

Asquith Nursery - Hill Park

Inspection report for early years provision

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Registered person	Asquith Court Nurseries Limited
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

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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 provider must give a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must give a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Day Care and Childminding (inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 No 2300 Regulations 5 and 6).

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 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?

Asquith Day Nursery is one of the nurseries run by Asquith Nurseries Limited. It opened in 2001 and operates in a large converted house. It is situated in a residential area in Hendon North London. The nursery 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.

A maximum of 53 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery comprises two units on the ground and first floors, which are split into smaller age groups; for babies and toddlers three months to two year olds, and the nursery unit for age groups two to five years. There are currently 68 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive nursery education funding. Some children speak English as an additional language. The nursery currently supports some children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The nursery employs 20 members of staff including the manager, cook, and administrator. There are 18 staff who work directly with the children, 13 hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a qualification. The nursery receives advice and support from a local authority advisory teacher, the Pre-School Learning Alliance and from the company.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted effectively by the standards of hygiene that are maintained. The nursery is cleaned well. Good hygiene is practiced when changing nappies and both toddlers and older children are encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet. Even toddlers still in nappies do this. They greatly enjoy the independence staff give them to turn on the taps, to dry their own hands and to throw their paper towel in the bin. Children's well being if they are ill or have accidents is safeguarded. Many of the staff have first aid qualifications, there are first aid boxes handy in each area of the nursery and a good system is in place to record accidents and inform parents.

Children are offered healthy foods, plenty of drinks and their particular diets are adhered to well. They enjoy home made lentil and broccoli soup with wholemeal bread and fresh fruit for tea. Lunches are equally healthy and are brought in from a nearby school kitchen. The temperature of transported foods are monitored to ensure food safety. Children's place mats list their dietary needs thus helping to ensure children receive the foods that are appropriate for them.

The weakness in helping children to be healthy is in the organisation of mealtimes.

These are not always times when there is a calm relaxed environment in which children can enjoy their meal and receive sufficient support. The oldest children sit together in a separate room. Staff sit with children and the children and staff chat as they enjoy the meal and generally children eat well. However, children aged two to three years do not enjoy a calm atmosphere. Staff serve food away from where the children sit and they do not sit with children and encourage quiet conversation. Children are able to scrape their own plates or collect their meal from the serving table but this adds to the noise and bustle and this age group eat less well than older children.

Babies eat according to their individual routines, which are closely followed by staff. However, at tea time babies are fed by staff standing at and moving between a line of high chairs and this does not create a calm homely feel to tea time for babies. Toddlers generally eat well, but again staff do not sit with children throughout the meal and ensure they are well placed to offer all children the support they might need so some have to wait quite a while for help. Children have good access to drinks older children can pour their own water from a jug. Toddlers point to and some can reach their own cups that are kept within sight. They know which cup is theirs and staff encourage them all to drink regularly.

The younger children have lots of exercise and opportunities to develop their physical skills. Toddlers have lots of fun climbing and exploring indoors as well as outside. Babies enjoy the fresh air and the chance to meet the other children each day when staff take them for a walk in the garden. Indoors they have good support to help them learn to sit, crawl and walk. Toddlers, as well as enjoying a good range of outdoor play experiences twice a day, have low level indoor climbing equipment indoors and they are becoming increasingly agile. There are plenty of resources and room for them to transport toys, to fill and to tip, activities well loved by this age group and ideal for encouraging toddlers' dexterity. Two year olds climb, dig and run freely in the nursery garden. They enjoy the free access to outdoor play and their large physical skills are developing well.

Older children spend a lot of time in the garden. They enjoy the variety and physical challenges of the outdoor play provided. In addition a working party is being formed to plan new challenges in the garden. Children pedal and steer bikes with confidence, run and climb as part of their pretend play and dig in the growing patch. They move with good co-ordination and control in group games and have a lot of fun.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are busy and active enjoying the welcoming, environment the nursery provides. Displays and the wide selection of readily accessible resources in most rooms contribute to this. Bathrooms are well designed to foster children's independence and displays make hallways and stairwells attractive. There is a well resourced nursery garden that children really enjoy using. Safe, suitable and

sufficient equipment is in place to enable children to play, eat and rest in comfort. However, the temperature in the room leading to the garden can become quite cool for children playing there when the garden door is open.

Children's safety is a priority. Staff are alert as to how to keep children safe and they help children learn about this for example, by encouraging children to help mop up spills. Visitors to the nursery are well supervised to ensure they do not have unsupervised access to children. Close circuit television is used to check who is at the door and monitors are in each room. A thorough risk assessment underpins safe practice. This includes general company policy and things specific to the nursery. The health and safety policies are regularly reviewed to ensure any risks have been assessed in regard to new circumstances or equipment and the review is dated.

