



Abacus Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	221582
Inspection date	28 February 2006
Inspector	Emma Bright
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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?

Abacus Day Nursery is a privately owned provision. It opened in 1985 and operates from a single-storey building and adjacent mobile unit in Cambridge. A maximum of 38 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open 5 days a week from 08:00 to 17:45 all year round, except for 1 week at Christmas. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery has 3 dogs on the premises.

There are currently 40 children aged from 7 months to 4 years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area and further afield. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with special educational needs and also supports children who have English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 8 staff, 6 of whom, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health and welfare is promoted by staff and suitable action is taken when children are ill to make sure they receive appropriate care. All documents are in place to ensure children's individual dietary and medical needs are met, for example all medical consents are obtained from parents and some of the staff hold first aid certificates. However, some toys and resources in the baby room are not checked and cleaned sufficiently, which means that young children are not adequately protected from the risks of cross-infection by suitable hygiene procedures. Older children competently wash their hands during the daily routine and they know they do this to 'get rid of the germs'.

Children sit together at meal times to enjoy a relaxed and social occasion, where they chat with staff and each other and share news about their day. They enjoy quantities of good quality food and drink and they tuck in to the varied meals provided. The menu is planned and balanced and meals are freshly prepared and cooked on the premises each day, which ensures that all children are well nourished. Water is available and children readily help themselves throughout the day so they keep well hydrated. Staff record any allergies or special dietary needs so that children eat appropriate meals.

Children and babies rest and sleep according to their needs; good routines are in place which ensures that all children are well rested. Babies practise their growing physical skills, crawling through play tunnels and they pull themselves to standing on suitable furniture. Children develop their interest in physical exercise as they play active games in the garden or indoors. They play outside each day regardless of the weather and enjoy a wide range of activities, such as riding on wheeled toys, playing with bats and balls or planting bulbs in the garden. Indoors they play active games, such as music and movement or dancing to extend their physical skills. This ensures that all children benefit from physical activity to promote their good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a cheerful and bright environment, which is decorated with

posters and their artwork, so that children and their parents feel welcome. The room is prepared with appropriate resources in readiness for children's arrival each day, which means they can move around safely and freely. All children use a wide range of good quality, developmentally appropriate resources, which they can independently access from shelves, boxes and other low-level storage. This promotes their independence and enables them to follow their own interests and develop their play.

Children's safety is enhanced by good security procedures to restrict access to the setting, appropriate safety measures such as the use of covers on all low-level electrical sockets and through staff's vigilance in their supervision of children. Children maintain their own safe play space as they help to tidy up equipment and put things away, and they learn about boundaries that keep them safe outside. Children's safety in case of fire is priority. For example, smoke alarms are checked regularly to ensure they are in good working order and children practise the emergency escape plan regularly so that they all know what to do in an emergency and are familiar with the routine.

Children are protected and kept safe from harm as the staff have a sound knowledge of child protection procedures and have the necessary skills to identify signs and symptoms. Parents are informed about the setting's responsibilities through an appropriate policy, which is included in the parents' brochure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children enjoy their time at the nursery and they separate happily from their parents and carers, settling into their activities readily on arrival. Children are confident, they play happily together and enjoy warm and affectionate relationships with the staff, who are sensitive to their needs. This contributes to the children's sense of belonging and helps to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Children are involved and interested in the good range of activities and resources on offer, which they access easily so that they can follow their own interests; children independently seek out other resources to develop their play. Children are adept at caring for their own needs, such as dressing for outdoor play and they competently feed themselves with appropriate utensils.

Babies benefit from a good range of practical activities that follow the 'Birth to three matters' framework, such as messy play and music sessions, and they eagerly explore the 'treasure baskets'. Equipment and materials are easily accessible so babies explore and experiment independently, therefore developing their individual skills and interests. Babies form good relationships with staff, for example babies' early communication skills are developed through warm interaction with the staff, who respond positively to their talk. Babies' well-being is promoted by the good communication between staff and parents, which ensures their individual needs are met.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from practitioners' sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn through practical, meaningful activities. Planning is in place and provides an interesting range of activities and experiences that cover all areas of learning. Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones, and assessment records show that children are making progress towards the early learning goals. However, these records have not yet been sufficiently developed to be informative, plan for the next step in children's learning and do not yet take account of parents' contributions. This means that children do not benefit from the sharing of information that would enhance their learning and build on their existing knowledge and skills.

Children are confident learners and their independence skills are well developed; they concentrate and persevere in tasks that stimulate them and demonstrate pride in their achievements. Children's behaviour is good; they have developed good negotiating skills as they share and take turns, both independently and through the use of an egg timer. Children confidently communicate with adults and each other, and they have formed good relationships with one another. They initiate conversations and use conventions such as 'please' and 'thank you' unprompted. Children's early writing skills are developing as they practise these skills in a range of activities, such as drawing, painting and using notepads and writing materials in their imaginative play. Some children can form recognisable letters and they talk about and know the letter that their name begins with.

Children develop their understanding of numbers, counting and calculation in a range of practical activities and during the daily routine. They know how old they are and demonstrate on their fingers how old they will be next. Children use mathematical language easily in their play, such as big and small and demonstrate an understanding of position as they stand 'next to' or 'behind' when lining up to play outside. Children observe changes in the weather and plant bulbs to gain understanding about life cycles and seasons. They enjoy talking about events in their own lives that are important to them and share them eagerly at circle time; they talk about their feelings and express themselves competently. Children explore textures and shape, creating their own designs from a range of 'junk' materials and they enjoy experimenting with colour. For example, children make coloured icing to decorate cakes, observing how the colours change when mixed together and are excited to discover that red and blue make purple.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals; staff respect their individuality and work well with parents to ensure that the needs of all children are met. Parents receive information about the setting so they know about activities and events, and they have daily opportunities to discuss their child with staff. This ensures children's individual needs continue to be met. All policies and procedures are in place to share information with parents and carers. Children with special educational needs are supported well and staff work proactively with parents and other agencies to support these children's needs. Children access a good range of resources that promote a

positive view of the wider world and they enjoy talking about their own families, which helps them to understand about their differences and similarities.

Children's behaviour is good. They interact confidently with staff and each other and are learning to consider the needs of others and to work together co-operatively, for example, as they help each other to tidy up. Children learn to take turns, share resources and play harmoniously together because staff use effective strategies to manage children's behaviour and they use positive language to help children understand what is expected of them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents receive information about the setting, however they do not have sufficient information about the Foundation Stage so that they know how activities at the nursery help their child to learn and make progress towards the early learning goals. Staff understand the importance of good relationships with parents and carers, who are welcomed into the setting to share their traditions or special interests with the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a well-prepared environment that enables them to enjoy and achieve during their time at the nursery. They are happy and content as staff have developed warm and caring relationships with them. Sound recruitment procedures mean that staff are vetted, which ensures children are protected. Over half of the staff team hold appropriate early years qualifications and appraisals identify areas for professional development to further improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the needs of the children. The good adult:child ratio enables staff to work flexibly to support children's learning in small groups and on an individual basis, when appropriate. All required policies and procedures are in place. However, some documentation is not reviewed and updated regularly nor is it easily available, which means that children's welfare is compromised in an emergency. Good settling-in procedures ensure that parents feel secure in the care provided and children settle readily and become confident members of the nursery.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The owner is committed to continued development of the setting's practice to ensure that all children have access to good quality learning experiences. However, systems to monitor and evaluate the provision for nursery education are not yet fully developed to ensure that children are consistently challenged and have access to rich learning experiences. Children benefit from the staff's knowledge and understanding of how children learn and their ongoing commitment to further training to update their knowledge and practice. Staff work well together as a team and demonstrate enthusiasm to create a learning environment that promotes positive outcomes for children. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the provider was asked to improve safety. A procedure for lost children is in place and regular safety checks are completed and recorded. Emergency lighting has been installed to meet fire regulations and the menu has been revised to ensure it is suitable for babies. This ensures that children's welfare and safety is enhanced.

For the nursery education, the provider was asked to develop the planning, which has been revised so that all early learning goals are covered and children benefit from activities that help them progress in all the areas of learning. The provider was also asked to develop children's assessment records and this has not yet been achieved and remains as a recommendation at this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004. 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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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 all toys and resources in the baby room are checked and cleaned regularly
- continue to update all policies and procedures, review them regularly and ensure that key documents are easily accessible.

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 children's assessment records so that they are informative and help children to move on to the next stage in their learning. Ensure that parents have opportunities to contribute to their child's assessment records in order to improve staff's knowledge when planning children's next steps
- ensure that parents are provided with information on the Foundation Stage so that they know how activities help children learn and make progress towards the early learning goals
- continue to develop the system for monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education to ensure that children have access to rich learning experiences and older or more able children are consistently challenged.

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