



## Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY314555
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 May 2006
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<b>Registered person</b>	Pauline Anne Congdon
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional 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](http://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 good. 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?

Little Acorns opened in 2005 and operates from large hall. It is situated in a residential area in the London borough of Barnet, and serves families from all areas of the local community.

A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 09.15 to 12.15, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 33 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these six children receive funding for nursery education.

The nursery employs eight staff, seven staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is unqualified.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and clean environment. They benefit from the high level of cleanliness and hygiene throughout the nursery which effectively contributes to limiting the risk of cross infection. This is further supported by the availability of resources such as anti-bacterial sprays, tissues and gloves used effectively by staff to help to limit the spread of germs and infection within the nursery. Children have a good understanding of how to follow personal hygiene routines. For example, they know to wash their hands before snack times and cooking activities, and after using the toilet, gardening and collecting snails and worms. These good practices are consistently reinforced by practitioners.

One member of staff has relevant first aid training, however additional staff have not updated their training as yet. They implement procedures such as the recording of accidents and administration of medication appropriately to maintain good health and consistency of care. Children's individual health and dietary needs are appropriately recorded and staff ensure that guidance and parents wishes are followed carefully. Younger children have warm trusting relationships with staff which helps them feel secure. Staff are familiar with the Birth to three framework to support the development of younger children, however this could be increased to enhance their practice.

Snack times are sociable and give opportunities for children to enjoy their food and become independent as they learn to feed themselves. Children independently help themselves to drinks and pour from a jug. They select cups from a tray and place them in a bowl when their drink is finished. Children are offered some choice for example, fresh fruit and toast. However a wider range of healthy options would increase the children's understanding of healthy foods. They talk about how to keep their bodies healthy and they recognise the importance of eating a healthy balanced diet. They help themselves to drinking water, recognising when they are hot and thirsty, for example after outside play.

Opportunities for children to be active, learn to control their bodies and develop their physical skills both indoors and outdoors are good. They can access climbing frames, balls, beanbags, hoops, cones, tents and music and movement, this increases the children's opportunities for exercise and fresh air. Staff will regularly organise obstacles courses whenever requested. Children's enjoyment of physical exercise is increased by the staffs motivation and enthusiasm. Children competently use a wide range of small tools and equipment with increasing control including, scissors, dough cutters and glue spreaders.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a bright airy room which is made welcoming to children and parents through the use of displays of children's work and appropriate posters. Good use of space means that children are able to take part in a variety of different activities without impinging on others. Space is well organised and used effectively to allow children opportunities to engage in a good range of play equipment and resources, much of which is presented at low level in labelled boxes and in open shelving. The outdoor area is well resourced with suitable outdoor play equipment and fully enclosed to ensure children cannot leave unsupervised.

Children's safety is promoted because staff are vigilant at reducing risks and minimising hazards. Daily risk assessments of the nursery and the outdoor environment are effective at keeping children safe, for example any debris or broken equipment is removed prior to the children's arrival. Children are cared for in a safe and very secure environment where all visitors are monitored.

Practitioners show a good knowledge and understanding of child protection issues which helps them protect children from harm and neglect. The whole staff team are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection. Good use is made of local training opportunities to ensure that knowledge is kept current. Staff are clear about appropriate procedures to follow if they have concerns regarding a child's welfare. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and contact numbers readily accessible.

Good regard is given to fire safety, the nursery has devised an escape procedure and have practised this with the children. A fire blanket is wall mounted in the kitchen, the smoke alarms are tested and batteries changed when needed.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at nursery. They arrive happy and confident and quickly settle into the routine making their own choices about their play. For example the children discuss and collect caterpillars from the garden they bring them indoors, and discuss their caterpillar poster on the wall. The hungry caterpillar story sack is pulled out and the children discuss the different foods that caterpillar might like, the whole activity is child led. Children gain confidence and achievement from increasing their knowledge.

Younger children settle well and become familiar with their surroundings and the daily routine. Children are interested in activities and involved in their learning. Practitioners know children well and talk to them about their family and what they have been doing at home. This interaction, and the implementation of a successful organisation, helps to secure relationships between children and staff developing a strong sense of trust.

Children develop very good communication skills as they contribute to group discussions and become competent learners, for example they self-select activities such as playing at the investigation table and using maps and magnifying glasses. Children enjoy opportunities to express imagination through role-play and telling stories. They experience a range of media and materials encouraging them to explore their senses. Practitioners talk about how each child is progressing and plan their next step for development. They recognise the value of play in a child's development and introduce a range of experiences, enabling all children to learn to play and work together in large and small groups as well as independently.