Children's well being is further protected because staff are well informed about how to respond if they have concerns about a child. They are aware of possible signs of abuse and who to report these to. Good recruitment practice ensures staff are thoroughly checked to ensure they are suitable to work with children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies enjoy exploring a wide range of materials. They pick up and mouth the different textures in the basket of fabrics placed near sitting babies. A black and white patterned area provides children with an interesting visual experience as does the low mirror. Staff enhance the babies experiences as they sit beside them chatting and encouraging their attempts to reach for play materials and to sit up or crawl. Crawling babies are able to select books from the low trough and older babies can pull themselves to standing on the sturdy storage units. These attract babies' attention and encourage their mobility as they are well set out with interesting playthings. A younger baby wriggles in the little ball pool and giggles as staff tickle and chat to her. The babies are content and confident because staff sit beside them on the floor providing a secure base from which they can explore.

The toddlers are busy and active throughout the day. They enjoy a rich play and learning environment. Some toddlers stand at the low easel making bold strokes with the brightly coloured paint provided. Others shriek with delight as they scoop up flour from the low container on the floor and let it fall between their fingers. Staff sit nearby comment on the experiences the toddlers are having and they in turn echo what staff say and add their own words. Children move freely and confidently around the room. Each part of their room has an interesting set of resources to explore. They crawl up the carpeted slope on the climbing frame and hide in the little hidey hole below. A toddler finding an animal in the book area potters round the room chatting to himself. He finds a basket of animals and puts his animal in and waves and says 'bye-bye' to it. A lone toddler drawing concentrates for a long time. There is so much to do that disputes over toys are few and children are able to focus on what interests them undisturbed.

The two to three year olds enjoy the freedom they have to play indoors and outside. Some children are helped to follow up their interests and learn new vocabulary by the interaction of staff with children. Children using dough learn how to change its shape and they chat with staff about what they are making. However, some of their play is less focussed and children are less challenged by the provision than the younger children. Areas such as the water play, drawing table and home corner are not well maintained to ensure that they are attractive and encourage children's exploration and learning.

Staff record observations on what each child is enjoying and children's key workers plan how to provide for this interest using the framework Birth to Three Matters. Children benefit from the good understanding staff have of the ages and stages of children under three as described in this document. However, they do not always record concrete ways of providing for the children's next steps in learning. This means others using the plan to support children that are not their key children are less well informed and appropriate next steps are not always planned.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Overall nursery education funded children are engaged and having fun as they play and learn. Children's confidence and learning is encouraged by some of the questions staff ask children and the interest staff show in what children are doing. Children enjoy using the resources available, although the more challenging materials to extend children's skills and understanding are not always accessible.

Staff observe each child, record what they are able to do and use this information to plan what to provide next to extend children's learning. This is a good principal. However, some of the next steps in learning identified are not sufficiently well planned to encourage a child's progress. Children and parents enjoy the 'Incredible Learning Journals' key workers make for each child. These include photographs, observations and samples of children's work. However, the way these are set out does not make how children are progressing very clear across each learning area.

Children are confident and able to make decisions about what they do and who they play with. They have good relationships with their key workers and other staff and there are some very obvious friendships between children. They are able to concentrate and see things through. A child making food with dough sustained a long discussion about how to cook the food and then acted this out in the home corner. Children are learning about right and wrong. They listen to staff who help them settle differences and understand about what is fair. A child insisting he should hold on to a book readily gave it to another child when it was explained that the other child brought the book from home.

Children can communicate well and they are able to listen to others and contribute their own ideas. They can describe their experiences from home and what they are thinking, and good support is offered to children with English as an additional language. Children know the names and sounds of some letters of the alphabet, particularly those in their own names. However, children's progress in developing

their skills in writing is not supported well by the few times they have access to a well resourced writing area. Children enjoy story times and looking at books but when older and younger children are listening to stories together older children's attention and ability to question is limited by the interruptions of younger children.

Children count and they are beginning to learn to add and subtract in as part of practical activities, and when acting out number songs with finger puppets. Some children have a good knowledge of shapes and are learning about size and measurement through such activities as cooking. Children explore different natural materials for example sand and water. Children gain a lot from when this is done well, for example after a recent snow fall children's exploration of snow was followed up with a drawing activity. Children's drawings and photographs were made into an interesting display that stimulated further discussion and learning. However, sometimes opportunities to develop children's learning are missed. This is because challenging and interesting experiments with good adult support to help children question what they discover are not regularly planned for and provided in this area. Children learn about the natural world as they dig the growing patch in the garden and plant. They build and design with a range of easily accessible construction toys and use technology such as CD players confidently.

Children are creative and imaginative in their use of resources. They enjoy creating an imaginary world with animals in the sand tray and in role play in the home corner. Children paint and draw however, some of these activities lack challenge and the opportunity for children to develop new skills and express themselves fully through the use of a wide variety of materials. Children enjoy singing, making music and listening to many different kinds of music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are independent and confident at the nursery because staff actively encourage this for example, children are asked 'do you want help to do up your coat or can you do it?'. Each child has a key person who knows the child well and plans for their individual needs. Babies enjoy the security and consistency offered by the good practice of closely following each child's home routines. Children who are learning English as an additional language are supported well and good steps taken to learn some key words of children's different languages. These are recorded alongside their meanings and how children pronounce them. Children are learning to value their own and others different backgrounds. Books, play materials and displays show positive images of such differences. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being fostered well.

