

## Dear parents and carers

Looking for a nursery for your child can be fun; it can also be worrying and may cause you some anxiety. To help with this big step we have compiled some information that should enable you to select a good nursery and make the right choice for your child. Ofsted inspection reports provide a good starting point but ultimately you need to choose the nursery that feels most right for you and your family; most parents agree this is how they make this important decision.

### The nursery manager

He/she should be knowledgeable, qualified and dedicated to providing high quality childcare. They need to have the experience and training to ensure they are able to manage a professional nursery and choose and retain staff that can provide a warm, safe and caring environment. There should be an experienced and qualified deputy manager to take full responsibility in the absence of the manager.

### The staff team

This could be the start of a long relationship...

### Good things to look out for

The relationships between staff and the children and with each other are crucial. Do staff interact with the children and each other? Are they listening to the children and responding appropriately? Are the children given the opportunity to speak for themselves? Do the children approach staff happily? Does there seem to be love, and respect, between child and carer? Do staff cuddle children and show affection for them? Do they give reassurance, encouragement and appropriate praise? Do they seem to value the children and their differences? Are there enough staff to enable the children to receive individual attention? Are the staff sitting at activities with the children? Do they encourage and promote positive play? Are the children able to do things for themselves? Do staff ask children questions to help make the children think? Do staff respond to children's interests? Does the staff group reflect the different ethnic groups attending the nursery? Do the staff seem interested in your child, and have you and your child been made to feel welcome? Are the staff varied in age and experience? Do they provide good examples of behaviour? Do they look happy and as though they are enjoying their job?

### Some questions you may want to ask:

What procedures does the nursery have in place for covering staff absence?

How does the nursery manage staff breaks and lunch breaks?

What's the staff turnover like?

Are the manager and deputy manager supernumerary or are they included in the staff to child ratios? The appropriate ratios are 1:3 for under 2s, 1:4 for 2 to 3 year olds and 1:8 for over 3s.

Does the setting operate a key worker system where one member of staff has the main responsibility for keeping records on your child's progress and taking time to share this with you?

Does the nursery have a key worker policy that includes information on how that person will support your child and your family?

Does the nursery employ any cooks and cleaners so the staff are not taken away from the children unnecessarily?

Can you see a list of staff details including qualifications? (At least half the staff must have relevant childcare qualifications.)

Do the staff running the rooms have at least an NNEB or level 3 qualification?

How many staff are first aid trained?

Do the staff have health and safety and food hygiene training qualifications?

## **The premises**

### **Good things to look out for**

Is the building well maintained and attractive for young children? Is there adequate light and heating and a comfortable atmosphere? Does the setting provide adequate space for children of different ages to play safely and independently? Can the children access materials and equipment for themselves? Is there enough equipment? Is it well maintained? Are displays and areas of interest at child height? Is their own work displayed to promote self-esteem? Is the furniture in good repair and safe for the children to use? Is there enough of it? Is it the right size for children to be comfortable?

Is there an outdoor play space? Is this attractive, safe and well resourced? How often do the children have outside access? Is there an emphasis on outdoor play and are children encouraged to go out every day?

Are toilet facilities adequate for the number of children and suitable for their ages and abilities? Are toilet paper, soap and hand wash basins accessible? Are they clean? Are children supported to use the bathroom?

Does the nursery have telephones in each room or another way of getting help if necessary? Is there adequate storage? Does the play area look tidy and safe? Is the nursery accessible for parents and carers with prams and pushchairs or disabled persons? Can you park nearby?

### **Some questions you may want to ask:**

Have there ever been any significant accidents due to the premises?  
How are typical childhood accidents recorded?  
What is the procedure for evacuation in case of a fire?  
If the nursery are providing meals, is the kitchen clean and well equipped?  
Are the children able to access the kitchen unsupervised?  
Where do the children nap?  
How is sleep time managed?  
If the children do not sleep, is there a quiet rest area?  
How is potty training managed and where?  
Can you see the potties and bathrooms?

### **The curriculum and activities**

#### **Good things to look out for:**

Are children encouraged to try new experiences in a supportive environment? Are activities planned for both inside and outside, where they can take part in energetic play? Do children also have quiet times when they can rest and relax? Are they involved in a broad range of activities that support their language, mathematical thinking and imagination? Do children have the opportunity to make decisions about their play and learning? Can they choose from a range of activities? Is there sand and water play available? Do the resources encourage exploration? How much access do children have to paint and drawing materials? Are there puzzles and construction toys available? Are there plenty of books and a quiet and comfortable area for children to look at them or hear a story? Do the books reflect our multicultural community and show women and men in a positive way? Are there resources for dressing up play and good opportunities for children to participate in role play? Does the nursery curriculum help the children to relate to other children and adults in the group?

