



## Early Adventures

Inspection report for early years provision

**Unique Reference Number** EY279320  
**Inspection date** 16 May 2006  
**Inspector** Hilary Preece

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**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](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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Early Adventures Day Nursery opened in 2004. It operates from a purpose built single storey building consisting of four playrooms and a separate sleeping room for babies. It is situated in a shopping precinct in Abbots Langley. A maximum of 43 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:30 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed play area.

There are currently 49 children aged from 3 months to 5 years on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery serves the local area of Abbots Langley and Watford. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 12 staff. Eleven of the staff, including the manager and registered owner, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Currently one member of staff is working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children lead healthy life styles. They enjoy varied and nutritious snacks and meals that have been carefully planned. Parents are encouraged to contribute their ideas to the healthy eating menu plans, so children's individual dietary needs are met. Children keenly try a selection of fresh fruit and raw vegetables with dips for snack, and their meals contain a balanced range of nutrients important for their growth. Children help themselves to drinking water whenever they are thirsty throughout the day. Children's overall well-being and health is also promoted by regular opportunities to play outside in the fresh air. Toddlers develop confidence in their movements as they attempt to march around the room to a musical activity tape. Children explore a range of equipment in the garden. They love to throw balls, climb simple apparatus, use hoops and ride wheeled toys. Babies sleep according to their individual needs and their home routines are followed. Other children sleep or enjoy a quiet time after lunch, and any child who is tired can rest whenever they need to.

Children remain healthy because staff have a high regard for promoting health and hygiene. Children are protected by effective policies and procedures, such as no outdoor shoes being worn in the baby room, regular disinfecting of equipment and clearly understood nappy changing procedures. Children learn to take responsibility for their own personal care. Older children help themselves to tissues to blow their noses and understand the importance of washing their hands after touching a slug in the garden. Children's individual health needs are clearly documented and discussed with parents. There is a reliable system in use to ensure that parents are quickly informed of any accidents or medical issues. The sickness policy is robust and ensures that children who are sick do not attend the nursery, so the risk of infection is minimised.

Children in the pre-school enjoy being physically active and develop good physical skills. They manipulate small tools, such as pencils, cutlery and scissors, with growing confidence. They have many opportunities to develop gross motor skills by using equipment and engaging in activity tapes. They experiment with movement by trying to waddle like penguins and shake their bodies to music. Children learn about their bodies and health awareness through interesting topics and daily routines such as brushing their teeth.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in secure and welcoming environment. There are appropriate systems in use to ensure visitors do not enter the premises without authority, such as a video intercom system. There is sufficient space for children to engage in a range of activities that promote their development. This is used well in most areas to allow children to move about safely. Older children though do not have access to comfortable rest or quiet areas. Children are mostly kept safe because staff carry out daily checks on the premises as part of the risk assessment. This is still a developing area and staff do not use the risk assessments thoroughly enough to identify all hazards. Children are at risk from accidents in the garden as they are allowed to use wheeled toys in the same area where others are running, climbing and playing ball games. Children do not learn how to keep themselves safe as staff do not sufficiently reinforce safety rules. Some children wear inappropriate footwear when using apparatus whilst others risk tripping over shoe laces that are undone.

Children generally use a good range of well-maintained equipment and resources. In some cases these do not meet the developmental needs of the children. Toddlers, for example, use furniture that is too high for them so they are not safe when they sit at the table. They also use wheeled toys that are too large. Their feet do not touch the ground so they feel insecure and cannot propel themselves along.

Children's safety is maintained on outings as a higher adult to child ratio ensures they are closely supervised. Staff carry essential supplies and information so that they can deal with any emergencies promptly and appropriately. Children are protected in the event of an emergency as there is a clear evacuation plan that is understood by all staff and prompt action is taken to address any issues highlighted during a fire drill.

Children's welfare is supported by a generally sound child protection policy. Some staff have attended training in this area and all understand their obligation to share concerns with management. However, children's welfare is not fully safeguarded as procedures for recording and reporting concerns are not sufficiently understood.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from thoughtfully planned activities and play opportunities that support their emotional, physical, social and intellectual development. Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to provide some stimulating experiences for babies and children up to three years. Children's development is assessed consistently throughout the rooms and parents are kept informed on a daily basis about care routines and activities.

