has made. As a result, children are extremely eager to participate and learn because they are given independence and can follow their interests. All the while, staff are helping them to communicate, question and try things for themselves, talking about number and letters in a relevant way to help children solve

problems and explain their thoughts. For example, three-year-olds in a large group investigate the concept of two and pairs, smaller and larger as they compare various shoes. A four-year-old has a turn at composing some simple music using a computer program one to one with a member of staff, discovering how to use information technology to create sounds and seeing how this is represented as notes on the music clef. Other children independently roll the tyres and hoops down the slope to see how and how far they travel before stopping. Similarly, children's early reading and writing skills are significantly enhanced by free access to numerous books and mark making media, using paint, chalk, water, brushes and pencils, both outdoors and in.

Children are making excellent progress in all the areas of learning because staff have a superior understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They constantly adapt their planning and input to take account of children's learning and development needs and later put their observation notes, photos and examples into children's developmental profile books. Each child also has an evidence file containing their work which is annotated to explain what it shows of the child's learning and development. Detailed observations of individual and group activities are made and evaluated each week so that staff are continually aware of what each child needs to learn next. Staff provide times for children to talk about what they have been doing to help them consolidate their learning. They also celebrate children's achievements immediately and display and show their work on the walls and in photographic form.

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

The provision is good.

Children are independent and considerate learners because the long standing and consistently warm staff design the environment to make it accessible and understandable. Children are encouraged to go straight to play upon arrival and staff make themselves available to speak to parents if information exchange is needed. However, some children find it hard to settle in the large and busy home rooms, particularly when many children and staff are already playing outside. As a result, children sometimes become distressed or cannot get started because they cannot find a familiar staff member or friend. The sense of belonging of two to four-year-olds is held back because they have no clear routines to register themselves in or to greet their key worker and key worker group as they arrive. Small group work and photos of children enjoying and achieving together are underused to promote children's sense of belonging to a key group of a manageable size. As a result, some children often play alone while others tend to cling to a member of staff. Nevertheless, staff work extremely hard to share their attention fairly between all children attending and children enjoy large group led and one-to-one-activities greatly. Children can cooperate well together to tidy up, pour drinks or prepare for meal times and they also behave extremely well, using good manners and consideration for others.

Children have good opportunities to consider and value diversity because there are good resources including books, dressing up costumes, dolls, play figures, musical instruments, puzzles, posters and games which show positive images of various cultures and disabilities. Staff offer meaningful craft activities and project work to support children's understanding of the festivals of various cultures, for example, Chinese New Year. Children and adults with physical disabilities and behaviour or learning needs are included fully in the life of the setting because staff are both committed to inclusion and skilled to identify emerging concerns. They successfully ensure that each individual child continues to make progress, including stretching very able children to develop writing and reading skills. Likewise, individual routines for sleep, rest and toileting are also met so that every child is individually cared for. Staff liaise sensitively with parents and relevant professionals, to ensure that they plan and work together using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit children with emerging special needs.

Children and families are involved in charitable fund raising events to increase their awareness of various people in need. Children and staff are also taught to use simple Makaton throughout the nursery to facilitate good communication for everyone, including children who have limited speech. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive consistency of care between all elements of their life because staff and managers forge supportive and open relationships with parents and obtain good quality consents and child details from the outset. Parents receive a handbook about the setting and informative newsletters and information in the public areas of the nursery. However, they do not have their own copies of the policies, their views are not formally elicited through questionnaires or other methods and some parents are unsure who their child's key person is. Many parents come to the parents' evenings organised to share children's progress and some parents contribute their skills, for example in teaching music programmes for parents to do with young children. Day to day information about children's day and how they have been is carefully passed on to parents and they are able to view the planning and activities boards to see how they can continue their child's learning at home. However, specific activity ideas are seldom given and few parents ask to view their child's progress files during the term. Nevertheless, most parents say their children are happy and making good progress. Parents particularly value the emphasis upon outside play and experiences offered in the setting.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Recruitment, vetting, induction and training systems work well to ensure that children are well protected and cared for by up to date and motivated staff who are well supported by domestic, maintenance and administrative staff. All personnel are vetted and an advisor is regularly present to assist with evaluations, improvements and monitoring in the nursery. Rotas are designed to provide for children to receive consistency of care and staff are carefully inducted into the systems and ethos of the nursery. Their career development is nurtured through 'in house' and external training opportunities and an annual appraisal process, although the latter is not consistently well used. In addition, staff and files are well organised and show a commitment to ongoing development for all, through support meetings, training and special responsibilities.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is outstanding. The pre-school teacher provides daily leadership and support to all staff working with three and four-year-olds, providing a wealth of ideas, strategies and input for successful teaching in the Foundation Stage. She works seamlessly with the pre-school staff to plan, evaluate, record and deliver high quality teaching on a weekly basis in each of the six areas of learning. In addition, the management team work closely with their advisor to regularly re-evaluate the success of the nursery in meeting the outcomes for children and addressing identified weaknesses, using regular spot checks and well organised documentation to secure continual improvement and adaptation of methods to suit the children attending. Up to date plans, policies, procedures and handbooks show how the setting works to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution.

Policies and procedures are robust, well developed and work in practice to promote good outcomes for children. Accident, medication, incident and complaint procedures work well and individual children's records and details are regularly reviewed and kept up to date. Safety checklists and risk assessments support children's welfare and safety well, while careful planning

following advice from inspections and evaluations lead to continual improvements in resources, activity planning and childcare. However, the daily attendance register is not always clear, accurate and up to date in the baby and out of school facilities. This compromises children's safety in the event of an emergency.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration 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 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 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 that all staff are fully competent to identify, record and refer child protection concerns and that parents are made aware of the nursery's responsibility to do this
- extend the use of small groups and key working to improve children's sense of belonging in the setting and the meeting of their individual emotional needs
- ensure that daily attendance registers are accurate and up to date at all times, showing arrival and departure times.

#### **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):

- extend the involvement of parents in children's learning in the Foundation Stage.

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)