

Alexandra House

20 Crownhill Fort Road, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5BX

Inspection date	10/07/2013
Previous inspection date	10/05/2012

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	4
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
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The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is inadequate

- There is a lack of supervision and support within the leadership and management, which results in ineffective monitoring of performance and practice.
- Vetting and recruitment procedures are not always rigorously implemented, to ensure that all adults involved with the setting are suitable to do so.
- Staff do not fully protect children's health as they do not consistently follow their policies and procedures when administering medication.
- The key person system is not fully effective across the nursery, so there are some inconsistencies in communication and relationships with parents.
- Changes of staff, their deployment and organisation sometimes result in less effective supervision of children.

It has the following strengths

- Children are happy and enjoy their play in a stimulating environment, which has a friendly atmosphere.
- Staff are caring in their approach, so babies, toddlers and children show confidence and feel secure.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspectors observed children in their indoor and outdoor play activities.
- The inspectors had discussions with the manager, deputies, staff and parents.
- The inspectors had a meeting with the manager and deputy and a joint observation was undertaken.
- The inspectors read and discussed a sample of children's development records.
- The inspectors scrutinised policies, procedures, records and documentation, in relation to the concerns.

Inspector

Julie Wright

Full Report

Information about the setting

Alexandra House registered in 2004. It is a charity-run organisation, operating from purpose-built premises to the north of Plymouth centre. The setting is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register. Care is available for children aged from three months to five years. There are currently 135 children on roll. The setting receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. It opens each weekday from 7.30am to 5pm, for 51 weeks of the year. The setting supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who learn English as an additional language. There are 23 staff employed to work with the children. The manager, who is supernumerary, is a qualified primary school teacher. There are two staff with an early years degree and the rest have early years National Vocational Qualifications to at least level 2.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take the following enforcement action:

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

- ensure that regular staff appraisals and supervision is carried out with lead practitioners to identify any training needs, and secure opportunities for continued professional development for staff; this is with particular reference to the nursery manager.

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- ensure all staff understand and implement the procedure to keep a written record each time a medicine is administered to a child, and to inform the child's parents and/or carers as soon as reasonably practicable.
- have effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises), are suitable to do so.
- ensure staffing arrangements, including for temporary staff, meet the needs of children at all times.

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- extend further the information obtained about children's starting points in order to make the best possible provision for children on entry.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Babies and toddlers are cared for in rooms on the first floor, and pre-school children are downstairs. All areas of the nursery are well equipped with toys and resources to interest children and adequately promote their development. For example, staff engage babies and toddlers in water play. Young children enjoy rolling balls down tubes and repeating words encouraged by staff, such as 'splash and splosh'. Small groups of younger children explore musical instruments by tapping drums and using shakers to make sounds. Staff encourage the children to describe and compare what they can hear, such as 'loud and quiet'. Children have fun as they play, so they develop positive attitudes to future learning.

Suitable observation, assessment and planning procedures are in place across the nursery.

Staff take initial information from parents about their children when they first attend. This helps staff to follow children's personal routines, preferences and to know about their backgrounds. However, these initial forms do not clearly identify children's current stage of development to help inform initial planning. Parents contribute to children's development records with the use of 'wow' forms, to show achievements made at home. Key persons aim to meet with parents to discuss children's progress each term but owing to staff shortages this is not happening for all children. Staff complete summary reports for all children, including the required progress check for children aged two years.

Pre-school children benefit from consistent routines, with times for small and large group activities. Staff divide the children into suitable age and ability groups, so that children have appropriate challenges. For example, older children listen to longer stories to develop their concentration. The younger ones enjoy looking at pictures with staff, repeating words and phrases. This activity helps children's language and literacy development. To promote shared learning at home, children can also borrow books. Children are keen to play and show interest in their surroundings. They move around with confidence and make choices from accessible resources. Staff respond to children's ideas and vary their planning accordingly. For example, when children want to 'do a treasure hunt', they drew a map and, with staff support, this led to making pirate hats. Children wrote their names, put on their hats and went off to look for treasure outside. They confidently explained that the magnifying glass was 'to make it bigger' and then showed people what treasure they have found. Therefore, this activity promoted children's development in a number of areas and demonstrates how staff extend their learning. There are structured key group times, when children complete activities, talk about them and learn to take turns, which helps to provide children with skills in readiness for school. Children enjoy regular baking activities, which prompts mathematical understanding as they weigh and measure ingredients.

Staff engage children in 'phonic activities', to promote communication and language development. They use visual aids; for example, a sequence of pictures shows a timeline to help children understand 'what happens next'. Staff are planning to introduce the use of Makaton signs, to provide more support in children's communication skills. When needed, children are given individual support; for instance, a member of staff might take children to play a game in a separate area. However, staff do not always prevent distractions, such as loud music, which impacts on children's language and listening skills. To support children who learn English as an additional language, staff ask parents for key words, such as 'hello' and names for comforters. This promotes inclusion and helps children to settle into the nursery.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

There is a key person system in place; however, the effectiveness of this varies in practice. Each family has a key person and a named deputy, to cover for absence in order to promote consistent care. However, staff do not always minimise the number of carers, particularly for new babies, to promote secure attachments effectively. Some staff know children well and have strong relationships, but other temporary or new staff have not

fully established their role. This leads to some parents not being easily able to contact their child's key person to receive information about their child's day. For example, some parents are very complementary about staff, while others express concern about the number of carers their children may have. Staff are caring towards children and meet individual care needs. As an example, they are attentive to babies feeding and sleeping routines, so babies are content. Staff are careful about sun safety and frequently apply high-factor sun creams to children. Children like to help to put on their cream and find a sunhat to wear, and they know they 'need to keep safe in the hot sun'. Older children talk about 'sitting in the shade' and help themselves to water at the drinks station. They clearly show confidence and independent skills.

