



Atherton House School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY302394
Inspection date	14 November 2005
Inspector	Michele Anne Villiers
Setting Address	6 Alexandra Road, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 7TF
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Registered person	Swan Aqua Ltd T/A Atherton House School
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?

Atherton House School is an independent school and opened to provide day care for young children in 2005. It operates from a three storey Victorian house in Great Crosby, Merseyside. A maximum of 65 children may attend the pre-school and after school at any one time. The provision is open each weekday from 08.00 to 17.00 during term-time and school holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 28 children aged from 2 to under 8 years on roll. Of these 15 children receive funding for nursery education. The provision supports children with special educational needs, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The school employs 10 staff to work directly with the children, all of whom hold appropriate qualifications in early years or teaching. The Montessori method of teaching is incorporated into the learning programme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff conduct satisfactory hygiene procedures to help prevent cross infection. Protective clothing is worn when changing nappies and the premises are suitably maintained and clean. Children are developing a satisfactory awareness of personal hygiene and adequate measures are taken to promote their hand washing at appropriate times. During planned activities children learn about dental care and use props such as a crocodile with large teeth to clean. Children's health is further protected as appropriate procedures are in place for the administration of medication and the recording of accidents. Several staff are trained in first aid and have access to a first aid box in order to treat minor injuries.

Children develop a positive attitude to exercise and fresh air, which contributes to their good health. They play outside every day and enjoy organised games using balls, hoops and bean bags. They access a suitable range of outdoor resources, including a large climbing construction with tunnels, to challenge the older, more able children's strength, balance and co-ordination. On wet days they have some indoor equipment and staff organise movement to music.

Meals and snacks are generally nutritious and reasonably balanced. Fruit is offered daily, helping to develop children's awareness of healthy eating. The cook provides hot meals that include curry, shepherd's pie and chicken fingers. Children's dietary needs are met, in consultation with parents. Drinks of juice or water are offered with meals and children may ask for a drink at any time to quench their thirst.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are suitably organised, with sufficient space for the children to play. There is a welcoming environment for children and parents with displays of children's artwork and information about the provision. Children have access to a range of safe and appropriate toys and resources that are used well to promote their learning and create a stimulating environment.

Most safety procedures are in place to protect children from danger. However, there are some hazardous materials stored outside compromising the children's safety; the

outside wooden benches are worn and children risk getting splinters. Staff supervise the children well to help safeguard them and risk assessment is carried out regularly. Children learn about safety and keeping themselves free from harm throughout the daily routine. Staff gently remind young children to be careful when jumping down the steps and to stay within certain boundaries when playing outside. Staff practise the fire evacuation procedure with children, helping them to understand what to do in the event of an emergency.

Children are further protected as staff have a good understanding of child protection. There is a designated child protection co-ordinator who has completed the NSPCC correspondence course. Most staff have attended training and know to follow the written policy, which is in line with Government procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are developing well through the wide range of stimulating activities and the enthusiastic support given by staff. Young children have fun with painting, construction and playdough. They sit and concentrate to complete tasks such as building a tall tower with Duplo and putting puzzles together. Children learn to explore and investigate using their senses. They discuss the texture of the 'fluffy' chick in a tactile book and examine colour and pattern during art and craft. Children develop a strong identity and are encouraged to express their own ideas, views and interpretations through creative play and during discussion. Children engage with interest and excitedly participate at story time as they predict what the old lady swallowed from 'There was an old lady who swallowed a fly'. They enjoy singing and develop mathematical concepts as they sing and act out '5 currant buns', counting backwards and taking turns to sit down in the baker's shop. Staff actively encourage the children's independent skills. Children learn to competently dress themselves for outdoor play, put toys away, help brush the floor and toilet themselves. Staff effectively use the Montessori approach to help children achieve and have recently introduced the Birth to three matters framework to further promote good practice and outcomes for young children. However, individual children are not assigned to a designated key-worker to oversee continuity of their well being and to ensure that information about the child is exchanged with the parent.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals, which is reflected in the wide range of varied and interesting activities planned. As a result children make good progress. Staff provide a stimulating and caring environment that has a positive effect on the children's attainment and progress. They support children in small groups and skilfully judge when to become actively involved in their learning and when to allow children to independently explore. Staff plan well and use good observation to assess the children's progress and link to future activities. They prepare and organise the environment for children to make choices and appropriately provide designated areas. However, there is not a comfortable area for children to relax and rest, for

example, when reading books. Some resources are on low level shelves for children to freely access.

