

Abacus Children's Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector John W. Paul

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Abacus Children's Nursery opened in 2006. It is owned by Abacus Children's Nurseries Ltd and is registered on the Early Years Register and the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. It operates from three rooms in a purpose built single storey building in the grounds of Kingfisher Primary School in the town of Chatham, Kent. The site and building are accessible to people with disabilities and this includes wheelchair access. A maximum of 80 children may attend the nursery at any one time.

The setting is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. There are currently 204 children aged from three months to ten years old on roll and, of these, 36 children receive funding for nursery education. The group also operates breakfast and after-school provision, which is open to children attending the school. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Children are drawn from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports two children who speak English as an additional language and it also supports several children with special educational needs.

The nursery employs 16 staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The registered person is working towards a relevant degree. Four lunchtime ancillary staff are also employed.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

It meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage well. The staff cooperate effectively with its manager and registered person to ensure that children are well included in all that is provided. They are cared for and safeguarded well, irrespectively of their ethnicity, learning needs or social circumstances. A particularly friendly, open relationship with parents is fostered very strongly, which helps children to settle effectively and to progress well. The success achieved to date suggests a good capacity to improve quality further.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- include criteria in all action plans that will indicate to staff when they have been successful in carrying out the required improvements.
- improve exterior areas and availability of shelter to provide children with greater opportunity to acquire skills outdoors across all areas of learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Good leadership and management ensure that the nursery is well organised, including for those children who attend at breakfast time and after school. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are prioritised effectively. A particularly high proportion of the staff, including all managers, have received training in first-aid to the required standards. Procedures for the vetting of staff and systems and policies to ensure health and safety all meet statutory requirements. Daily risk assessments are taken very seriously and safety checks are carried out meticulously. Each member of staff takes responsibility for the care, welfare and learning of a particular group of children, ensuring that each individual's needs are well known to all other staff. Records show progress and indicate each child's learning and development are kept conscientiously. Necessary routines ensure the safety and wellbeing of those children and babies on roll who require rest periods or sleep are prominently displayed. The staff are responsible for carrying out frequent checks on children who are asleep and good systems ensure thorough record keeping showing that they have done so.

All staff are included well in planning continuous improvement. That said, the resulting documentation does not include criteria for measuring success and is therefore too open-ended in terms of completion. This makes it difficult for leaders and managers to measure the extent and rate of their successes and to celebrate completed results with the staff. Nevertheless, a strong sense of direction and desire for improvement is very apparent amongst all staff. Since the last inspection, for example, significant outcomes have been achieved in addressing the report's recommendations. Children's toy boxes are now clearly labelled, so children learn what is in each one and know where to look for what they want. More toys have been purchased to facilitate the acquisition of required skills across all the areas of learning in the new Early Years Foundation Stage. Many of these toys, such as dolls and figures in wheelchairs or holding white sticks, reflect another recommendation, helping children to see people with disabilities in a positive way. Planning of children's activities records the learning needs of individual children effectively. Leaders and managers check to ensure that this procedure links to evaluations and assessments of what children achieve against national age-related goals. A member of staff trained in procedures for assisting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities also uses such planning and assessment well to identify those who might need additional support. She has also established good links with outside agencies and shares all individual plans thoroughly with parents.

Leaders and managers are highly successful in establishing an excellent partnership with parents. All those parents spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they feel valued. A typical parental comment stated that leaders, managers, key staff, '...in fact everyone is very friendly and willing to listen and help. They tell you what your child does, how they get on and they will always tell you if there has been an upset'. Another parent commented that this is important 'because you then feel trust'. This reflects the impression on entry to the nursery, where a parents' board is conspicuously placed. Formal and informal opportunities

are also provided to inform parents about how their children are getting on, including a home book and an achievement record. All this excellent practice contributes much to ensuring that all parents and carers, feel completely welcome and included.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

All the staff are well skilled in involving the children in activities. This includes older children who attend at breakfast time and after school. Activities are planned effectively on themes that match recent national requirements. As children grow older and move through each of the nursery's age-related rooms, assessments indicate that they progress well. In the Baby Room, as throughout the nursery, the staff relate very well to the children, joining in with activities, role modelling very well and keeping up a good flow of talk to encourage gains in vocabulary. The children are fed healthily and encouraged to drink water and eat fruit. Food is kept hygienically, in refrigerators whenever appropriate and, as children grow older, staff teach them why this is so. By the time they leave the nursery, children's ideas about 'what is good for you' are well developed.

The staff provide good opportunities to learn about 'what makes us happy and sad', thereby encouraging children's emotional development, health and wellbeing. Personal, social and emotional development is good. The children enjoy each other's company, behave well and share equipment sensibly. This happens because adults in all rooms set high standards that help children to develop safe routines. The children know about 'stranger danger'. The staff employ good strategies, such as rhymes and little songs, to engage interest, learning and development. Children give every indication of enjoying their achievements and what they do in the nursery. A good example given by a parent is how her child tried to teach the whole family at home a song that had been learnt. Each room in the nursery, as well as the outdoor area, is characterised by positive staff and smiling children working and playing together. This includes occasions when opportunities are taken to teach older children numbers, counting skills and letter sounds. The children also greatly enjoy making marks with a variety of implements, including pencils, on a variety of surfaces, including paper and card. The standards that they achieve usually match what is expected for their ages and contribute well to their future well-being. That said, the staff's efforts to ensure that children are enabled to move freely between chosen activities is limited by the outdoor accommodation. This lacks permanent shelter and the surface is almost entirely grassed, which limits the types of activity that can be provided there. This does not permit children sufficient freedom of choice outside, according to their own learning preferences, especially when the weather is inclement.

The staff provide good opportunities for children to contribute positively to the community and to learn of the importance of helping others. In 'Quiet Times', they are asked about what they have done in the nursery and 'what I could do to help other children'. As they get older, they contribute little jobs, such as laying tables for lunch or snacks and they also register themselves when they enter the nursery.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met