

# ACE Nursery School

37 Parkside, CAMBRIDGE, Cambridgeshire, CB1 1JE

<b>Inspection date</b>	07/11/2013
Previous inspection date	02/12/2009

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision**

### **This provision is outstanding**

- Children flourish due to the staff's highly imaginative use of the premises, resources and the local area to provide an exceptionally high quality, all-round learning experience, skilfully delivered, enabling them to make excellent progress towards the early learning goals.
- Children have an exceptionally strong sense of belonging as the key person system uses innovative techniques to develop this, to ensure that every family is included and the two-way flow of information is maintained effectively.
- The highly effective, cooperative style of management is built on the strong and meaningful involvement of parents, who all feel part of nursery and work together to maintain the uniqueness of the nursery.
- Safeguarding of children is given paramount consideration at all times, so parents can be reassured that their children are well cared for and safe as they play and learn.

## 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.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

## Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities and interacted with children in the playrooms, the outside area and the dining area, and as they moved between areas.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager and staff members and carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector viewed evidence of suitability checks and qualifications of staff working with children.
- The inspector viewed children's developmental records, assessments and planning documents.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to during the inspection.

## Inspector

Sarah Williams

## Full report

### Information about the setting

ACE Nursery School opened in 1966. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery is run by a parents' co-operative and operates from five rooms in a four storey building in the centre of Cambridge. It serves the local area. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery school opens five days a week during school term time. The standard nursery day is from 8.45am to 4pm each day with wraparound sessions available from 8.30am to 8.45am and from 4pm to 5.30pm. A holiday play scheme operates for the majority of the school holidays.

Funded nursery education is available for children aged three and four years. There are currently 64 children on roll, all of whom are within the Early Years age group. The nursery school supports children who speak English as an additional language. It employs 10 members of staff who work directly with the children. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. One member of staff holds Early Years Professional Status and one holds Qualified Teacher Status. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

### What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- consider enhancing the already excellent programme for literacy by, for example, reviewing resources available to aid children in writing their own names and the use of text and signage in the outside area, to show the uses of print in different contexts.

## Inspection judgements

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

Children at ACE nursery school make excellent all round progress in their learning and development. Skilful and highly dedicated, enthusiastic staff work as an effective team to provide a balanced range of stimulating and imaginative activities and experiences. These securely equip children with the skills and attitudes they will need for future learning and prepare them for school life. Staff know that it is imperative to use a variety of teaching methods and strategies to support all children's needs and preferences. For example, children can freely select from the wide range of open-ended resources, both indoors and in the garden, as they choose, enabling them to develop their creative thinking and problem solving skills exceptionally well. They combine resources and materials in the mud kitchen, adding herbs and leaves to create imaginary meals and observing, fascinated, as their mixtures evolve. Combining role play and physical skills with sensory and

mathematical thinking allows children to develop and refine their skills through purposeful play. Staff know when to intervene and when to allow children to explore and investigate alone, so children are always active learners. At other times, direct teaching helps children understand about the world around them. They talk about road safety and their own ideas of how they can be safe when out walking and crossing busy roads and how traffic lights can help them. This links very closely to children's experiences when they visit the local farm shop to choose and purchase the food for snack time and when they enjoy their weekly trips to a local gym for exciting physical play using a variety of equipment.

Children's language and communication development has a high priority and is seen as key to building children's confidence and their ability to express themselves and articulate their ideas and feelings. Several children attend for whom English is an additional language. Excellent support is in place to aid their rapid acquisition and understanding of English while sensitively recognising and incorporating their home language. Posters and key vocabulary ensure that families feel welcomed and included. One child, who entered the nursery with no English, is now teaching English to her au pair at home, using what she has learned at nursery, much to her parents' delight. Books and storytelling are part of the daily practice and encourage children's listening skills. They interact with a pirate themed story, skilfully read by a staff member with interesting voice tones and characterisation, and songs played on compact disc, linking their ideas and developing their vocabulary with new words, such as, 'telescope' and 'treasure'. Children self-register when they arrive for sessions and have named coat pegs, becoming familiar with their written names and those of their friends. However, resources, such as name cards, to aid those who may be ready to begin attempting to write their names, are not always readily available for every child. The outside area is imaginatively resourced to support all areas of learning and serves as an outside classroom while retaining a very 'homely' feel, much as a domestic garden. There are trees to climb, flowers and herbs in containers and winding paths for children to negotiate with wheeled toys. Play houses and a log train are the source of much inspiration for children's imaginative play. There is scope to add to the outdoor signage and text to enhance children's understanding of print in different contexts.

Every child has a development profile, shared with parents, which details their progress and clearly states the next steps in learning. Staff use innovative methods of assessing and recording children's achievements accurately and precisely. Among other things, this includes the 'learning stories', which include space for parents to respond and provide a highly sensitive and personal record celebrating children's progress and learning. Children at age two have a detailed progress check which serves to indicate any areas where they may not be meeting expected levels of development. Sophisticated and thorough tracking methods, initiated by senior staff, target vulnerable groups of children and ensure that every child has access to the activities they need to maximise their progress, for example, children who may speak English as an additional language. This further demonstrates how every child at ACE Nursery School is valued and included, and illustrates the many ways in which their personal learning needs are exceptionally well met.

