



Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	102824
Inspection date	23 May 2006
Inspector	Nicola Jayne Pascoe

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Registered person	Little Acorns Pre-School
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns opened in 1993. It operates from purpose-built and self-contained premises. It is situated on the site of Penponds School, Higher Penponds, near Camborne, in Cornwall. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 during term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 79 children aged from two to 11 years on roll. Of these, 20

children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The setting employs five staff. All of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. All staff are currently working towards a play work qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority, Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA) and Playlines.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from following clear and consistent hygiene routines. They wash their hands regularly and at appropriate times, for example, before snacks and meals and after use of the toilet. Children have use of clean premises, toys and equipment. Children eat healthy and nutritious snacks, which are provided in sufficient quantities. Food is stored appropriately and preparation areas are clean and hygienic. Fresh drinking water is made readily available for all children. Children are growing their own vegetables in the pre-school garden. They are exploring growth and change and comparing it to their own development.

Children enjoy fresh air and physical exercise on a daily basis. They are aware of the need to wear their coats to protect them when they play outdoors in the cold and wet weather. They enjoy regular local walks in the countryside to explore the plants and wildlife. Older children initiate football practice and participate in social group games. They have regular planned opportunities to practise for their cycling proficiency test. Pre-school children use the school field and play ground to run, jump, climb, ride bicycles and play games outdoors. Children are able to rest and relax when required, on cushions in the book corner. Children's medication is stored and administered appropriately. There is a sufficient number of staff who have completed paediatric first aid training. Accident records show that injuries are treated appropriately and that parents are kept informed. Suitable procedures are followed to care for sick children and prevent the spread of cross-infection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the use of a purpose built and self-contained unit, which is child-centred, safe and secure. The central room is organised to provide comfortable areas for children to rest and play. Toys and resources are freely accessed by children, as they are kept in low storage units, which are clearly and appropriately labelled. Children are supervised closely when outdoors and on outings. There are suitable procedures in place to ensure that children are collected by authorised persons.

Staff follow a written risk assessment to ensure the premises and equipment are safe for children's use. Daily visual checks are routinely carried out by all staff. The

premises are kept secure and children, visitors and staff entering and leaving the premises are monitored well. Children are protected from persons who are not checked for suitability. Clear child protection procedures are shared with parents and followed well by staff, who demonstrate confidence in their ability to identify, record and report concerns appropriately. Staff follow clear emergency evacuation procedures, practising fire drills regularly with the children. Fire equipment is checked each week by the manager, who is the appointed and trained fire warden.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children are busy, interested and involved in worthwhile and purposeful activities. They select freely from the wide range of age appropriate activities available. All children enjoy time to play individually and as part of large and small groups. Staff offer appropriate levels of support and interaction, praise and encouragement.

All children are included in the range of activities available. Activities are linked to a general theme in order to provide opportunities for children to make connections, explore ideas fully and maintain focus. Staff have developed their awareness of the Birth to three matters framework. A familiar daily routine is followed, which provides children with a sense of security and a balanced range of activities. Children participate in enjoyable opportunities to play and learn. They participate in a broad and balanced range of both self-initiated and planned activities.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children follow interesting and enjoyable planned activities which promote their learning and development. However, children's individual assessment records are not used effectively by staff, to ensure individual targets are linked to future planned activities. As a result, children do not receive sufficiently challenging opportunities to ensure that they may reach their full potential.

Children are able to develop their independence within the pre-school room. Resources are stored in low, labelled storage units and toilet facilities are freely accessed. Mark-making materials are freely available to children during pre-school sessions, but children are not encouraged to use mark-making in a purposeful way. For example, they do not have opportunities to attempt to write their own name for self-registration or to label their own work. Children's written work is not displayed and valued. Older children are generally well behaved, polite and kind to others. They listen and concentrate well at group discussion time, they are keen to join in and particularly enjoy singing favourite songs. Children explore the days of the week, special occasions and the weather at registration time. They are beginning to understand the passing of time. Children are actively involved in tidying away at the end of the session.

Children observe the change in consistency and texture when they make 'butterfly buns', during their regular cooking activity. Staff promote children's language well

through this activity, discussing the changes observed and the process to be followed. Children are involved in weighing and measuring the ingredients. They participate in daily routine activities to count, for example, at registration time when they establish how many children are present. Overall children are making satisfactory levels of progress in most areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children are settled and happy. They have formed strong and trusting relationships with staff and other children. A key worker system is in place and is used to ensure children's specific individual needs are identified and that information is shared regularly with parents. Staff are suitable role models and most children respond well to follow their examples, they are developing their use of 'please' and 'thank you' and demonstrate good table manners. However, staff do not manage the behaviour of some younger children appropriately.

Children explore and celebrate their own and different cultures, beliefs and abilities through planned activities. They also have free use of a sufficient range of suitable resources which promote a positive awareness and understanding of people's differences. But they do not have a sufficient range of visual aids displayed, such as posters or pictures, which depict the diverse range of people within the local community and the wider world.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Staff are aware of the importance of sharing information regularly with parents and of how this positively impacts on children's well-being. However, they do not obtain information about what children attending the pre-school know, understand and can do on entry to the setting. Information is shared verbally with parents on a daily basis. The parent notice board displays useful written information. Written policies, a prospectus and newsletter are freely available to parents. Children's work is displayed and viewed by parents. The setting fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the staff's ability to provide an organised, child-centred and comfortable environment. Children can move freely and independently indoors. The setting has implemented robust recruitment and vetting procedures. Suitable contingency arrangements are in place to provide emergency cover. Clear registration systems are in place to show that adult-child ratios are met at all times.

Children's records and nursery documentation are stored securely and confidentiality is maintained. Staff demonstrate an awareness of the importance of storing these records for an appropriate length of time and of sharing them regularly with parents. Support is actively sought and welcomed from external agencies. Working relationships between the setting and the school are satisfactory. Older children

benefit from the close liaison the setting maintains with the school. However, the pre-school children do not benefit from the same level of interaction. Staff appraisals are used appropriately to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the setting.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. The manager is effective in her day to day organisation of the setting. Staff demonstrate a commitment to attending ongoing training and to improving standards of care and education. They have developed their knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework, but have not yet implemented this in their planning for the care and education of younger children. Children are generally well supported, happy and content. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was given a satisfactory judgement. There were a number of issues to be addressed relating to the provision of both care and nursery education. The setting was required to improve written procedures which monitor risks in the playgroup environment and detail procedures to be followed in the event of a fire or accident. Suitable written risk assessments and emergency evacuation procedures have now been developed and implemented.

They were also required to develop the knowledge and understanding of staff and committee members regarding child protection procedures. Staff have now attended appropriate training and their individual development plans identify more comprehensive training for the future. Two members of staff have recently completed early years and play work courses, which include child protection training. Staff now demonstrate confidence in their ability to follow child protection procedures appropriately and effectively. They are planning to share this information with the committee members.

The written documentation was required to be updated to include sufficient information relating to the provision of full day care. All policies and procedures have now been appropriately amended.

Drinking water was to be made freely accessible to children at all times. A suitable water dispenser and plastic cups are now available on the work top.

Systems to obtain information regarding children's abilities on entry to the setting and with which to share information formally with parents regarding children's progress, were required to be developed. Staff have not yet developed a system to establish what children know, understand and can do on entry to the setting. However, they do provide regular one to one meetings with parents to share information regarding children's progress.

Improvements were required to ensure that children's individual learning requirements are regularly reviewed and are planned to be met through future activities, in particular through use of daily routines to promote problem solving and literacy skills. Daily routines now include problem solving and some literacy development, but writing skills and the linking of individual targets to future planned

activities still require some development.

The systems used to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision of nursery education and the delegation of specific roles and responsibilities, through use of the newly developed staff appraisal system required improvement. The staff appraisal system is now implemented effectively and there are plans to introduce a mid-term review to monitor development plans more regularly.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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.

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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):

- provide a suitable range of visual aids which positively promote children's awareness and understanding of people's differences
- implement the Birth to three matters framework
- implement appropriate methods of behaviour management to effectively manage the behaviour of younger children

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):

- obtain information to establish what children know, understand and can do on entry to the setting
- provide sufficiently challenging activities, which are linked to children's

individual targets, in order that all children are able to make good levels of progress

- provide opportunities for children to use purposeful mark-making on a daily basis, and ensure their written work is displayed and valued.

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