Suitable arrangements are in place for the provision of children's food and drink. Staff are conscientious about food hygiene as they wear disposable aprons, gloves and hair protectors. They provide nutritional information for parents about packed lunches. Children enjoy sociable snack times, which include a variety of fresh fruits and things that children have made in nursery. These include celebration cakes, for example when children are leaving the nursery. Children learn how things grow as they plant vegetables and fruits in the garden. They show pleasure as they discover a new raspberry and talk about when it is ready to eat. Staff are aware of children's individual dietary needs and medical requirements. They record information and discuss care arrangements with parents, for example with regard to allergies and medications. In the baby rooms, staff demonstrate secure knowledge of the procedures to protect and promote children's health. They maintain clear medication records in accordance with the welfare requirements. However, there are omissions in the records of medication kept in the pre-school room, and practice is inconsistent in protecting children's health.

Staff provide plenty of outdoor play opportunities for children in both age groups. Children like being able to mix with their friends and siblings. This helps children to feel confident in their surroundings as they progress through the nursery. However, at times it is difficult for staff to supervise their age group of children rigorously. For example, children develop physical skills as they freely run around the large garden and try to climb apparatus. Although there are sufficient staff, they do not always closely supervise the climbing frame area, to help children and to fully minimise risks. Staff take advantage of impromptu situations to promote spontaneous learning. For instance, emergency vehicles in the vicinity prompt excitement as children mimic the sirens. They wave with enthusiasm at a helicopter flying overhead and wonder if the pilot can see them. Children return indoors with staff and have fun as they wind bandages on their bodies. Staff ring a bell as a signal for children that it will soon be time to come in and children quickly respond to this, which shows their understanding of routines.

Children behave well and develop a sense of responsibility. For example, they help to tidy toys up and to clear away their plates. Staff use positive language in their directions and suggestions to children. For instance, a member of staff says, 'Can we leave the bike outside?' and 'That will be wonderful'. They gently remind children about 'walking feet please' so children do not run and hurt themselves or others indoors. Children take part in a number of games which promote physical coordination and social skills. They enjoy holding a parachute as a large group and manoeuvre a ball around the fabric. In smaller groups, they do puzzles and play matching games with staff, which promote mathematical

understanding. Children show self-esteem as they proudly prepare for their 'graduation' when they leave to start school in September.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The inspection was initially brought forward due to significant safeguarding concerns. Ofsted undertook an investigation, which resulted in seven actions being set around safeguarding, general suitability and information sharing. A further concern was received in respect of staffing, organisation and children's welfare. Inspectors undertook a full review of the safeguarding actions response, which have been satisfactorily addressed. Staff have had recent child protection training, in order to update their knowledge and awareness of safeguarding procedures. They have updated their policies and procedures in line with advice and guidance from Plymouth City Council Local Safeguarding Children Board. Appropriate systems are generally in place to provide support, advice and guidance to staff and to discuss any specific safeguarding issues, in order to protect children. Designated persons are aware of their roles and responsibilities to monitor child protection concerns, maintain records and liaise with relevant agencies. Arrangements for supervision, appraisals and induction are in place for the deputies and the staff. However, the registered provider does not conduct appraisals or supervision of the manager, which is a breach of requirement. In addition, the nominated person has not yet completed suitability checks for Ofsted and is not meeting their responsibilities under the Early Years Foundation Stage.

With regards to the concerns around staffing, organisation and children's welfare, the inspectors found that there are procedures in place to record the administration of medication. However, these are not consistently completed throughout the nursery as not every medicine administered is recorded. This compromises children's health and is a breach of the safeguarding and welfare requirements. The nursery is having difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff, which has resulted in a number of changes to key persons for some families. This has an impact on continuity of care, communication and positive relationships. Staff maintain ratios by using casual and agency staff when necessary some of whom are regular and therefore become familiar with the children. However, at other times, agency staff have insufficient time, information and support to be effective in the care of children. Staff are appropriately deployed, although there are variations in the course of the day in their organisation. For example, there are periods when children are appropriately grouped and well supervised, but organisation is less effective towards the end of the day. Staff are not always vigilant in checking the numbers of children that they are responsible for, such as when returning a group from one area to another.

Leadership and management is not effective because the provider does not have active involvement. Roles and responsibilities are unclear, which leads to insufficient monitoring and support. The manager is aware of vetting and recruitment procedures, and staff have appropriate checks to show suitability. However, the provider has not completed checks

for other individuals. There is a self-evaluation procedure, and the manager and staff have made some improvements since the last inspection. For example, they have created raised beds in the garden for children to grow plants in. Staff identify and attend appropriate training to support their professional development. The management structure within the nursery has been reviewed to formalise a 'leadership team'. However, the provider has insufficient contact with the manager and staff to have a clear overview of the setting's effectiveness. The nursery has a development plan in place; however, a number of the issues remain unchanged, which shows limited improvement within the organisation. This is not helped by the governance of the setting changing approximately every two years. This has an impact on continuity and the establishment of accountability.

Parents are given questionnaires to complete each year, which contribute to the self-evaluation procedure. At inspection, one or two parents indicate inconsistencies in information sharing, but overall feedback is positive. Parents comment that their children enjoy being there, they are pleased with their children's progress and the range of activities as well as concerns about staffing arrangements. Staff work in close partnership with others to support individual children's care, learning and development.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY281026
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	922531
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	58
Number of children on roll	135
Name of provider	Alexandra House
Date of previous inspection	10/05/2012
Telephone number	01752 781 888

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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