

# The Alphabet Train Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126972
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 July 2007
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<b>Registered person</b>	Amy Clarkson
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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?

The Alphabet Train Nursery School is privately owned and run. It opened in 2001 and operates from the first floor of a building in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday, term time only. On Monday and Friday session times are from 08.30 until 12.15, Tuesdays and Thursdays the sessions are from 08.30 until 12.15 and 13:00 until 15:00 and on Wednesdays the nursery is open from 08.30 until 15.00.

There are currently 38 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs four members of staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is due to commence training in September.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of keeping themselves healthy; they wipe their hands with wet wipes before snack time and use liquid soap and paper towels for hand drying after toileting. However, shared bowls of hand water are used within the toilets and nursery room, and children do not wash their hands before lunch time or after coming indoors from a trip to the park. These aspects do not avoid the spread of infection. Staff adopt appropriate hygiene practices such as use of antibacterial wipes to cleanse table tops, different coloured cloths for different jobs around the nursery and encourage children to change in to indoor slippers or shoes when arriving.

Children enjoy healthy snacks on a daily basis, such as mango, banana and orange pieces, although they do not eat from a suitable bowl or plate and these are handed out for them by staff. Children drink water or milk, although this is served to them ready poured. They do not have independent access to drinking water at other times throughout the day to ensure they remain hydrated.

Suitable systems are in place to ensure that staff are aware of dietary requirements, are able to deal with emergencies and illness and have sufficient first aid qualified staff present on a daily basis. Although there is no outdoor play area, children thoroughly enjoy the range of physical play opportunities which are set up for them indoors, for example climbing in and out of the play lofts, hoops to crawl and slither under, the rocking horse and ride on wooden trains. They delight as they explore the equipment at the park such as the slide, swings and climbing frame and develop skills such as balancing, jumping and running.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed in to a safe, bright and attractively presented nursery. They are able to access a wide range of good quality, well presented resources throughout the session which are rotated regularly and changed in line with themes and topics. Children are generally kept safe through appropriate safety equipment and security being maintained. However, at times, staff vigilance means children are not supervised closely throughout the session. Risk assessments are completed infrequently and do not address day to day safety including ensuring children are kept safe on outings. During the inspection children are not fully safeguarded whilst at the park due to lack of full supervision. Staff do not consider changing temperatures and therefore the need for sun cream, and staff do not effectively deploy themselves to ensure full and close supervision at all times. These aspects compromise children's safety. Staff have a clear awareness of child protection issues, this helps keep children appropriately safeguarded. The child protection policy currently requires some updating. Fire drills are completed; however no evaluations are kept of these.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are extremely happy, settled and confident. They enter the setting with enthusiasm greeting their friends and staff and settle down to activities of their choice quickly. Generally children play well and enjoy the session, however at times opportunities for children to learn

are presented through 'learning sessions' and it becomes quite structured with less emphasis on learning through their free play. Children's needs are met well and they appear happy and settled at the nursery.

### Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff provide an extremely well resourced, attractively presented environment, which children show great enthusiasm about. Staff provide a varied range of activities for children and plan in line with themes and topics. They ensure that the majority of resources are linked with these topics, for example during the inspection children enjoy the range of dressing up linked with the animal topic. Staff have implemented a simple planning system; however learning opportunities are usually restricted to 'learning time' and other structured activities such as worksheets and workbooks. Many opportunities are missed to offer children the majority of their learning through free play. Staff position themselves at tables where activities are fairly structured such as sewing or colouring in a glove puppet. Children enjoy the activities provided; however staff plan in line with these activities only and plans are limited in supporting newer staff. In addition, observation records kept are limited. On occasions opportunities are missed and at times children lack the support, challenge and interaction they need as they play. Planning is limited and mainly focuses on learning and singing activities.

Children are confident and enthusiastic. They talk with confidence about their home lives and important events. They play extremely well with one another and have developed strong friendships. Children are developing mathematical skills, they count in many situations and are encouraged to recognise the number that comes next and how many the total will be if one more is added. Children use size language when threading shapes and are beginning to develop an understanding of different shapes. However, children are not always sufficiently challenged in this area. Children show they can mark make and attempt to write their names, however this is mainly through the use of work books and work sheets. Children recognise their names at registration and enjoy using the attractively presented book corner. Children are encouraged to learn and repeat new words such as lemur, ostrich and meerkat.

