

Alphabet Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	221576
Inspection date	17/02/2011
Inspector	Anna Davies

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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

Alphabet Day Nursery opened in 1993. It operates from brick-built premises on the edge of Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. The nursery has three main playrooms and serves the local area. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6.00pm for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

The nursery is registered on the Early years Register. A maximum of 54 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 87 children in the early years age group on roll. The nursery supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

There are a total of 18 members of staff working directly with the children, 11 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3. The Manager holds a Degree in Early Years and has achieved Early Years Professional Status. The Deputy holds a Level 4 qualification. Two members of staff are currently working towards higher qualifications. The nursery also employs a cook and a cleaner and provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The friendly and inclusive nature of the setting ensures that all children receive a warm welcome and settle well with the support of the caring and nurturing team of staff. Children enjoy participating in a varied range of stimulating activities which allow them to make good progress in their learning and development. Staff have developed secure skills in observing and assessing children's progress towards the early learning goals and planning for their future learning. Good partnership working with parents and carers ensures that the staff know the children well and are able to effectively respect and meet their individual needs.

The committed and enthusiastic staff team, manager and proprietor strive to develop and improve the provision. There is a positive approach to self-evaluation and effective procedures are in place to support the continuous review and evaluation of the provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- gather more in-depth information about children's starting points on entry into the nursery so that the good progress they make can be clearly demonstrated
- develop the use of toys, resources and images that enable young children to gain a positive view of diversity
- implement an effective system that provides a two-way flow of information with other providers who deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to benefit those children who attend more than one setting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to safeguard children and the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child in their care. The majority of staff have received training in this area. A clear safeguarding policy is in place and accessible to parents. Recruitment procedures are secure and all staff have undergone the necessary checks to ensure their suitability. It is fully understood that those staff for whom checks are just being initiated, are never left alone with children until checks return as clear. Effective induction and appraisal systems ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and that their continued performance is monitored. Staff are well qualified as a team and work well together. They share an enthusiasm and commitment towards their work which benefits the children they care for. Children play in a safe and secure environment, due to staff's good understanding of assessing risks in the children's surroundings, both inside and outside as well as on outings. For example, much consideration has been given to safety when developing the outdoor areas, protective padding surrounds the wooden posts of the gazebo and safety surface has been laid. Written risk assessments are of good quality and are effective in identifying and minimising potential risks to children. A wealth of policies and procedures underpin the good practice at the setting and these are fully understood and implemented effectively by all staff.

The nursery is bright, welcoming, clean and safe. Space and resources are organised well to support children's learning in each room. There is easy access to toys and resources arranged at a low level to encourage independent play in all rooms. Children's work is displayed throughout the rooms which gives them a strong sense of belonging and ensures that the areas are welcoming. The garden has been further developed since the last inspection and now enables children to enjoy many activities to support their learning, such as, digging, planting, balancing and climbing. There is also a separate outdoor space for babies which enables them to get plenty of fresh air whilst maintaining their safety. Staff promote inclusive practice well. Children who speak English as an additional language are effectively supported. Clear systems are in place to work closely with parents and any outside agencies in order to fully support children's additional needs. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that strategies used between home and the nursery are consistent.

Staff have a good knowledge and understand of individual children and their families which helps them to meet their needs successfully. Children celebrate a

good range of both local and multicultural festivals encouraging them to become aware of and explore diversity. However, although the nursery makes use of some resources reflecting diversity, these are not prominent enough during everyday play to enable children to receive consistent messages. Furthermore there are few positive images reflecting diversity displayed.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the benefits of working closely with parents. A wealth of information is provided to parents about the nursery through comprehensive policies, a wide range of informative notice boards, regular newsletters and topic letters which outline how parents can support their children's learning at home. Staff take time to talk to parents when they collect their children, ensuring that they receive a good amount of information about their child's day as well as this being recorded in a 'home to nursery' book. Parents regularly contribute their comments about what their children know and can do, in their assessment files. Parents comment that they find their children's learning and development information very informative. A positive and flexible settling in process ensures that children make a smooth transition into nursery according to their individual needs and parent's wishes. Feedback from parents about the care and education offered at the nursery is very positive. The nursery has established effective partnerships with local schools to ensure that the transition for children from nursery to school is smooth. However, their partnership working with other providers where children attend more than one setting, is less well established.

There is a good commitment from all staff to attend training on a regular basis in order to consistently update their learning and skills. The proprietor, manager and staff team share the same vision which is to continue to provide good quality care and education for the children they care for. Clear systems of self-evaluation are in place and effective in identifying areas for further development, these are well-targeted. For example, since the last inspection the outdoor area has been re-developed and consideration has been given to babies comfort with the purchasing of bean bags to make a cosy, comfortable area in the baby room.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are very happy and settled in the pre-school. They leave their parents confidently and settle readily to activities. A good range of age-appropriate activities and experiences are offered to children, both planned and child initiated. This ensures children are actively engaged in their learning. Staff enthusiastically support children's learning well. They use open-ended questions to challenge children's thinking, such as, 'What else can we find in mud?' when children find worms in the flower bed. Children respond with answers, such as, 'carrots' which demonstrates their increasing knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Staff know the individual children well and respect their choices, such as, during a game of 'Mr. Bear' where some children prefer not to wear the blindfold scarf over their eyes. A good variety of teaching methods are used to actively engage children. For example, the use of finger puppets to promote simple number songs, promotes enjoyment and keeps children actively engaged as they

learn. Staff encourage children to explore and investigate. For example, as a toddler examines a pastry brush from the good range of household and natural objects they have to explore, the member of staff shows him what the bristles feel like when 'tickled' on his hand.