#### **Some questions you may want to ask:**

How do staff share information about the children's day?  
How do you find out which activities your child has taken part in?  
What sort of written notes are provided to identify your child's significant achievements?

Ask yourself, will the activities on offer challenge your child and encourage them to develop new skills? Does the curriculum seem to meet the needs of the children who attend? Is the setting inclusive? Do you think the staff are thinking about the needs of the children and planning activities to meet those needs? Do children seem engaged and occupied?

## **Babies**

Staff working with babies should have a good understanding of young children's basic emotional and physical needs and be aware of their unique vulnerability. They ideally should have experience of caring for under 2s and a vested interest in this age group.

### **Good things to look out for**

Does the room have a cosy atmosphere and happy babies? How much experience do the staff have with babies? How is continuity of care maintained? How much one to one time can be given to the babies? What are the nappy changing facilities like? How are the baby's individual feeding patterns taken into account? Are your preferences as a parent given respect and followed? How are they fed once they are weaning? How and where do the babies sleep? Can the babies sleep safely according to their own routine? How are babies monitored during sleep? Is the environment attractive for babies with good use of colours, textures, lights, sound and movement? Can the babies interact with older children or siblings throughout the day? Are natural and homelike play items used as well as plastic? Does the equipment look well maintained and hygienic? What will your baby gain from the nursery? Do the babies seem to stimulate each other? Are the staff relaxed and happy to comfort and care? Do the staff seem to have a bond with the babies?

### **Some questions you may want to ask:**

How is information shared about your baby's daily routine, their current needs and their development?

What are the arrangements for getting babies out in the fresh air?

Is the baby room well ventilated?

What happens if your baby becomes really upset and won't settle?

What are the procedures if your baby develops a temperature or is in discomfort due to teething?

### **Health and safety**

Is the setting clean and well maintained? How is this managed? Is there a person who has overall responsibility for health and safety? Are regular risk assessments carried out? How are local trips/visits managed?

Are staff active in promoting good health and hygiene? What are the meals like? Are they healthy and nutritious? What snacks are offered to the children? Are the meals prepared on the nursery premises?

What happens if your child becomes poorly while at nursery? What happens if your child is taking antibiotics or has medication such as an asthma pump? What happens if your child sustains an injury at nursery? How is this information shared?

## **Behaviour**

The way that behaviour is managed within the nursery can have a dramatic effect on your child's wellbeing and potentially their behaviour outside the nursery. It is important that you agree with the nursery's behaviour management ethos and as far as possible can provide consistent boundaries at home and at nursery. If you are not able to see any behaviour management on your visit ask the person showing you around to explain the behaviour management policy and how it is implemented.

### **What to look out for:**

How are the children behaving and how is unwanted behaviour dealt with? It is important the nursery you choose shares a similar behaviour management policy to your personal beliefs. The nursery should reassure you that children are always valued as individuals even if their behaviour may sometime be unacceptable. The setting should reassure children that strong feelings are acceptable, especially when children do not have the language to express how they feel. However, they must set fair and consistent boundaries appropriate to the child's level of understanding and all staff must treat the same behaviour in the same way. The setting should offer praise and encouragement for good behaviour. They should teach children about negotiation and sharing, helping them to become aware of how what they do and say affects others. The staff should set a good example by respecting and cooperating with others as well as planning activities to help children learn about right and wrong. They should be supportive, kind and considerate.

Did the staff seem to set good examples? Do the staff seem patient and considerate? Do you feel they are capable of helping your child to find a constructive solution to unwanted behaviour? Do staff seem well trained in strategies for dealing with behaviour?

### **Some questions you may want to ask:**

Ask to see the behaviour management policy and ask how staff are trained in behaviour management.

What would the nursery do and how would they inform you if your child was involved with, or showing, unwanted behaviour?

How is good behaviour valued and encouraged, according to the child's different stages of development?

### **How are you involved in your child's nursery?**

What sort of information is available about what your child is doing? How do you get access to the nursery policies and procedures? What happens if you need to make a complaint? Are you welcome to visit or spend time in the nursery? Do they hold regular

parent meetings, open days or other family events? How is information shared about the nursery, activities and events?

**We hope you find this information useful when choosing a nursery for your family. We hope you will choose Adventures Day Nursery, but what's most important is that you choose a nursery you are confident will take the best care of your precious child.**