



The Alphabet House Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	132242
Inspection date	16 May 2006
Inspector	Jill Dawn Butler
Setting Address	23 Harold Road, Upton park, London, E13 0SQ
Telephone number	020 8548 9466
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Registered person	The Alphabet House 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?

The Alphabet House Nursery School (Harold Road) is one of five privately owned businesses run by Alphabet House Nursery Schools Limited. It opened in 1999 and operates from a purpose-built two storey building with six rooms. It is situated in a residential area in Upton Park, East London. A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. It is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 50 children aged from one month to under five years on roll. Of these 16 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports two children with special educational needs, and also supports 33 children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 14 staff. Eleven of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The nursery offers a Montessori approach with older children, and combines this method with the Foundation Stage curriculum.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are developing a good understanding of how to follow personal hygiene routines, for example, they know to wash their hands after using the toilet, and before snack and meal times. Children are well protected from infection by practitioners consistently promoting good hygiene practices. Babies drink from sterilised cups and bottles, and practitioners use disposable gloves when changing nappies. All visitors to the baby room take their shoes off prior to entering. Tables are wiped and disinfected before and after lunch and snack times.

Children's good health is promoted by the implementation of appropriate sickness and medication policies. Children do not brush their teeth after eating lunch which would promote their oral health and hygiene, however, there is an intention to introduce this practice shortly. Accident and incident records are appropriately completed, with confidentiality maintained. Children can expect to be treated appropriately in an emergency situation, with first aid boxes located in each room, and several practitioners with first aid qualifications on the premises at any one time. Children's individual sleep needs are well met. There are separate cots for babies, and good supervision is maintained, with sleep charts kept for parents to view.

Practitioners are appropriately deployed and a key worker system works effectively, with positive relationships with individual children and parents maintained. This contributes towards children's emotional well-being. Children receive close, individual attention, although there are some inconsistencies in the care of the youngest babies in this respect. Handovers from parents are handled competently, and most children happily settle.

Children engage in a good range of physical activities. All children routinely use the outdoor area at least twice a day. Here, they run, throw balls, and use a range of wheeled vehicles including tricycles and scooters.

Healthy eating is well promoted. Children eat a diet which is balanced, varied and nutritious. A vegetarian option is always provided and the needs of children with special dietary requirements are effectively catered for. Children eat fruit at the nursery each day, and additionally take a piece of fruit home with them. Babies' milk

is hygienically prepared and older children have routine access to drinks. On occasion, however, weaknesses in communication regarding the preparation of food requires children to wait for extended periods for their lunch or snack to be ready.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Effective health and safety risk assessment procedures ensure children's safety within the premises. The environment is bright and welcoming, with attractive wall displays. The spacious lobby is kept free from obstruction and hazards which effectively promotes children's safety when moving around the building. Vision panels in doors aid visibility for monitoring that children are kept safe and two heights for handles provides additional security. Downstairs provides a more spacious environment than upstairs. There is robust, high fencing and gates in place to ensure children are kept secure when using the outdoor play area. However, the area currently in use is all paved, with no safety surfaces. This is a temporary situation as children are unable to safely use the additional grassed outdoor play area whilst neighbouring building works take place.

A good range of toys, equipment and furniture are available in each of the group rooms. These are age and developmentally appropriate. Older children have access to Montessori equipment, which supplements their play opportunities.

Children develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are successfully able to negotiate their movements within rooms and around furniture and equipment, which are effectively organised. Children are well supported as they discover boundary limits, and they learn about rules in a clear and consistent manner, for example, taking care when ascending stairs. Their risk of accidental injury is minimised by the practitioner's diligent supervision of children, both indoors and outdoors. Effective use of space allows children to work at tables, enjoy role play and creative activities, and move around freely. In the babies' room, floor cushions and mats contribute towards providing a safe environment for those who are crawling and emerging walkers. Children are well protected in the event of a fire. Fire drills are regularly undertaken, which are recorded and evaluated, and there is appropriate signage and fire fighting equipment around the premises.