Children are happy, interested and involved in activities and relate well to each other and adults. They demonstrate high levels of independence, helping at snack time and preparing for outside play. Children concentrate well and persist in tasks to achieve outcomes. They learn to competently use small tools such as scissors when cutting out star fish and use a hole punch in order to thread wool through. They demonstrate excellent dexterity whilst picking up polystyrene shapes with tweezers and sorting into bowls. Children become confident communicators. They chat about past and present events and enjoy singing songs from memory. Many opportunities are provided for children to practise their writing skills and learn to recognise letters. They make notes in the role-play 'Doctor's surgery' and write their name on artwork. Good displayed print and captions around the room help children to understand that print carries meaning and they access a wide range of interesting books for enjoyment and reference. During play and throughout the daily routine children progress well in their mathematical skills. They discuss volume and quantity and how full containers are with water and whether they will overflow. They learn to recognise numerals and competently count the number of toy frogs in the water play. Children have access to a computer to support their understanding of technology and they develop a good understanding of the world through planned topics and outings. Visits to the aquarium enable children to observe living things and they develop a sense of place, travelling on buses and trains and local outings to the shops. Children celebrate festivals and become aware of other cultures, making Rangoli patterns and Mehendi prints during Ramadan and Eid and accessing different ethnic clothes. Children's imagination is fostered well and staff organise interesting role-play activities that include the Doctors, using real equipment such as a stethoscope donated by a parent.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop good levels of self-esteem and staff form close and caring relationships with children. All children are included and their differences acknowledged and valued. Staff work closely with parents to address any additional needs. Positive steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of children with special needs. Staff liaise with outside agents and access any training needs to ensure appropriate action is taken to meet children's individual requirements. All children are included in the activities provided and they gain an awareness of diversity through a suitable range of resources that promote positive images. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff manage the children's behaviour well and give good consideration to the children's stage of development and maturity. Effective strategies are used to reinforce good behaviour. Praise and encouragements are consistent and 'smiley stickers' and 'helping hands' are given to older children. Staff create a very positive environment and support the children in a calm and caring manner. They talk and listen to children and act as good role-models, showing respect and consideration for

children and each other. Children respond well and as a result show a growing awareness of right and wrong.

The partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from the close relationship staff have with parents. Parents speak highly of the provision and of their satisfaction with the care provided and their children's level of achievement. Information is shared through daily discussion and regular letters to keep them up-to-date about current events. Parents are invited to coffee mornings and specific celebrations such as fireworks night. The parents' forum, held each term, enables parents to put forward ideas and suggestions. Yearly parents' evenings and open nights provide opportunities for parents to formally discuss their child's progress and to meet staff. Parents of children in receipt of educational funding are informed about the learning programme and the Foundation Stage through discussion with the staff and displayed information in the entrance. Parents may request to see their child's development files at any time.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of leadership and management of the provision is good. The manager and staff work well together to ensure that children are provided with good quality care and education. The ethos of the Montessori approach is successfully achieved and reflected in the children's happiness, strong sense of belonging, confidence and independence. The manager effectively monitors and evaluates the activity plans and spends time talking to staff and organising regular meetings with room supervisors. The manager is fully aware of the Foundation Stage and staff receive in-house training. All staff are fully qualified in either childcare or teaching and have several years' experience. Regular appraisal sessions and staff meetings identify any training needs to further improve skills and enhance the care of children. Staffing ratios are very good, affording high levels of individual and small group support for children, helping to meet the needs of all children.

Effective recruitment procedures are in place and the manager conducts comprehensive checks to ensure the suitability of staff before they are employed. Written policies and procedures are shared and understood by staff and all appropriate documentation pertaining to the provision is in place. Records are stored securely and confidentiality is maintained, with arrangements in place for the sharing of records with parents about their child. Overall the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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):

- devise a key-worker system for staff to be responsible for the continuity of care, and to ensure that information about the child is exchanged with parents
- ensure children can play safely outside and they are protected from any hazards.

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):

- organise the play space to provide an area for children to relax and rest during quiet activities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk