

Inspection of Alphabets Nursery

2 Hillary Road, Penenden Heath, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2JP

Inspection date: 23 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children are warmly greeted by attentive and nurturing staff, who know them extremely well and are genuinely pleased to see them. As a result, children leave their parents with ease. Upon arrival, they promptly engage with their friends and interact with their designated key person. Staff are consistently warm and attuned to the emotional and developmental needs of the children throughout the day. Consequently, children are exceptionally content, focused and engaged in the stimulating activities prepared by the highly competent staff.

Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour. They consistently engage in play while demonstrating good manners and respect for one another and their surroundings. They skillfully teach children about the importance of working together and how to learn from one another. Staff encourage children to work together to solve problems and find a solution, such as constructing the pipes during a water play activity. This positive behaviour fosters a sense of community and teaches essential social skills and responsibility.

Children develop a love of learning as a direct result of the staff, curriculum and learning environment. Staff plan a very ambitious curriculum for all children. The impact of this is that children make rapid progress in relation to their individual starting points in development. High-quality teaching supports children's motivation to learn. Staff place a focus in the curriculum on children developing their independence, maths and literacy skills and ensuring they gain the skills they will need for their move on to school. Maths is skilfully interwoven through activities for all age groups. For example, babies take part in singing with songs involving number. Older children learn that numbers change when they add or subtract an item to a group when counting out ice cubes.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Leaders are inspirational. They keep children at the heart of everything they do and lead by example. Leaders have clear ambitions for the future, they are committed to supporting staff progression and are passionate about the work they do. This helps ensure that the quality of care and education at the nursery is exceptional.
- Leaders have created a curriculum that centres around the individual child. Adults are highly skilled at creating an environment that sparks children's natural curiosity and provides a wealth of well-planned experiences. These keep children highly engaged and focused. Adult's teaching skills are exemplary. They skilfully sequence the curriculum so that children can build on their knowledge. For example, during a play dough activity, children use rich vocabulary to explain their experiences.

- Leaders are deeply committed to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), creating an exceptional environment where they thrive. Staff work in strong partnership with professionals and use highly effective strategies, ensuring every child receives the right support to make excellent progress. For example, they support families with individualised resources to extend learning at home.
- The team of happy, nurturing and experienced staff comment on the inspiring management team, and how their enthusiasm is infectious. They say they are fully supported and priority is given to support their own professional development. They say they feel valued as part of a team. Many commenting that they genuinely look forward to coming to work.
- Mealtimes are regarded as sociable occasions. Authentic resources such as china crockery, place mats and flowers help create a homely atmosphere. For example, children serve themselves and support their peers, making sure they each have what they need for their mealtime. This helps children to show kind consideration for others.
- Staff working with younger children prioritise the importance of secure attachments in nurturing environments for young children. They constantly listen to children's immediate interests and needs. For example, when younger children look into the mirror, staff ask prompting questions, modelling and demonstrating enjoyment, such as asking 'Can you see your nose?' This leads children to respond by leaning in close and pointing to themselves with pride.
- Staff support children's communication and language skills effectively by creating a language-rich environment with stories, singing and role play. Staff expose children to new and repeated words, helping them develop a wide vocabulary and engage in meaningful conversations.
- The focus on children's communication and language skills provides a central theme from which all other areas of children's learning are derived. Staff are excellent role models for communication and language. Babies hear lots of sounds, words and early language. Children throughout the nursery thoroughly enjoy being sung to and singing with staff. Pre-school children eagerly use wooden spoons to select favourite songs during an activity. Staff extend these interests with children.
- Staff enthusiastically reflect on their own continuous professional development, recognising the significant progress they have made over time. Leaders ensure that professional development opportunities are thoughtfully tailored to meet the specific needs of both staff and children. For example, recent working with babies training has supported routine improvements for the younger children, which has strengthened their settling-in process.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY263151
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10399582
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	44
Number of children on roll	73
Name of registered person	Alphabets Nursery Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP902354
Telephone number	01622 762045
Date of previous inspection	6 December 2019

Information about this early years setting

Alphabets Nursery is one of two nurseries under the same ownership. It registered in 2003 and is located in Penenden Heath, Maidstone, Kent. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round from 8am until 6pm for 51 weeks of the year. There are 12 members of staff, 10 of whom work with children. Ten of these hold early years qualifications. The nursery is in receipt of funding for early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Laura Hodges

Inspection activities

- The inspector reviewed relevant documentation and assessed evidence regarding the suitability of staff working at the nursery.
- Parents provided their feedback about the setting to the inspector.
- The manager and the inspector conducted a collaborative observation during circle time.
- The inspector spoke with staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education offered, both indoors and outdoors, and evaluated its impact on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector conducted a learning walk together across all areas of the nursery and discussed the curriculum.
- Staff spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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