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

The nursery school is unique in that, as a parent cooperative, families understand that they play an essential part in the day-to-day operation of the nursery. This inclusive approach is part of the appeal, which makes the nursery popular and means that families recommend it to their friends. The partnership with parents is the cornerstone of the relationship, which supports the children during their time at the nursery. A very well established key person system underpins the highly effective two-way communication; parents again state is an outstanding feature of the setting which gives them the confidence and reassurance they need that their child is in safe hands and developing well. Parents provide all information relating to their child's welfare and stage of development before the child starts attending and includes details of their interests and hobbies. This way, staff can start to plan and provide a personalised educational programme, which engages children from the first days. Staff realise that every child is unique and will have an individual approach to settling in to their new surroundings. The key group time is used to familiarise the children, through discussions, with routines and what activities and play opportunities they can look forward to. Parents are kept informed in various ways; photographs are displayed as a slideshow in the parents' room, along with wall displays where the children enjoy picking out pictures of themselves and their friends as they recall events, such as the 'pumpkin day' party.

Children are confident and display a very strong sense of belonging as they move between the different rooms and the outside area. They clearly develop strong emotional attachments to the staff, in particular their key person and can ask to have their needs met or express their feelings knowing that they are listened to. The nursery is based in a building with several sets of stairs so the safe negotiation of these is one of the early lessons impressed upon children. This is closely monitored at all times by the vigilant staff, keeping children safe. Children develop self-care as they use the bathroom and cloakroom areas, supported as needed by staff who are on hand, but allowed to gain independence when they show readiness. At lunch time, children enjoy a sociable meal with their friends in a designated dining area, again supported by staff who cheerfully assist and encourage the children. Posters give parents ideas for healthy lunchboxes and prompt discussions about what foods will aid a healthy lifestyle. There are established procedures and a clear understanding of the need to liaise with any other early years settings attended by children in order to share information to promote continuity of care for the children. Equally, relationships have been forged with the various feeder schools to which children progress when they reach leaving age. Most schools arrange for the reception teacher to come into the nursery and see the children in their usual environment. By talking to the key persons and looking at the development records an assessment can be made for when the children start school. This, along with activities and role play, prepares children for some of the changes they are going to encounter.

Children respond to the consistently applied and easily understood behavioural expectations from staff. For example, staff will only intervene to sort out disputes if children cannot negotiate a solution by themselves and then do so sensitively and calmly. Therefore, children develop resilience and an understanding of how their actions have an impact on others, as they mature emotionally. Older children can take turns in a board game and share the resources or wait for a turn on the swing. The layout of the outside area promotes children's independence exceptionally well. For example, as they seek ways to carry water from the water butt to where they need it, or change their shoes for boots

when it is wet underfoot. This is also an area where children can challenge themselves physically and experience risk, in a safe and supported environment. They can climb and jump, go up and down the slide and explore the multitude of play areas and resources which are imaginatively provided for them. One staff member utilises her individual knowledge and love of yoga to introduce some basic poses and exercises to the children in regular sessions. This is another dimension for children to develop their minds and gain control over their bodies. Photographic displays show parents what happens in the sessions so they can talk about and, if they wish, follow on with the learning at home.

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

At ACE nursery school, children's safeguarding is assured as all staff have an excellent understanding of their responsibility to be vigilant for any signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect and to act on their concerns without delay. The manager has attended higher level safeguarding training and oversees all child protection matters within the nursery. The comprehensive policy, outlining the nursery's responsibility and approach to safeguarding, is given to every family during the settling-in period and is available for reference to all parents in the parents' room. If parents are unhappy about any aspect of the nursery there is a complaints procedure they can follow, but they are encouraged to discuss any concerns with a staff member or the manager initially.

A key strength of this outstanding nursery is the management's approach to continuously evaluating every aspect of the environment, care and teaching. All staff are involved in thinking about how they can improve their rooms and the quality of care and learning for the children. They are encouraged to discuss these matters and their own ideas at the weekly staff meetings. These plans form part of an overall dynamic action plan for the nursery which is constantly reviewed and added to. Consequently, the nursery progresses at a very natural rate according to ideas and innovations staff wish to bring in. Parents' and children's views are also incorporated wherever possible if this will have a positive impact on the environment or educational programme. All areas of the nursery, both indoors and outside are risk assessed continuously. Staff act as a team to ensure that all areas, and any outings undertaken, are safe. Staff endorse robust hygiene and safety rules which children easily understand are there to protect them. They are vigilant and remove any broken toys or equipment, keep the sand pit covered against any animals when not in use, and remind children at all times how they should walk when moving between rooms or on the stairs. The management understand that monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is crucial to responding to every child's emerging needs and maintaining the very high standards they have come to expect. As well as supporting staff to raise their overall qualification levels, the management and senior staff carry out regular supervision and appraisals of staff as they work, and this, together with peer observations ensures that staff are performing to the best of their ability, which in turn reflects on the quality of care and education provided. Staff morale is exceptionally high; many staff are passionate about their jobs and their enthusiasm spills over to the children. New staff are subject to rigorous recruitment and induction procedures and all staff are thoroughly checked for suitability before they are offered permanent employment or are permitted to care for children unsupervised.

The highly effective partnership with parents is unquestionably a cornerstone of this excellent nursery's ethos. Parents spoken to during the inspection were unfailingly full of praise in regard to the care and education their children receive. They expressed their feelings of reassurance and complete trust in the staff to care for their children, and keep them fully informed of events and activities, as well as the children's progress and development. Regular newsletters, which are professional in appearance and presentation, keep parents informed of changes, topics, outings and activities at the nursery, and invite their participation as often as possible. Many parents share their interesting careers or hobbies, such as music, with the children, providing an added dimension to their understanding of the world around them. Overall, children have overwhelmingly positive experiences which build on their natural curiosity and eagerness to learn. Consequently, when leaving ACE nursery they are eager and ready to continue their learning and have the skills and attitudes which will help them to do this.

### **The Childcare Register**

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

## 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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	221549
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	937775
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 17
<b>Total number of places</b>	40
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	64
<b>Name of provider</b>	A.C.E Nursery School (Cambridge) Limited
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	02/12/2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 357181

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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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