



ACE Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221549
Inspection date	18 May 2006
Inspector	Jean Goodrick

Setting Address	37 Parkside, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 1JE
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Registered person	ACE Nursery 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?

ACE Nursery School opened in 1966. It is run by a parents co-operative and operates from five rooms in a four storey building in the centre of Cambridge. The nursery serves the local area.

There are currently 79 children from two to six years on roll. Of these, 58 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery is able to accept children with special needs, although currently there are

none on roll. The group supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. The nursery day is from 08:30 to 17:30. Within those times various sessions are available.

Ten members of staff work regularly with the children. Nine have early years qualifications. Two members of staff are currently on training programmes. The setting receives support from a mentor from the Early Years Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy an excellent range of energetic physical activities which contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They develop self confidence in their physical skills as they use a wide range of equipment in the spacious and well equipped outdoor play area. Children also enjoy the freedom of the large gym at a nearby school where they express themselves with great exuberance.

Children's health and welfare is given a high priority. Staff are generally conscientious about following health and safety procedures and completing the necessary records to ensure good continuity of care for the children. However, parental permission for medication needs to be made clearer in the medication records. Children's welfare in an emergency may be compromised as staff do not have permission to seek emergency medical treatment. Staff have current first aid certificates which are regularly updated.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through regular daily routines as, for instance, they wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Staff act as good role models as they wash their hands and clean the tables. Good routines for sleep and quiet times are in place so that children are well rested and their individual needs are met. For instance, some of the younger children have a nap after their visit to the gym.

All children enjoy sufficient quantities of food and drink and staff are scrupulous in ensuring any specific dietary requirements are met. Parents provide nutritious meals and staff encourage children to eat fruit at the 'café style' snack time. Children are regularly offered drinks of water and encouraged to think about what happens to their bodies when they exercise, for instance, feeling their heart beat and breathing deeply.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and well-maintained environment; they move around freely and safely in the nursery, taking great care on the stairs between floors and

holding on to the banisters with sensitive reminders from the staff. Staff identify and minimise risks for children. For instance, there are good security procedures to restrict access to the setting and safety issues are discussed regularly at staff meetings.

Children develop good awareness of safety through practising emergency evacuations every term, although these are not timed. They learn about road safety as they discuss the new coach park which has been planned for the road in front of the nursery and watch the manager on television explaining the potential dangers. Children are very well supervised on outings including the weekly visit to the local school gym.

The good organisation of toys and resources, which are regularly checked for safety, means that children can freely move around in and between rooms. They follow their own interests, develop their independence, and begin to direct their own play.

Children are well protected and kept safe from harm as the staff have a good understanding of the nursery's policies and procedures. Staff are aware of the importance of keeping up to date with relevant child protection training. The nursery has procedures in line with those set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled at the nursery. They enjoy very warm, affectionate relationships with the staff who are attentive to their needs. Staff create a calm, purposeful environment where children's voices are heard and where children are responded to with great care and respect. Therefore children develop good self-esteem and are confident to attempt new challenges and to approach adults, for instance, showing the Ofsted inspector their 'new shoes', and asking for help when needed. Children develop independence in everyday tasks, clearing up after their snack and putting resources back on the shelf when they have finished with them. They play happily together and develop positive relationships with one another.

Children are interested and involved in the broad range of activities which are on offer. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of child development, and have attended training in the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Children benefit from an age-appropriate range of resources which promote all areas of their development. They have good opportunities to select their own resources, follow their own interests and begin to direct their own play as, for instance, they create a restaurant in the role play area.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress in their individual learning because practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn most effectively. Planning is in place and covers all the areas of learning. The nursery is currently taking part in a pilot scheme to trial a Foundation Stage profile and staff meticulously

observe and record children's achievements. Therefore planning and assessment is being developed so that activities build on what individual children know, understand and can do. Children make good progress along the stepping stones. Their progress is shared with parents who also contribute their observations to the assessment records. The environment is organised to support children's learning and staff use good questioning skills to challenge and extend the children's learning.

Children display high levels of confidence and are eager to participate in new activities. They are actively involved in their learning, and have good opportunities to select their own resources independently and develop their own play. They develop warm, trusting relationships with adults and with their peers, negotiating for resources, sharing and taking turns, for instance, with the footballs in the gym saying 'it's your turn now'. Children concentrate and persevere in tasks that stimulate them.

Most children are confident communicators, initiating conversations with adults and speaking and listening in a familiar group, for instance, at 'chat time' although some children become rather restless in this large group. Children handle books with great care and thoroughly enjoy listening to familiar stories such as 'Mog goes to the Vet'. They have good opportunities to recognise their names and develop early writing skills but limited opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. Children take great delight in playing spontaneously with words and rhymes, for instance 'paw' and 'sore', 'put the mustard in the custard' and the 'conker nut tree'. They demonstrate a good understanding of numbers, counting and calculation and they have some opportunities to practise this skill in the daily routine and in their play. Children use mathematical language, for instance, as they compare sizes and learn about shapes in their topic.