Children with disabilities and learning difficulties receive very good support and make good progress. They are included in all the activities and one to one assistance is provided where needed. The children are helped to access the activities of their choice and to participate alongside other children. Individual plans are made for their progress and these are regularly reviewed. Children's key workers are supported by a

senior member of staff who is the nursery's special educational needs co-ordinator. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies in the health service and local authority.

Children behave well and are learning how to share and negotiate for what they want. Staff generally support this well with short clear explanations and by praising good behaviour. A toddler who turned on a tap for another is praised for helping. A child who has to wait for a turn to paint is offered interesting alternatives then called to the easel when it is free. Older children clearly know the rules which are expressed in positive ways. A child rushing around indoors is asked 'where do we run?', he replies 'in the garden'.

Children benefit from the good partnership staff develop with parents. Parents are welcomed into the nursery by staff and they gradually settle their child with the allocated key worker. The comprehensive information collected from parents helps staff meet children's individual needs. Parents have clear information about how to complain. Any concerns are recorded and followed up. Parents are encouraged to make suggestions for improvements or to say what they value about the nursery through parent questionnaires and action is taken to address the issues raised.

The partnership with parents of nursery education funded children is also good. They receive good information about the Foundation stage curriculum and how the activities offered help children move through the stepping stones of each area of learning. This is in the parents information booklet and shown on the good photographic displays. Parents are able to be involved in their child's learning and participate in the nursery through reading their child's 'Incredible Learning Journal', speaking to key workers and attending parent evenings.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children enjoy good relationships with the committed staff team at the nursery. The care and play of babies and toddlers is very well organised and provided for. Children under two are happy, busy and learning throughout most of each day. The key person system is effective in building the partnership between staff and parents. However, there are weaknesses in the organisation of mealtimes and the provision for two year olds. Children's safety and welfare are well met by the nursery and the appropriate records are in place to support staff's understanding of each child. A thorough risk assessment further protects children.

Children's well being is safe guarded by the thoroughness of staff recruitment and selection which ensures those working with children are suitable to do so. There is a high percentage of qualified, experienced staff. Good systems are in place to ensure children are protected by the nurseries sound policies and procedures. Staff know and understand these because there is good induction of new staff and quizzes in staff meetings ensure staff continue to be familiar with what is expected of them. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management is satisfactory for the nursery education funded children. They are generally happy and learning because the manager has clear aims in line with the Foundation Stage Guidance. These are that children learn through play and when they have good supportive relationships with staff. However, older children's progress is limited by the way the rooms are organised and how children are grouped. Some activity areas are not well maintained and nursery education funded children do not regularly have access to wider and more challenging experiences.

Children benefit from staff being given time out of the rooms to record and reflect on their work. The manager spends time in the children's rooms observing practice and uses the one to one and staff team meetings to develop good practice. This has been very effective upstairs where the babies and toddlers are based. However, the weaknesses in the planning and organisation of play and learning for children on the ground floor have yet to be fully addressed. The management make good use of the company and local authority training and advice and there is an effective staff appraisal system in place. The manager is proactive in gathering feedback from parents and acting on what she learns.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. Children are enjoying more outdoor play which is interesting and offers sufficient challenge. The garden is well resourced and older children free flow in and outdoors throughout most of the day. Younger children have two garden times a day and babies are taken out for walks each day.

Staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and procedures have been developed well thus safe guarding children's well being more effectively. Staff manage older children's behaviour more consistently and use appropriate strategies to help children understand why their behaviour may be inappropriate. There are systems in place to improve practice when a member of staff's work is not fully consistent with policies.

Staff have a more secure knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, but they have yet to consistently and effectively assess and plan for children's next steps in learning. Staff are very attentive to children, and they support them well in what they are doing. The monitoring system the management have developed now identifies most of the nursery's strengths and weaknesses with the exception of weaknesses in the challenges provided for older children and in the organisation of mealtimes.

Complaints about the childcare provision

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):

- ensure children using the ground floor are warm enough when there is free flow access to the garden
- organise mealtimes more effectively to enable children to eat in a calmer environment and with more adult support and encouragement
- maintain the play areas for two to three year olds throughout the day more effectively so that they continue to be attractive and stimulating for children

The quality and standards of nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure children's access to more challenging resources is provided for in each learning area throughout the day
- review and develop the way children's achievements and plans to support their progress are recorded so that staff are clear about exactly how they are progressing and what they will be providing to aid children's next steps in learning

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 2473) which is available from Ofsted's website:
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