



Alphabets Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY263151
Inspection date	31 January 2006
Inspector	Mary Van De Peer
Setting Address	2 Hillary Road, Penenden Heath, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 2JP
Telephone number	01622 762045
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Registered person	Alphabets Nursery Ltd
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?

Alphabets Nursery opened in 2003 and operates from three rooms in converted shop premises. It is situated in the town of Maidstone, Kent. A maximum of 36 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 all year round. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 58 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 28

children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and some who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine staff, eight of whom, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are two staff are working towards an additional child care qualification.

The nursery is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and also receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

From an early age, children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through effective daily routines.

Children who are infectious do not attend the nursery, preventing the spread of many childhood illnesses. Parents give prior written consent to administer medication, which ensures children receive the correct dosage according to their needs. All staff hold a current first aid certificate. This means they can give appropriate care if there is an accident.

Children are offered a good selection of healthy foods. They are able to choose from a selection of fruit and toast during breakfast and snack times. Set menus are available for parents to view. Children benefit from nutritious meals that are cooked on the premises. Children's individual dietary needs are catered for. They also help prepare some of the vegetables for lunchtime. Fresh drinking water is available at all times and children confidently help themselves. This encourages children to think about their personal needs. Children enjoy regular exercise that contributes to their good health. They enjoy many opportunities to take part in physical play, both indoors and out. Large play equipment in the outdoor area gives children the opportunity to practise and develop their physical skills. They are competent when selecting and using small equipment such as scissors, glue sticks and paintbrushes. Children's fine motor skills are also developing well.

Staff follow babies' individual routines for eating and sleeping. This ensures continuity of care and contributes to their physical well-being. Children under three develop warm relationships with staff who are responsive to their needs. Babies confidently express feelings verbally and non-verbally. Staff monitor food intake and nappy changes to ensure babies remain healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children can play in a spacious, well-organised environment. This allows them to

move around freely and play safely. Children have easy and safe access to a good range of toys and resources appropriate for their age. An effective key worker system ensures the careful supervision of children at all times. Children benefit from a good range of safety measures; for example socket covers, safety gates and a secure outdoor play area. There are effective recording procedures in place for the arrival and departure of children, staff and visitors. Written daily risk assessments on the premises are carried out by the staff. Toys are assessed for suitability and safety regularly. Children use appropriately-sized furniture and equipment suitable for their ages. There are sufficient cots and beds that allow babies and children to rest and sleep in comfort and safety.

There are well-written and clear procedures for dealing with child protection issues, which help keep the children safe. This information is shared with parents which helps ensure they have an adequate understanding of the nursery's role in protecting children. Children's well-being is promoted. All the children are involved in the well-thought-out emergency evacuation procedures. Good staff interaction helps develop children's awareness of safety within the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children enjoy their time at the nursery and the company of the staff. Children smile, laugh and interact well with staff, voluntarily offering them hugs and kisses. The walls are decorated with children's work and photographs of children enjoying activities, as well as brightly coloured information posters, all helping to make the atmosphere homely, friendly and welcoming. Children settle easily when they arrive. There are lots of appropriate and interesting toys for the children to play with, covering the appropriate areas of development. Staff have used Birth to three matters to assess the needs of the younger children and babies. There are imaginary play areas in each room, and creative areas where children can experiment with different craft mediums. There are also quiet areas where the children can relax and read books. Children can choose their own activities most of the time.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing very well, supported by the staff's confidence and good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Planning is quite detailed and covers all areas of learning comprehensively. Children's achievement is clearly linked to the stepping stones. However, children do not always have choices in their play when activities are adult led. Staff use regular observations appropriately to plan the next steps for their learning. Good use of observation and assessment also means that the children are suitably challenged. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. This helps them meet the needs of all children including those with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language.

