



Acorn's Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY312065
Inspection date	15 March 2006
Inspector	Rachel Ayo

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Registered person	Oakhill College (Whalley) Ltd
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 satisfactory. 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?

Acorn's Nursery is attached to Oakhill College, which is an independent co-educational day school set in the Ribble Valley in an area known as Whalley. The nursery has been running independently since 1989 but was registered with Ofsted in 2005. The nursery complex consists of two buildings; one of which accommodates children aged 2 to 3 years and one of which accommodates children aged 3 to 4 years. Children also have use of the drama studio, main assembly hall, adjoining

toilets and music room, all of which are situated in the college buildings. Each nursery room has toilet facilities. A maximum of 48 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 until 17.30 for 50 weeks of the year. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 57 children aged from 2 to 6 years on roll. Of these, 31 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and wider community. The nursery is not currently supporting any children with special education needs or who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs nine staff all of whom, including the manager, hold an appropriate early years qualification. The nursery has achieved the Investors In People award and the Smile For Life Certificate. The nursery receives support from the Early Years teacher team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well nourished at the nursery. They enjoy a varied range of meals which are mostly nutritious, well balanced and freshly prepared by a designated cook. Children have healthy snacks, such as fruit salad and their development and all round good health is well supported because of the provision of water dispensers. Children independently make choices as they access these freely throughout the day. Children have their dietary needs met because staff work well with parents. Information is recorded in children's files and passed on to the cook to ensure that any special requirements, including cultural, are adhered to. This ensures children's well-being and promotes good partnerships with parents.

Children are satisfactorily helped to stay healthy as staff implement appropriate hygiene practices in some aspects. For example, they wear gloves and aprons when they wash and prepare the fruit for snack, tables are cleaned before use and nappy changing procedures help to minimise the risk of cross infection. However, children do not always wash their hands after toileting or before meals and separate bedding is not used for children who are sleeping. This does not promote children's all round good health. Accident procedures are generally appropriately followed, however, the procedures relating to illness, in relation to equipment used by children who are identified as being ill, do not effectively help to protect children from infection.

All children enjoy physical activity both indoors and outdoors because of a broad range of well planned play opportunities. They access the outdoor area at regular intervals throughout the day as they benefit from exercise and fresh air. Older children balance carefully on the wooden benches and run around as they chase each other and younger children develop confidence in their physical skills as they ride around on the wheeled toys. Indoor music and movement activities and PE sessions help children to learn how their bodies work and experiment with different ways of moving.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. Displays of children's artwork and topics are attractively presented, photographs and posters adorn the walls and windows and brightly coloured children's furniture all contribute to parents and children feeling welcomed. Areas are organised creatively and are inviting because of an extensive range of stimulating activities. Resources are stored in low-level, clearly labelled tubs and drawers, which positively supports children's care, learning and play as they are helped to become confident in making decisions. Children use a very good range of generally safe and suitable equipment and furniture.

Children are appropriately helped to stay safe in some aspects. Fire safety is well promoted because the emergency escape plan is practised regularly and records are maintained to identify any risks or weaknesses in the evacuation procedure. Written risk assessments are completed on all areas used by children and these are regularly reviewed and updated with action plans. Hazards are identified and there are systems in place to minimize risks to children. However, staff do not effectively promote children's safety and welfare in relation to monitoring the access to the provision, ensuring that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and the use of the microwave, which is at children's level and not disconnected after use.

Children are safeguarded in most aspects. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of their role in child protection; they are able to identify possible signs of abuse or neglect and are fully aware of the procedures to follow where any concerns arise to ensure children's safety and welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children present as happy and are well settled. All children demonstrate high levels of confidence and self-esteem as they choose their preferred activity, talk to their peers and readily approach staff to hold their hands or sit on their knee. High levels of interest and enthusiasm are shown by all children as they engage in an extensive range of planned activities that support their all round development and learning. Younger children show delight and excitement as they access a wide range of sensory experiences that enable them to explore and investigate, for example, as they squeeze the jelly which oozes through their fingers. Older children enjoy weaving the wool to make patterns in card, co-operatively play in the role play home corner and concentrate as they pat, roll and poke the play dough to make a variety of shapes. Young children enthusiastically join in with singing familiar nursery rhymes and copy adults as they sing "twinkle, twinkle little star" and make diamond shapes with their fingers.