Many toys are stored on low level shelves where children are able to access them safely, this provides choice and promotes children's self help skills and ability to make decisions for themselves. They show their ease with their surroundings as they sing to themselves and access resources confidently. Children's creativity is well supported by staff who encourage them to create their own designs and express themselves in their work. For example, children collect sticks from the garden, they decide to paint them so that the sticks become snakes in the jungle.

Practitioners' warm interaction and good support helps build positive relationships, children confidently approach staff members and chat happily about what they are doing. An effective key worker system is in operation and staff have a good knowledge of children's individual needs. Lots of appropriate cuddles are evident, particularly for the new and younger children which help them feel secure.

#### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good individual progress because practitioners have a secure understanding of how children learn effectively and use their self-chosen play to extend their learning. They adapt their questioning techniques, according to the age and ability of the child, and implement a varied range of teaching methods to introduce an exciting range of activities and experiences to all children. Practitioners encourage children to lead their own learning and this is successfully achieved by a well developed routine, with a good balance of child and adult initiated activities.

Children are eager to learn and concentrate well showing good perseverance with activities. They co-operate and negotiate roles, when acting out their imagined ideas in role-play and value one another's ideas. For example, children discuss the shopping they will need for a meal, that they cook in the home corner.

Children listen with great excitement to stories and suggest their own endings. They confidently talk about words that beginning with the same sound and notice letters in familiar words around the room. Children independently use a range of tools and materials and freely access a variety of resources from the writing station, which they use to represent their own ideas, such as writing lists during imaginative play. Children have opportunity to experiment with scale for example large wall friezes completed with large brushes, hands and feet and smaller cards and materials where small mark making equipment is available.

Children gain confidence in using numbers and begin to compare the weight and size

of objects as they predict how many cupfuls of earth it will take to fill another. Children use good mathematical language, because practitioners introduce words such as over and under, more or less, to extend the children's thinking. Children learn the sequence of numbers in imaginative and fun ways. For example, children hang out numbers in the correct order using pegs on a washing line.

Effective use is made of time and resources to provide children with opportunities to engage in physical activities, including dance and explore creativity using a wide range of media such as paint, pasta, wood and sand. They learn about themselves and their families through discussion and topic work and talk about their local community and the wider world. They learn about different countries and continents through information files, globes, parents participation and story time. Children can access telephones, calculators and tape recorders. Children's understanding of technology is increased by good use of their working computer.

Practitioners observe and monitor children's progress regularly in a variety of different ways and this is used to identify individual targets for children to work towards. Realistic expectations of children and good individual knowledge helps them to consolidate their learning before moving onto the next stage. As a result, the curriculum is tailored to individual children's needs and abilities, which ensures effective support and sufficient challenges are provided to help children achieve their individual potential.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the nursery because practitioners value each child as an individual. Children are confident and show good self-esteem responding well to continual praise and encouragement. They know what is expected of them and confidently talk about ground rules, helping to develop a very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Children work together co-operatively, for instance by negotiating turns when completing the obstacle course and practitioners help re-enforce this.

Children learn about themselves and the wider world through planned activities and discussions, for example around a variety of cultural festivals, helping them to understand and value the similarities and differences between themselves and others. However there is a lack of varied and positive representation of disabilities within the play equipment. This positive approach fosters children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Children benefit from good relationships and working partnerships with parents, which contributes to their well-being and the relationships they develop at nursery. Secure links are in place between home and nursery and parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child when they begin the group. Flexible settling in arrangements, ensure parents are involved. Practitioner's value parent's comments and suggestions using these to enhance the provision for children. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children develop a secure sense of belonging because the daily running of the nursery is well organised and staff know the children well. Practitioners are supported by the provider through regular team meetings, and active encouragement to attend a wide range of training and practice workshops. However there are no structured opportunities to meet with the manager on a one to one basis. All required documentation regarding the care of children is in place, it is current, well organised and appropriately stored with an awareness of confidentiality.

Staff deployment is good, ensuring all children are well cared for and happily engaged in a range of stimulating activities. The organisation of space, particularly in the main play area and garden, ensures that the areas available are used effectively. Children are given opportunity to access equipment and have space to play actively, as well as quietly.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. Practitioners are knowledgeable about the foundation stage curriculum and use observations and assessments effectively to evaluate how children are progressing toward the early learning goals. This enables them to utilise observations to affect future planning and specifically to identify how individual children will be helped to move on. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable

## **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.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

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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):

- ensure that more than one member of staff, has completed an up to date first aid course
- improve knowledge and understanding of the needs of children under 3 for example through the use of the Birth to three matters framework
- provide a healthy range of snacks that offer variety and choice
- provide an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote positive images of disabilities

### **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):

- provide opportunity for staff to meet with the manager on a one to one basis

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