Children show a sense of belonging as they greet each other and staff on arrival. They are actively involved in play and activities throughout the sessions. They have a good level of independence and take responsibility for their personal care. The three

and four-year-old children display concern for each other and take turns in their play where necessary. They count correctly to over 20 and show a clear awareness of size and quantity. They enjoy stories and can begin to write some of the letters in their names. They can select books to share with each other or with staff. Children are able to explore everyday items and learn through play on a computer. Staff extend children's knowledge of their environment and keep their learning interesting and relevant. Outings expand on this further so children become aware of the local community, time and place. Children are able to play with and use resources and equipment which enables their physical development to progress appropriately. They play in the outdoor area daily, getting plenty of fresh air. Children's creativity is encouraged and they are able to use their imagination in many areas of their play. The staff work hard to praise and enable children to try things for themselves and continue to practise to further develop their skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff treat children with respect and use lots of praise and encouragement to promote their self-esteem. Staff are good role models, helping children learn the importance of showing respect for all. Topics such as holidays and other countries help children understand other cultures. Planned activities help children to learn about themselves, each other and the world around them. The individual needs of all children who attend are well met. The setting has effective arrangements to care for children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Children behave well. They have a good understanding of right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and the age-appropriate methods staff use to manage behaviour including explanation, distraction and time out. The staff's clear guidance: for example, a reminder to stop talking so that other children can hear a story, helps children to begin to accept the needs of others. Staff encourage children to resolve their own differences, which helps them learn to take turns and share. Parents have access to the nursery's policies and procedures. They provide staff with information about their children and are able to talk to staff when they need to. For babies under the age of a year, staff complete a daybook for parents, giving information about their child, their daily activities, food intake and sleep. All of this helps to ensure continuity of care. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents provide relevant details about their children's needs and development to the staff. This helps to ensure children receive individual care and attention. Parents state that they receive appropriate information about how the nursery operates via regular newsletters. A questionnaire is also regularly sent out, This provides the nursery with important information on parents' views. Curriculum plans are displayed, showing activities provided for the children, relating to the six learning areas. There are both formal and informal systems in place for staff and parents to share information about children's individual progress and development. Some parents are unsure if they receive enough regular, written information on their children's individual progress and development towards the early learning goals. However, because of the good verbal communication between parents and staff, children benefit from parents' involvement

in their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The group's organisational plan is constantly adjusted and reviewed to meet the needs of the children and staff, taking into account the new Birth to three matters framework for example. The manager, deputy and almost all other staff hold appropriate childcare qualifications. A current paediatric first aid course certificate is held by all members of staff. Children are well grouped and the key worker system ensures appropriate support and care throughout the session. There are suitable contingency plans in place to cover for absences. This ensures that children always have appropriate supervision. There are clear aims for the provision and staff are made aware of these during meetings and appraisals. These aims reflect a commitment to improving the quality of care and education. Staff understand their role and responsibility. They have the opportunity for professional development, and the management actively encourages staff to attend training. There are effective and robust recruitment procedures in place. This means that suitable, experienced and qualified persons look after children.

Leadership and management is good. The aims and objectives of the pre-school are clearly stated in the operational plan. The manager has lots of experience, enthusiasm and commitment, which in turn motivates staff. She is continually looking for effective ways to develop and improve the pre-school in the areas of partnership with parents, staff appraisals and the Foundation Stage planning, which subsequently improves the learning experiences for children. The nursery is currently taking part in an accredited quality assurance scheme, which results in staff regularly reflecting, monitoring and improving the quality of their care and education. All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and is regularly reviewed. Children's and staff's individual records are stored confidentially in a lockable filing cabinet. All Children Act regulations are met. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider has followed the previous recommendation to improve the security of the premises. An extension to the building has now been completed. This has meant that the old security system has now been updated and helps to ensure that children are cared for in a more secure environment. A second recommendation to update the child protection policy has also been followed. It now provides parents and staff with appropriate information and procedures to follow.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- provide parents with information on the progress and development of their children on a more regular basis

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):

- provide children with more opportunities to have choices in their play

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