Children's welfare is effectively safeguarded through practitioners having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to child protection, and knowing how to implement relevant procedures. All practitioners are vetted. There is an appropriate collection of children procedure and a secure entry system, with all movements of visitors monitored and recorded. There is CCTV in operation in the office and one of the classrooms, which provides additional security.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are confident and happy and are purposefully engaged when participating in

the interesting range of activities presented at the nursery. Planning is consistently well implemented and documented throughout the nursery, and is informed by regular observations and assessments by practitioners on individual children. The Birth to three matters framework is well developed in group rooms for under three year olds. Children's attempts to converse are generally interpreted well, responded to and valued, helping them to become skilful communicators. They happily engage in creative arts and crafts, exploration and discovery, for example, children squeal with delight as they play with bubbles in water.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Practitioners make good use of planned and routine activities to extend children's learning. They utilise effective questioning techniques to stimulate thought and challenge children. Practitioners have good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, which is supplemented by the provision of Montessori experiences and equipment. Children are well supported and allowed to learn at their own pace, and there is good understanding of children's individual needs. There are high expectations for children's behaviour. Children form positive relationships and share space together well.

Children show good levels of concentration. They play an active role in their learning as they make their own choices about what they want to play with. They learn to share and negotiate, as well as support each other in their activities, for example, when helping each other to find pieces to complete a challenging puzzle. They excitedly co-operate with each other when using a range of wheeled vehicles outdoors. Children confidently ask for help and support, which is readily given by practitioners, for example, when using playdough modelling tools. They take personal responsibility when they help themselves to resources, such as pencils, scissors and paper, which are easily accessible. Children take themselves to the toilet, and wash their own hands. They enjoy setting the table at mealtimes and can use eating utensils well. They help themselves to drinks and tidy up after themselves, including putting away their sleeping mats when they wake up.

Children are very well behaved. They often resolve disputes themselves. Children learn about a range of cultural traditions, through exploration during topic work. This enables them to learn about, and value, different beliefs and ways of life.

Children confidently contribute to discussions individually and in small and large groupings, which promotes their linguistic and communication skills. Children are asked open ended questions to extend their thinking, for example, when playing with puppets they construct a scenario and consider where they are going, how they are getting there and what issues they need to consider. Their literacy skills are promoted when they sing a familiar alphabet song, they have access to a word bank of cards with familiar basic words, and are currently exploring the letter "r". Children enjoy looking at books, although access is restricted through limited space being available. They take home reading books each day, with target words to learn. They can recognise their own and others' names when setting the table. Children enjoy mark marking and writing for different purposes, and are well supported when writing their own names on their work.

Children make sound progress in mathematical development through participating in counting songs, for example, "five little monkeys" and use subtraction as well as addition. They count how many jugs of water are needed to fill a bottle, and how many steps they take to go downstairs. However, opportunities for calculation and mathematical problem solving are not sufficiently routinely presented throughout the day. Children learn about shapes routinely and through topic work, and enjoy constructing models of various sizes.

Children's curiosity is well promoted. They are learning about the natural world including life processes, seasons and the days of the week. Children gain routine access to sand and water, and investigate objects to see if they float or sink in the water. They become competent in design and construction and learn how to use tools including screwdrivers and pliers. Participation in interesting outings enables children to learn about their local environment and extend and widen their play and learning experiences.

Children get opportunities to participate in a good range of activities to promote their physical development when they gain regular access to the outdoor play area. They handle objects such as pencils, paint brushes and scissors competently. They complete puzzles independently and show good hand/eye co-ordination. They demonstrate a good understanding of their health and bodies. When eating their lunch, they talk about getting bigger if they eat all their food, and that food gives them energy. They describe their tummy rumbling when they are hungry.

Children extend their imagination and express themselves creatively through exploring a range of media and materials. Their sensory experiences are extended when they use a range of Montessori equipment, for example, sandpaper, wooden and metal objects. The concept of colour is consistently reinforced. Children enjoy singing familiar songs, and making music together.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Good knowledge of children's linguistic, racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds contributes towards their individual needs being well met. Many children with English as an additional language attend the nursery and good practice is in place to aid communication. This is strengthened by diversity within the group of practitioners who, between them, can speak a range of community languages. Children learn about themselves and the wider society as they engage with the broad range of activities, play and learning resources. They interact with the displays and labels around the nursery which promote positive images and include various scripts, flags, posters and photographs. Through planned activities children learn about festivals which are celebrated and acknowledged through the year including Diwali, Chinese New Year, Eid, and St. Patrick's Day. Girls and boys are encouraged to fully participate in all activities and they play well together, for example, when role playing. The nursery demonstrates a positive attitude towards promoting an inclusive environment and there are good arrangements in place to support children with special educational needs. Overall, this positive approach fosters children's social,

moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Children are well behaved, and are quickly comforted when distressed. Practitioners act as positive role models and children learn to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and age appropriate management of behaviour. Children feel valued and affirmed, and develop self confidence. They begin to learn to share and take turns. They form good relationships with each other, and older, more able children are happy to assist younger children with tasks.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good. Effective communication is maintained through a range of methods, which promotes children receiving continuity and consistency in their care. A parents' notice board in the lobby displays current information, policies and procedures, and monthly newsletters are distributed. Parents of babies and toddlers receive a daily written report. Parents are encouraged to contribute towards their child's learning. They have routine access to their child's progress records, they receive quarterly assessments, annual reports and parents' evenings are organised once a year. Parents' comments on the nursery are sought through a formal parent evaluation exercise taking place twice a year, when parents are asked to complete a questionnaire.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The manager implements effective and well organised systems to promote the smooth running of the nursery. She has appropriate qualifications and experience. She continually monitors and evaluates policy and practice at the nursery and is keen to implement beneficial developments. A senior manager oversees and quality assures performance at the nursery. Good use is made of early years advisory officers. There is no deputy currently employed, but the new post holder is due to start shortly. Regulations and conditions of registration are known and adhered to. Detailed policies and procedures are made accessible to practitioners and parents.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Practitioners have knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Comprehensive planning, assessments and recordings take place, which have regard to individual children's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals.

Children are cared for in a well organised environment. Practitioners have designated roles and areas of responsibility and are encouraged to play an active role within the nursery and at meetings. Good practitioner to children ratios are in place in all the group rooms, which enables children to receive good attention. The majority of practitioners are suitably qualified and attendance at in-service training to develop knowledge and skills is encouraged. Two room leaders are new and are currently being inducted by the manager. The manager is diligent in forward planning to cover any absences, and there is a pool of practitioners available which can be used as relief cover.

Comprehensive record keeping takes place. All records are stored in a manner to protect confidentiality. A complaints record is kept. Registers include times of

children's arrival and departure. All information is well organised and easily retrievable. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the nursery was asked to review planning and observation of group activities with the under threes, to ensure individual children's needs are met. The Birth to three matters framework is now well developed in the nursery. Observations and assessments are regularly and routinely undertaken, which inform planning and targets for the next steps in learning and development. The nursery was also asked to improve the confidence of practitioners in promoting good behaviour. All practitioners act as good role models, helping children to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and age appropriate management of behaviour.

With regards to nursery education, the nursery was asked to improve the opportunities for children to develop more independence, choice and creative expression during mealtimes and when using resources. Additionally, the nursery was asked to extend literacy opportunities, and monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. Children are now able to choose what they wish to eat during snack and mealtimes from the available selection, older children take responsibility for setting the table, and they use their imagination and creativity when, for example, pursuing arts and crafts activities and engaging in role play scenarios. Due to limited space, opportunities for children to extend their interest in books and stories remains an area for improvement. However, systems to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning are now well established, and good use has been made of support from early years advisory teachers.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 Ofsted has received two complaints. The first complaint relates to National Standard 2: Organisation and National Standard 7: Health, concerning insufficient staff on duty and an accident involving a child. An Ofsted childcare inspector carried out an unannounced visit to investigate the complaint. As a result of the visit Ofsted made a recommendation. The provider remains qualified for registration.

The second complaint relates to National Standard 1: Suitable Person and National Standard 13: Child Protection, concerning the inappropriate behaviour of a member of staff. The complaint was investigated by another agency and the member of staff was disciplined. Following the outcome of this investigation an Ofsted childcare inspector carried out an unannounced visit and raised two actions to ensure the National Standards are complied with. The provider remains qualified for 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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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):

- ensure consistency in maintaining positive relationships with babies to support their emotional well-being
- prevent any delays in the serving of snacks and meals

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 additional routine opportunities for children to extend their interest in and enjoyment of books
- provide additional routine opportunities for calculating and using mathematical concepts for problem solving

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