Observation, planning and assessment arrangements are well established. Each child has an assessment folder which contains regular observations and reviews of children's progress. When children start, information is gathered about their routines, interests and needs. However, there is no specific information gathered about children's starting points in relation to their learning and development to aid assessment and to demonstrate the good progress they make from entry. Next steps are identified and filtered through to the planning. Planning also takes account of children's own choices and ideas as well as specific information relating to children who require extra support. Information from parents is valued to help staff plan and provide activities that are meaningful to the children. For example, older children's parents write information about activities that children have done at home or special achievements and a board in the toddler room is regularly updated with children's interests from home.

Children's independence is encouraged as they confidently see to their personal needs and pour their own drinks at snack time. They enjoy very warm and friendly relationships with staff and each other and their emotional needs are well supported. Children spontaneously use good manners and understand about working together. For example, they say 'excuse me' to their friends and suggest 'we do it together' after deciding that they need to clear up some spilt soil in the role play area. Children have good opportunities to mark-make and use mark-making for different purposes. They ascribe meaning to their marks, such as, using emergent writing to label their pictures for displays, such as, 'Handas Surprise'. The print rich environment throughout the nursery ensures that children are able to begin to recognise familiar words. Children enjoy reading books either by themselves or with staff, they understand that books are read from front to back and staff support their early reading skills by pointing to the words as they read the story to children. Children's language is developing well across the nursery as staff talk to children, responding to their chat and modelling back clear words without negating their attempts at speech. Emphasis is given during the planning of activities in all rooms, to opportunities for introducing and promoting new vocabulary. Staff interact confidently and positively with babies, always down at their level. Older children readily initiate conversations and discuss their ideas. Children persevere at solving simple problems. For example, when completing puzzles children realise when a piece is missing and that the pieces they do have, do not belong to their puzzle. Children demonstrate curiosity. For example, toddlers experiment with media, such as, water, watching when they drop containers into the water tray, how the water splashes up or when they post lentil and oat mixture through holes in the play tray, it comes out of the bottom. Children learn about growing and taking care of living things. For example, they plant, grow and taste fruit and vegetables and care for their baby, African land snail or enjoy watching butterflies grow and develop before releasing them. Children's developing information technology skills are well supported through a good range of electronic toys and the use of a computer in the pre-school room. Children ably use a mouse to make selections on screen. All of these activities help

to lay secure foundations for children's future economic well-being.

Children learn about healthy lifestyles through a good range of activities and child friendly information displayed around the nursery. All children enjoy regular exercise and fresh air in the outdoor play areas. Play equipment in these areas offers lots of physical challenges which children enjoy and benefit from. Young babies are given good opportunities to develop their physical skills, such as, safe spaces to learn to roll and toddle. Babies individual routines for sleeping and eating are followed which ensures that their physical needs are well met. All children have good opportunities to be creative through a wide range of art and craft, imaginative and musical activities. For example, children enjoy the changing role play areas, such as, an indoor flower bed where they gain experience of digging, planting and travelling soil in a wheelbarrow. A good range of sensory activities enable children to begin to understand texture, sound and colours. For example, babies explore bottles filled with different substances, such as, sand, coloured liquid and glitter and toddlers enjoy using upturned copper jelly moulds to create different sounds when they beat them with wooden implements.

Children are cared for in a safe, clean and hygienic environment. They are learning about keeping themselves safe through a variety of activities, such as, safety circles, the use of 'stop' signs in the nursery so that they are clear about where they can go and not go and through learning about road safety when out in the local community, holding hands and wearing high visibility jackets so that they can be seen. Children and staff follow good hygiene routines. For example, all children have individual flannels which are washed after each use. Bathrooms are very child friendly with low-level soap and paper towel dispensers and toilets which enables children to have independence in their self-care skills, this ensures that good hygiene practices can be promoted from a young age. All food is home cooked on the premises by a cook and fresh produce is all sourced locally. All meals and snacks are healthy, balanced and nutritious. Staff sit with children to eat meals which promotes a lovely social occasion. The nursery have received a five-star hygiene award two years running. Sleep and rest facilities are good. Children sleep according to their needs and staff are mindful in ensuring that this is a restful time. For example, signs are placed on the toddler room door when children are sleeping, requesting that no-one walks through which ensures that children get the undisturbed rest they need. Most staff hold valid first aid qualifications which ensures that minor accidents can be dealt with effectively. Records of accidents and any medication needing to be administered are well maintained. Clear systems are in place to ensure the health of children with allergies is safeguarded. Children behave well in the nursery. This is because of the stimulating activities that keep them engaged and the positive interaction and good levels of attention that they receive from staff. Minor incidents regarding sharing, are handled positively and sensitively.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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