Children enjoy learning about the natural world, for example they talk about the caterpillars, chrysalis and butterflies and are familiar with their life cycle. Children are developing a knowledge of names of butterflies such as painted lady and cabbage white butterflies. They explore play dough and sand and have taken part in planting activities. They have plenty of resources to construct and design. Technology toys such as remote control toys, programmable toys and musical toys are available, although the computer is not accessible on a daily basis. Children learn about their wider society through celebrating events such as Chinese New Year and Holi.

Children have excellent imaginations and a wide range of resources support this; they use a good range of dressing up and use the play lofts well to enhance their play. They enjoy painting, play dough and sewing and other creative opportunities. Choice is not always wide for creative activities, for example offering children alternatives to the planned craft activity and allowing them to create art work and express themselves as they wish. Children enjoy music and singing times, and thoroughly enjoy acting out 'the three little pigs' with props, which is told without the need for a book.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff know children well and support them at times as they play, helping them begin to feel settled and valued at nursery. Children's individual needs are met and they show good levels of confidence and independence. Children are developing an awareness of our wider society through planned activities such as Chinese New Year and Holi. They play with resources promoting diversity such as books and dolls. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. A nominated Special Educational Needs Coordinator is in place, which helps ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported and have their needs met. However, the last of the modules relevant to this role have not yet been completed by the Manager.

Children delight as they receive praise from staff when they do something well. Staff use positive reinforcement, encouraging and praising children, and offering them a smiley stamp on their hand when they have brought in something related to the topic. Sharing is encouraged and children are encouraged to clap one another when they have done something well in a group. Generally children are happy, settled and occupied. However, at times, staff call instructions to children across the room and don't always follow up behavioural issues, meaning children do not fully understand the consequences of their behaviour.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents are provided with information such as newsletters, an information board and website, and complete an annual questionnaire. The information for parent's booklet provides detail about the Foundation Stage of education and includes sections about how they can help their children. 'Show and tell weeks' provide parents the opportunity to come in to nursery to discuss their children's progress with their child's key worker and they are welcome to liaise with staff at other times. Consequently, satisfactory systems are in place to enable staff to work in partnership with parents.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Organisation of the nursery is generally satisfactory. A range of well-organised and detailed paperwork is in place, including a simple range of policies and procedures. However some aspects require updating and expanding to bring them in line with the National Standards, and the Managers knowledge and implementation of the National Standards is currently limited. Organisation and running of the session to enable children to achieve to their full potential is not currently fully effective. This impacts on how the sessions and group times operate and on occasions staff deployment does not ensure children are well supported, fully supervised or encouraged throughout all activities.

Staff ensure that ratios are met the majority of times, however systems are not currently in place to support staff if shortages occur. Two of the four staff are qualified and one is due to commence training in September. Informal procedures are followed for the recruitment of new staff however no paperwork is in place to support this aspect. A clear induction pack is in place. All staff are police checked. This helps to safeguard children.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staffing changes have recently occurred, which have impacted on the running and organisation of the nursery. However, staff are working at building their team and developing the nursery. They have regular staff meetings and annual appraisals, although the Supervisor and Deputy do not undergo an appraisal. Systems are in

place to monitor and identify areas for improvement within the setting however these have not identified aspects raised at this inspection, and few evaluations take place for any areas of the nursery. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection in September 2004, the group were set care and education recommendations. They have now implemented a thorough induction pack covering many relevant areas to support new staff starting at the nursery. The storage heater in the hall has now been fitted with a cover to ensure it does not pose a hazard to children. Hygiene practices have been improved, however some improvements are still required in this area. The short term plans have now been appropriately updated to include an area of focus. Further work is required in the area of planning and observation records, to support the staff in promoting children's learning in all areas of play.

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

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. 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**

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):

- review all health and hygiene procedures for the nursery to improve standards at all times
- undertake thorough risk assessments to cover all aspects of safety both indoors and out
- improve methods for managing children's behaviour
- ensure all required paperwork aspects are developed and implemented
- improve knowledge and understanding of the National Standards for full day-care

#### **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):

- improve and develop methods for planning, observation and assessment
- ensure children have greater opportunities to learn through their play throughout the sessions
- implement thorough evaluation systems for all aspects of the nursery

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)