Children learn about the natural environment as they observe stick insects and grow plants in the garden. They design and construct using a good range of materials, such as junk modelling. Children have some opportunities to learn about the festivals of different cultures. They have superb resources to explore their creativity in the room devoted to creative activities. Children become completely absorbed as they explore patterns using corrugated card and make their own collages. They explore a wide range of media and materials and engage in imaginative play in the well-furnished role play area, re-enacting familiar scenarios. Children express themselves through singing, music and drama, joining in exuberantly with actions in the dinosaur song and having a lot of fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are highly valued as individuals. Their needs are well met as the nursery gathers clear information from parents and this contributes to children's well-being. Children access a very good range of resources and activities which promote a positive view of the wider world and help them to understand about their differences and similarities. Currently there are no children attending the provision who have special needs but staff have attended relevant training and have a good knowledge and understanding of the issues involved.

Children generally behave very well. Staff are consistent in their behaviour management strategies and children are given sensitive support in understanding expectations of behaviour. Staff are very good role models showing respect to each other and the children and helping the children to resolve any differences with their 'friends'. They receive plenty of praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements.

Children have opportunities to learn about the world they live in and all members of society, for instance, the 'people who help us'. They play with small world figures, look at books, listen to music and take part in a varied range of cultural and religious celebrations. Therefore the provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff know the children and families very well, so that children feel secure and have a strong sense of belonging, which is described by parents as being like 'an extended family'. Older children attend after school and during some school holidays and staff are careful to ensure that the care of younger children is not adversely affected by their presence. Parents and carers are involved in all aspects of the 'co-operative' including practical help such as decorating. They receive comprehensive information about the nursery so that they know about activities and events and they have daily opportunities to discuss their children's progress with their key workers. Parents give glowing reports of the care their children receive and the attitudes of staff. Questionnaires have recently been introduced so that feedback is obtained and responses made to the issues raised.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage and they receive regular reports about their children's progress towards the early learning goals. They also contribute to their children's assessment records. Information about current topics is displayed so that parents and children can contribute resources.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery environment is well organised and activities are set out so that children can move around safely. Children benefit from the rigorous recruitment procedures which ensure that staff have suitable experience and qualifications to work with children. Staff regularly attend training to update their childcare practice. The nursery has a comprehensive framework of policies and procedures which promote children's welfare. Members of the staff team, including students, are clear about their roles and responsibilities and generally follow the necessary procedures to ensure the health and safety of the children. High adult to child ratios mean that children are very well supported both inside and outside the nursery.

The quality of the leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Regular staff and management meetings mean that everyone works very well together as a team ensuring that the learning environment promotes positive outcomes for children. Staff are supported in attending relevant training to develop their skills and expertise for the benefit of the children. There is a strong commitment

to continual improvement of the provision. However, there is potential for further development in systems to monitor and evaluate areas for improvement, so that the quality of teaching and learning remains high. The management has been working successfully to improve the partnership with parents. A protective ethos is fostered and the equal opportunities policy is implemented well so that the nursery is an environment where every child matters.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was agreed that staff would be vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau and that all relevant information about vetting and staff qualifications would be kept on the premises in staff files. It was also agreed that the child protection policy would be revised to include procedures to be followed if an allegation is made against a staff member. Parental permission to seek emergency medical treatment and advice was also identified as an area for improvement. Staff records now include information about their qualifications and vetting status. Staff who have not yet been vetted do not have unsupervised contact with children so that children are always cared for by people who are suitable to do so. There are now secure procedures in place to ensure that children are well protected as the child protection policy has been extended to include procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation against a member of staff. The recommendation to obtain permission from parents to seek emergency treatment and advice has been carried forward at this inspection.

At the last nursery education inspection it was agreed that curriculum planning would be developed, using the stepping stones, to ensure that all children receive sufficient challenge in all the areas of learning. It was also agreed that staff would develop a more systematic approach to observing and assessing children's progress along the stepping stones, including parents' observation of their children's progress. A system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for nursery education would also be developed so that areas could be identified for further improvement, including staff training needs. Observation and assessment have developed well as the nursery is participating in a pilot project for the recording of children's progress which staff are carrying out conscientiously. Good progress has been made in the contribution that parents make to their children's records and the feedback that is obtained from parents through questionnaires so that information is shared for the benefit of the children. Some areas for improvement are identified. However, recommendations to continue to develop assessment and planning, using the new assessment tool to develop planning based on individual children's progress along the stepping stones, and to develop systems for the evaluation of nursery education, including staff training, for the benefit of all the children have been carried forward at this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted 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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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):

- request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment and ensure that written parental permission is recorded clearly before administering medication.

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):

- continue to develop assessment and planning in order to ensure that individual children receive appropriate challenge
- continue to develop systems to monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education so that any weakness can be identified and improved.

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