Children respond well to staff who show very good levels of interest in what they do and say; they sit and engage themselves in children's play and ask questions to promote their learning. For example, one staff member talks to children about how

the jelly feels and asks them what it smells like. All children relate well to others as they learn to co-operate, share and take turns, for example, as they play on the computer or wait their turn to play with the dough. Staff are beginning to implement the Birth to three framework well to meet the needs of the younger children attending; they plan activities and use observations along with photographs to ensure that children are moving through appropriate development stages.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are highly motivated and offer good levels of support as they spend a large amount of time working directly with the children. Staff communicate well and use effective questioning and discussion, in most aspects, to extend and consolidate children's learning. For example, one staff member reminds the children about their visit to the garden centre when she reads a story about planting and growing. Staff demonstrate a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage, which ensures that sessions are well planned, meet children's individual needs and include a good balance of activities to promote learning in all areas of the curriculum. Good systems are in place for identifying children's starting points and staff are aware of children's next steps for learning which they use to inform future planning. Children's records include observations supported by photographs; these are clearly linked to the areas of learning and stepping stones, which helps staff to ensure that children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children display high levels of interest and motivation as they sit and persist for lengthy periods of time at activities of their choosing, for example, as they help to mix the cornflour and water or as they sit and make birthday cakes with the play dough. Children are confident in their interactions with others. They readily approach staff, their peers and inspectors to start conversations and express their ideas. Overall, children show a good awareness of behaviour boundaries as staff generally use praise and encouragement well to promote good behaviour and offer good explanations. However, unwanted behaviour is not always managed appropriately at mealtimes. Children manage developmentally appropriate tasks very well, for example, when undressing and dressing for their music and movement session. Children are confident speakers and use language very well as they express their ideas, talk about personal experiences and as they express their needs. Staff make stories interesting and involve children fully. This is reflected in how children sit attentively and enjoy listening to stories and in how children carefully handle books and read stories to themselves.

Children show an interest in numbers and counting in their everyday activities, such as, when counting the candles on the birthday cake made from play dough, counting the objects on the number puzzle and when using their fingers to show how old they are. Children are learning to solve simple number problems as they sing songs, such as "five currant buns" and use good mathematical language in their play. Children show curiosity as they excitedly use all their senses to investigate a wide range of textures, such as, jelly, sawdust and gloop made from cornflour. Children show a good awareness of change, for example, as seeds grow into plants or flowers and children show excitement and delight as they observe the snow and hail stones falling, commenting that they would need an umbrella. Children show very good skills

in the use of technology as they operate simple programmes on the computer and use the mouse efficiently. Children competently use tools for a purpose as they cut and roll the play dough and as they use mark-making materials, such as paint brushes, toothbrushes and pencils to make a variety of patterns, lines and circles.

A very good range of activities are provided for children to experiment with different ways of moving. Children move freely with pleasure and confidence as they move in a range of ways, such as leaping, stretching, jumping and wiggling as they enthusiastically join in with action songs and they clearly enjoy singing along. Children engage in a variety of planned activities and topics that help them to develop health and body awareness, however, opportunities within the daily routines to support this are limited. Children show curiosity as they excitedly use all their senses to explore and investigate a wide range of media and materials. They are beginning to describe texture, for example as they notice a change in consistency as water is mixed with the cornflour to make gloop. Children play alongside others very co-operatively as they demonstrate excellent imagination along with good narrative, for example, as they pretend to cook dinner in the home corner or make a list of things to buy before visiting the role play florists.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are valued and included. Children have their individual needs met by staff who work in close partnership with parents and carers. Good systems are in place for finding out about children's individual needs and informing parents about the nursery provision. For example, prior to placement parents are asked to complete an "All about Me" booklet on their child and a welcome brochure, which includes detailed information about the setting, including policies and procedures, is given to parents. Such systems ensure that staff offer appropriate care, have the agreement of parents and ensures that staff adhere to parent's wishes. Staff satisfactorily share information on a day to day basis. Regular newsletters keep parents up to date with the setting and development files, along with a yearly parent's evening, keep parents informed of their children's progress.

Children feel a sense of belonging because of the positive relationships with staff who are friendly and approachable. Children generally behave well; they learn to respond to appropriate expectations for their behaviour and develop self-esteem and respect for others because of staff's generally good use of praise, encouragement and explanations. However, staff are not always consistent in the methods they use to manage unwanted behaviour and some strategies do not reflect the setting's policy. Children learn to work harmoniously together as they take turns at activities, share the play dough or co-operate in the home corner. Children have ample opportunities to make choices and take decisions. For example, free play sessions enable children to become independent learners and explore and discover at their own pace with the support of staff. Staff provide an adequate range of resources and activities to help children value diversity, for example, as they celebrate the festival of Diwali or Chinese New Year and display a "Welcome" poster that reflects people from a variety of backgrounds.

Partnership with parents, in relation to nursery education, is good. Parents are provided with generally good information about the Foundation Stage; this is explained to them when they are shown around the nursery by the manager before placement. Information is also displayed and includes the letter of the week and current topic, daily planning sheet and photographs of children engaging in a variety of activities relating to the areas of learning. Good systems are in place to ensure that parents are well informed about their child's achievements; a parent's evening takes place yearly and parents are able to access development files at any time or talk to staff about their child's progress or concerns due to the nursery's open door policy. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their child's learning. They are asked to contribute to the Jolly Phonics display by bringing in objects for the letter of the week, letter books are taken home and information is provided about the six weekly topics. This encourages parents to support and extend their child's learning at home. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is generally well fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff with a good knowledge and understanding of child development. Effective recruitment procedures are implemented; clear job descriptions and specific questions during the interview process ensure that staff are suitable for the specified role and hold the necessary experience, skills and knowledge. Generally robust systems are in place for ensuring that staff are suitable to work with children, however, procedures are not secure in protecting children from persons who are not vetted. Children benefit from the high level of qualified staff as this well exceeds the minimum requirements. Staff have a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement; weaknesses are actively addressed and staff are fully encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge further through the well organised training matrix. This additionally ensures that they keep up to date with current practice, which promotes children's care, welfare and learning.

Time, space and staff deployment contributes positively to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting and ensures that children receive good levels of support. There are generally good arrangements in place for the induction of staff. For example, a three month buddy system is implemented to ensure that staff feel supported and staff have to sign to confirm that they have read the setting's policies and procedures. However, policies and procedures are not working in practice in some aspects because staff are not implementing them sufficiently at all times to promote positive outcomes for children. Overall, documentation is well organised and kept up to date and records are generally stored appropriately to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

The leadership and management of the nursery, in relation to nursery education, is good. The manager has developed successful working relationships with staff; she spends a good amount of time working directly in the rooms to ensure that staff are well supported. Staff are well qualified and high priority is given to staff training to enable them to increase their knowledge and skills, therefore, improving the practice

and care of the children. Activities are effectively monitored and evaluated to ensure that children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. Good systems are in place for monitoring staff performance; regular appraisals encourage staff to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. The manager clearly has high expectations of what staff and children can achieve and is committed to ensuring that any weaknesses are addressed to continually improve the standards of care and education for all children. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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

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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 good.

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):

- improve the arrangements in place which minimize the spread of infection in relation to children who are sleeping, illness and hand washing
- ensure that the safety of children is maintained at all times in relation to the security of the premises and electrical appliances
- improve the arrangements in place to ensure that any person who has not been vetted is never left alone with children
- ensure that adult handling of behaviour is appropriate, consistent and follows methods stated in the behaviour management policy (also applies to nursery)

education).

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):

- extend the opportunities for children to learn about health and bodily awareness in their daily routines.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk