



Widcombe Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 133108
Inspection date 08 June 2006
Inspector Kay Roberts

Setting Address St Marks Community Centre, St Marks Road, Widcombe, Bath, BA2 4ET
Telephone number 01225 445446
E-mail
Registered person Widcombe 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Widcombe Acorns Pre-School is an established group based in St Mark's Community Church Hall, serving the area of Widcombe in the city of Bath. It is permanently set up in separate rooms within the hall, with an integral kitchen and toilet area. It also has use of the main hall and part of the old church yard for outdoor play.

The group opens during school term time, Monday to Thursday from 9.30 to 15.30 hours and on a Friday from 09.30 until 13.00 hours. The pre-school group is

registered for 24 places for children from two to five-years, with a maximum of four children under three-years. There are currently 62 children on roll. This includes 23 funded three-year-olds and 36 funded four-year-olds. The setting supports children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language.

The group is managed by a parent committee. There are eight members of staff, seven of whom hold a relevant child care qualification, the remaining member of staff will commence training for National Vocational Qualification(NVQ) level 3 in September 2006. There are five members of staff plus a parent assistant present for each session. The setting receives support from a mentor from the Bath and North East Somerset Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Practice within the setting is strongly influenced by the groups participation in the '5 x 5 x 5 Reggio Emilia Approach' project.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's good health is very well promoted. They play in a clean environment. The risk of infection is minimised as staff follow highly effective hygienic procedures. Parents are fully aware of the policy for excluding children who are sick and are kept informed of infection within the setting. Children learn the importance of hygiene through the daily routine and without a reminder wash their hands in preparation for snack. They are given independence through the provision of a small step. Children have an excellent understanding of their bodies. They know where the heart and main bones are located in their bodies and explain that if they did not have bones they would not be able to stand up. All staff are qualified to administer first aid and accidents are appropriately recorded and shared with parents. Children's medical needs and special dietary requirements are sensitively met as staff adopt a proactive approach.

Many excellent opportunities are provided for children to play outside. They are protected from the elements. In summer sun screen is applied and children play in the shade of the many mature trees. When the weather is wet children wear Wellington boots, raincoats and have umbrellas. Children are enthusiastic about playing outdoors. They enjoy mark making with the chalks, listening to the sound of the wind chimes and go on number and letter hunts. Using their imagination they create dens and play in the space ship and station they have made from huge cardboard boxes. At other times they tend the runner beans they have planted in the garden and the range of herbs for the sensory area. A recent addition to the garden is the willow house which was constructed following consultation with the children. Children drew pictures of what they wanted and afterwards staff recorded the details as children explained their wishes to 'play hide and seek... you have to jump out'. Large muscle skills are developed as they ride bikes, try to keep the hoops around their waist and stretch from one tree stump to another. If the garden is being used by other people in the community centre children continue to develop large muscle skills indoors. In the hall they have fun as they move the parachute up and down together

to bounce a teddy bear up and down.

When thirsty, children pour themselves a drink of water from the jug. At snack time children are independent as they help staff to take the beakers, plates and jugs to the table. They choose when they wish to have their snack. If it is fresh fruit children help to prepare it. They explore the different textures and smell of fruit, such as pomegranate. When they have a biscuit, as a treat, they break it into pieces and ask staff to name the fraction. At lunch time, recognising what foods are healthy children take out their healthy food first and leave the remainder in their lunch box. Cooking activities help children to understand what foods are healthy as they make bread, fruit kebabs and a range of dips. When making smoothies children have the opportunity to use different tools, a fork, masher and liquidiser to see which is the most effective.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are welcomed into the pre-school as they receive a warm, personal greeting from staff. The premises are inviting with a wealth of well presented children's work displayed throughout and the good quality, safe resources, covering all areas of learning await their arrival. If children wish to play with something else they confidently help themselves to toys and games placed in low level cupboards and drawers. They remain interested in the resources as the range is extensive and staff regularly introduce new items from local libraries. Children are comfortable as they use the child sized furniture and chairs. Space is well organised so that children can move around freely and play undisturbed by others as activities are placed in clearly defined areas. Children relax in the book corner which is particularly attractive with a row of soft toys neatly lined up on the sofa. Opportunities for independence are maximised as everything is placed within children's reach, for example coat hooks. Children benefit from access to a side room for small group activities, a large hall and extensive outside area.

Children play in a safe, secure environment. Staff have a clear understanding of local child protection procedures. Children are protected from people who are not vetted and there is an effective procedure for ensuring children are only released to authorised adults. There is a thorough ongoing risk assessment and the premises are checked on a daily basis before children arrive to ensure there are no potential hazards. The risk of children having an accident is reduced as staff are extremely vigilant. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance between setting safety limits and allowing children the freedom to fully explore their environment. Children learn to protect themselves. They move between areas by creeping quietly in a line, so they do not disturb other members of staff, but have fun as they reach their destination and shout 'boo'. Children are alert to road safety and know that if they get separated from their parent on an outing they should stay where they are.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children new to the provision settle quickly because of the emotional security provided by the presence of their parent, an effective key worker system and the proactive approach used by staff to ensure that children's individual needs are sensitively considered. They make excellent progress because all staff are highly skilled, have a good understanding of early years guidance, such as Birth to three matters and the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage, and use this to effectively plan a range of stimulating and varied activities.

Children are keen to enter the premises and aware of the daily routine they confidently select their name card and place it on the tree to show they are present. Register is made into a fun, learning experience. Children name the day and month when they are given the initial sound. They count the number of children present with magic wands and use their fingers to calculate simple addition and subtraction. Afterwards they listen intently to a parent who was formerly a nurse as she explains her uniform, badges and instruments. Children are keen to tell everyone that they have badges at home and know that their temperature is taken with a fever scan. After it is explained that a thermometer has mercury inside one child recalls from the nursery education programme in the previous month that there is a planet called mercury. Children know what their heart beat sounds like because they listen to it using a stethoscope. Afterwards as fine muscle skills are developed they enjoy drawing round their bodies and after cutting out the black paper stick on the white bones by following the chart. They are able to name the different bones and know that the whole is called a skeleton. Children have fun measuring the size of the spine against the size of their bodies. As children participate social skills are extended as they wait their turn and work together to stick on the bones. They are introduced to new words and children are keen to talk about what they are doing.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff use children's interests and knowledge of each child's progress to effectively plan an extensive range of stimulating activities which cover all aspects of the curriculum. Staff make learning a practical, fun experience and as each achievement is celebrated children make excellent progress because they are motivated to learn. Activities are very well supported with resources. When looking at symmetry children know what a ladybird looks like because they are able to see the pictures in a book. Children want to listen to the story of 'This is the Bear' as adults bring the story to life and having heard the story previously children join in with some of the words. They enjoy sharing books and explain the stories by confidently describing what is happening in the pictures. The short stories children have dictated to staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the way stories are structured as many begin with 'once upon a time'. Children have excellent communication skills and their broad vocabulary allows them to express their views and emotions well. Mathematical language is used to describe, height, size and shape and in stories children use numbers to represent distance. Children enjoy singing favourite nursery rhymes, such as 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' and as they do so keep a good rhythm with the musical instruments. They know that the beat for 'The Grand Old Duke of York' should be fast and loud. When staff start dancing, children quickly join in and follow their actions. Creativity is strongly

encouraged as children are given access to an extensive range of media such as clay, charcoal and marbling inks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. All children are welcomed and play a full part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality. Staff sensitively meet children's special needs as they are fully conversant with the Code of Practice and plan well in advance of their arrival. All children know how to sign and keen to extend their knowledge, already aware of the sign for cow, ask how bull is communicated. Children sign and sing 'Three Blind Mice'. Some children are so enthusiastic about signing they make up their own signs. Through this positive example provided by staff children learn to value difference. They play with readily accessible resources reflecting positive images of diversity and learn about the cultures of others. For Chinese New Year they made a dragon from cardboard boxes and built a Sukkah to celebrate Sukkot, the Jewish harvest festival. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and set consistent boundaries so that children's behaviour is exemplary. At snack time children remember to say 'please' and 'thank you' both verbally and by signing. When wishing to speak in a large group they say 'excuse me'. Children are able to take turns, share and work together to achieve a common goal. They show consideration for each other; when one child leaves her bag, another child takes it to her. Respect is shown for the environment as they help to tidy up when the music plays. Children's respect for nature has been fostered as they have grown and nurtured the beans and herbs. They observe the change in the seasons and gather up the dead leaves in autumn. In spring they watch the bulbs and leaves on the trees begin to sprout. Children are also alert to changes in the animal kingdom as they watch the tadpoles gradually develop into frogs. Many opportunities are provided so that children have a good understanding of the local community as they are visited by the local police officer and students from a range of schools and Bath Spa University. Other users of the community centre are invited to special events such as barbecues and Easter egg hunts. Earlier in the year children looked at the location of the pre-school in relation to their own homes and shops which they recorded on a map.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. The relaxed relationship between parents and staff provides emotional security and reassurance to children. Parents comment very positively about the provision; using words such as 'brilliant' and 'fantastic' to describe the staff. When children are due to commence at the setting parents are invited to an open evening where they have the opportunity to meet staff and members of the committee. Parents receive a comprehensive range of information relating to practices and the education programme within the setting. This enables parents to be actively involved in their children's learning both at the playgroup and at home. Parents are asked to share their knowledge of the children so that staff can effectively meet children's individual needs. Progress records are shared with parents on a regular basis.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom care is provided. There are rigorous recruitment procedures and a thorough induction. Highly effective management and communication systems ensures consistency of approach as staff are clear about their role and responsibilities. The stable staff team and effective key worker system gives children continuity of care. Keen to extend the provision staff have undertaken a considerable amount of training since the last inspection, for example, a day at a forest school. Parents' views about the provision are sought and any suggestions acted upon. Staff are enthusiastic about their work and are well deployed so that children receive a high level of support and are actively occupied throughout the day. An effective planning cycle ensures that all children make excellent progress. Good organisation of the premises, both in and outdoors, maximises learning opportunities. Space is provided for both physical activity and rest. Comprehensive documentation is continually reviewed so that children's health, safety and welfare are actively promoted. Paperwork meets the requirements of the National Standards, is confidentially maintained and where appropriate shared with parents.

Leadership and management is outstanding. There is a supportive working relationship between the leader and chair of the committee, both of whom are keen to improve the quality of care and education for all children. By seeking the views of parents and regularly reviewing practice there have been many changes made to the provision, for example allowing children to choose when they have a snack so that their play is not interrupted. Further plans for the future include improving the assessment records and developing a wildlife section in the garden.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection in June 2003 staff agreed to meet two recommendations. Children are further protected as documentation has improved. Staff have written parental consent to seek advice or treatment in the event of a medical emergency. The child protection policy includes a statement of the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff.

Since the last education inspection in March 2003 children's access to outdoor play has been enriched. Children have access to a broad range of activities, from planting to physical activity. They listen to the wind chimes and, create large constructions using drain pipes and crates. At other times children sit on the blanket and snack is more fun as they eat outside in the shade created by the mature trees.

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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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