Babies settle quickly, are content and look for re-assurance from attentive staff. They explore a wide range of interesting resources, such as treasure baskets, using their senses. They react with surprise when brushing feathery toys against their face and joyfully bang wooden spoons together to make a noise. Babies are encouraged to

find their voices as staff respond warmly to their babbling throughout their play and care routines. Young children engage in a range of messy activities that allow them to explore the texture of jelly, custard and paint. They safely splash about with containers of coloured water and express great excitement as it spills onto the floor. Staff support children well during such activities to allow them to explore their emotions at these new experiences. Children gain a sense of achievement as they are allowed time to complete a task, such as when absorbed in a painting. They freely express their creativity when painting as adults do not impress their own ideas on children, which shows staff have regard for the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Children show independence and make choices in their play. Young children independently select a book and sit nicely on a cushion to look at it. They communicate their needs appropriately as they say 'book, read it'. Babies and children explore their surroundings and resources with interest and there is always plenty for them to do. Children equally enjoy group activities. They respond positively to stories and action rhymes and children aged from two to five enjoy a weekly computer session from a visiting company.

### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children take part in well-planned activities that focus on clear learning objectives. However, not all staff are as involved in planning as others, which leads to some inconsistencies and missed opportunities for children's learning. Most children make good progress towards the early learning goals as plans are evaluated and activities re-visited as necessary to reinforce learning. Observations of children's achievements are made that link to the areas of learning. However, these are not consistently carried out by all the pre-school staff and children's work samples are not always dated so the system is not yet reliable.

Staff are generally deployed usefully in the pre-school room. They support children to play a matching game and help them play hopscotch in the garden. At times they do not always have strategies to involve all the children, such as at tidy up time. Children with particular needs do not receive sufficient support to enable them to join in with activities as their needs have not been fully recognised or understood. Systems to monitor the inclusion of all children are not effective so there are differences in learning across the children.

Children show positive attitudes to learning. Most are interested in the activities and confidently talk about what they are doing. Children are encouraged to be independent and to select their own resources. They experiment with a range of media, such as paper, fabric, seeds and pulses in order to create their own designs, and carefully think about the best way to use them. Children concentrate well in order to complete a task, such as when threading beads on to a lace or when listening to stories. Children explore and investigate. Some can confidently operate the computer mouse, they plant seeds and watch them grown and show an interest in the natural world. Children express themselves well. They love to dress up, dance to music and use their imaginations in carefully planned role play situations.

Children explore early writing skills in a number of ways. They attempt to write their

names on the playground in chalk or with a brush and water, and they love writing notes and filling in forms in their 'office' role play area. Children show an interest in stories and rhymes. They are learning the alphabet but there are insufficient opportunities to link sounds to letters as some staff are insecure in how to promote this.

Children use counting and mathematical language during their play. They count dots on the dice and match pictures when playing games, and they attempt problem-solving with numbers when singing number action rhymes. Children's learning is generally supported by the use of appropriate maths resources, though number symbols are not readily available around the room so children have less opportunity to recognise and sequence numbers in their play.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children use appropriate resources that promote inclusion and diversity. They celebrate festivals from a range of world faiths, such as Chinese New Year. They develop awareness of the wider world through interesting ideas. For example, the nursery has a 'holiday bear' who can be borrowed by children when they go on their travels. An attractive display of photos and a world map show where the children and bear have travelled. This also serves a positive link between the nursery and home.

Children generally behave well throughout the nursery. They respond positively to praise for effort and achievement, and thus develop confidence and self-esteem. Children are learning to respect the needs of others. They helpfully push each other around the garden in wheeled cars and look out for those children younger or less able than themselves. Occasionally, opportunities for children to learn responsible behaviour are missed as some staff are less confident in managing challenging behaviour. Children in the pre-school show growing independence. They ably get themselves dressed to go outside and enjoy helping hand out the cutlery at meal times. They are learning to work together as they negotiate the best way of tidying up the puzzles.

Staff have developed generally sound relationships with parents and carers. Their views are valued and they are encouraged to be involved. Parents are kept informed about their children's daily routines and progress through useful daily diary sheets and helpful photographic displays. They also receive informative written reports and have the opportunity to discuss their developmental progress at parent open evenings.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents do not receive written information about the Foundation Stage curriculum but do have opportunities to learn about the activities their children are doing. They see photographs of their children taking part in all six areas of learning and their daily diary sheets tell them what children have learned from an activity. Staff work well with parents, carers and other professionals to support children with identified special needs. However, children with English as an additional language are not fully integrated with their peers as staff do not always recognise children's

needs or understand the importance of working with their families. Staff are developing their skills in this area and a policy statement to support their procedures but this is not yet effective in ensuring all children's needs are met.

The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery management have developed robust recruitment and vetting procedures. This ensures that staff are suitably qualified and dedicated to the children's care. Staff qualifications vastly exceed the minimum requirements and turnover is low, which means that children benefit from consistency of care and form strong attachments with staff. Staff undergo a thorough induction period to ensure they are suitable, and great emphasis is placed on developing their skills and experience. They attend staff meetings, regular training, have appraisals and personal development plans that indicate they are valued and respected. Staff are encouraged to introduce new ideas from their training into their practice so that children are constantly stimulated and their overall development promoted.

Children benefit from being grouped appropriately. They feel secure with their peers and relate well to their key worker. Space and resources are organised adequately in order to meet the needs of the children, though some areas are cramped and less inviting and some children use resources that are not appropriate to their levels of development.

Documentation is sufficient and shared with parents. The nursery is still developing and reviewing some of its policies and procedures so currently these are not totally effective and do not support practice.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. The management team are committed to improvement and have worked hard to develop the nursery education. They have identified their strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate steps to address them. For example, the outside area is currently being developed and incorporated into the everyday curriculum, providing children with further opportunities to explore and investigate. Managers monitor and evaluate the teaching adequately but systems are not yet thorough enough to ensure all children's progress is developed and their individual needs met.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the nursery was asked to ensure staff had access to training that would enhance their skills; ensure that children in the Pre-school 1 room had appropriate access to toilet facilities; ensure all areas of the nursery are safe; and develop documentation to meet the National Standards.

Generally good progress has been made. Children greatly benefit from the skills and knowledge of a strong staff team. Training to enhance children's development, health and safety has been made available to all staff and there are effective systems in place to ensure that new skills are shared amongst the whole team. A new toilet and wash basin has been installed in the Pre-school 1 room so children have quick and easy access to this facility. Children's safety has been improved because risk assessments are carried out in every area of the nursery. However, this system is still developing and its effectiveness in need of further review. Most documentation is now in place to promote children's safety, welfare and development. There is now a behaviour management statement and a special needs statement is being developed.

At the last education inspection the nursery was asked to increase staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum; monitor the effectiveness of the planning and assessment; and develop opportunities for children to select resources and work independently.

Sound progress has been made. Key staff have attended training in the Foundation Stage and further staff are booked to attend. These staff now evaluate plans and adapt activities accordingly. They also ensure that learning objectives for the children are clear. Staff make observations of children that link to the areas of learning and are used to adapt planning for individual children. Children now have opportunities to independently select resources and engage in self-chosen play as resources are easily accessible and children are encouraged to make choices about what they need.

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

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. There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

## **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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### **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):

- promote children's awareness of how to keep themselves safe when they are playing and when using equipment in the garden
- review the child protection policy so that it complies with regulations and ensure procedures to protect children's welfare are clearly understood and followed
- review the use of space to provide comfortable rest areas for all children and ensure equipment is appropriate for children's developmental needs, with reference to furniture in the toddler room and outside equipment

### **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 opportunities for children to link sounds to letters to develop their early reading skills, and ensure all staff have consistent understanding of how to promote this
- develop teaching strategies and plans in partnership with parents, that are understood by all staff, to promote the development and inclusion of all children, regardless of their particular needs.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)