



Alderton Acorns Pre-school, Toddler and Baby Groups

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	101702
Inspection date	07 June 2006
Inspector	Angela Cole
Setting Address	Alderton Village Hall, Dibden Lane, Alderton, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 8NT
Telephone number	01242 620386
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Registered person	Alderton Acorns Pre-school, Toddler and Baby Groups
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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?

Alderton Acorns Pre-school, Toddler and Baby Groups is managed by a committee made up of parents of children at the group. It opened in 1974 and operates from the village hall in Alderton, near Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire. The pre-school uses the main hall, small room, kitchen, toilets and new enclosed garden that is being developed. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open on Monday to Thursday, from 09.30 until 12.00, during school

terms. There is an Early Club offered each pre-school day from 09.00 to 09.30, to coincide with school drop-off times.

There are currently 20 children, aged from two years nine months to under five years, on roll. Of these, 19 children receive funding for early years education. Children come from within Alderton, the surrounding villages and from further a field. The staff have experience of supporting children with learning difficulties, disabilities and English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs three members of staff, who all hold appropriate early years qualifications. The staff are supported by parents on rota duty. The group has links with the local community, including the schools and church.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn good balance, co-ordination and spatial awareness through regular physical sessions and active indoor and outdoor play. They enjoy a wide range of large physical equipment, including a variety of climbing frames and a spin bowl. They develop good control of wheeled toys in defined areas and enjoy moving to music. Children gain effective independence in self-care skills for toileting and tidying the play resources.

The children are cared for in clean, spacious premises and are kept at a comfortable temperature in hot weather. They become increasingly aware of the way activity affects their bodies and know when they need a drink or a quieter activity. Children develop a good understanding of hygiene through established routines and by discussing the reasons for washing their hands. Those who become ill are well cared for and the risk of cross infection is minimised, as parents are given detailed information on any current infection. Children receive good continuity of care, through the sharing of information with parents about accidents and medication.

Children help themselves to easily accessible drinking water throughout the session and enjoy healthy drinks at snack time. The parent helpers provide a good variety of fruits for them to eat and these are attractively presented to encourage children to try new tastes. The children enjoy nutritious foods that comply with all special dietary requirements, to ensure they remain healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move safely in the spacious premises. They play in a safe environment, as staff take appropriate steps to minimise potential hazards. These include daily checks of the community hall and regularly up-dated, in-depth assessment of risks. Children are safe within the pre-school environment as staff are vigilant and supervise them

constantly, especially when arriving and leaving. They use high-quality equipment that is appropriate to their age and stage of development, such as the new, sturdy ride-on toys. They independently select activities from a wide range of resources that meets safety standards.

The adults remind the children of potential hazards within their play, so they learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. For example, they discuss the dangers of sharp knives during the preparation of vegetables for soup. Children also begin to understand how to keep themselves safe outside the group; for example, a picture of a cyclist is skilfully used to discuss the importance of wearing a cycle helmet.

Children's welfare and safety is promoted, through the staff's clear understanding of relevant issues. For example, they all hold current first aid certificates and have undertaken child protection training to gain a sound knowledge of the local child protection procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive eager to begin their play and enjoy their time in the pre-school. They achieve well, because staff are highly skilled and use their sound understanding of early years guidance, such as 'Birth to three matters' and the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.' From an early age, children are fully included in the pre-school's activities. They constantly interact with and question the plentiful adults in this intimate setting, to develop their language skills. They gain good confidence to concentrate on their chosen play and enjoy experimenting, for example, with different types of paint. Children are deeply involved in a broad range of activities indoors and outdoors. They begin to make good sense of the world and express their ideas, for example, as they help to plant the new pre-school garden.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals in all the six areas of learning. There are no differences in learning between different groups of children such as girls and boys, for example, in mathematical development. The children confidently use numbers in their conversations and create their own problems, for example, to count 10 randomly placed 'candles' on a clay 'cake'. Staff skilfully support children to compare numbers to calculate one more and one less. For example, at the computer, a child adds one more animal on his own as he puts up another finger and counts to seven. Staff make good use of spontaneous opportunities to promote learning during routines, including positions of children in front and behind each other. The children make very good progress in relation to their starting points, for example, in communication, language and literacy. They develop effective speaking skills to clearly express their own ideas, learn new words and tell stories, for example, about an archaeological dig in the sand. Staff successfully use ingenious ways to help them develop listen skills, such as a 'sleeping tortoise' puppet. Children enjoy books and eagerly recall aspects of the story to link these with their home experiences, such as a kitchen a flood. They

confidently recognise sounds of letters and their names and write these when they are ready, for example, on family cards.

Children are well challenged to gain new ideas and skills to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. In the calm atmosphere, they become very involved in their explorations, including investigating objects that float or sink and how a water pump works. They enjoy regular cooking sessions to learn about changes to ingredients and handle different materials, such as ice 'hands'. Children gain a good sense of time and place as they explore the local community and recall, for example, when they chose the community hall's Christmas tree. They learn meaningfully about aspects of less familiar cultures, including language through the words of a Gallic song and books lent by a French family. The children's progress is of a similar high standard in all areas of learning. For example, their creativity is highly valued and encouraged. They enthusiastically respond through their senses, while painting to music that they come to recognise and name and to imitate the styles of painting masters. Children make very good use of their imagination to role play in suitably resourced indoor and outdoor imaginative areas, to create models and to tell stories. Children sing spontaneously and move rhythmically, as they clap and stamp. They enjoy freely exploring the different sounds of a wide range of attractive musical instruments.

The enthusiastic staff find out about the children's skills and needs and build on this information, to motivate them to achieve and progress towards the early learning goals. An informed approach to planning and an appropriate balance of adult and child-led activities encourage children to learn at their own pace. Children enjoy playing in the attractive, newly-landscaped garden, where staff currently provide basic opportunities for outdoor learning. The children freely choose to re-visit activities to consolidate their experiences and try new techniques. The staff are perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and question them successfully, to challenge and extend their thinking. For example, when a child suggests they sort home corner food, the adult offers sensitive support by introducing new words such as 'dairy foods' and helps them to remember that a tomato is a fruit. Staff use effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and plan appropriate experiences that help them to take the next steps in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly to their chosen play, as they relate well to the small group of staff. They play well with each other in pairs and small groups and they help the younger ones, for example, to sort farm animals. Adults encourage them to make decisions about their play and give warm, enthusiastic praise so children gain self-esteem and confidence, for example, to speak and sing in front of others. The staff follow a secure behaviour policy and know which method of management best supports each child. They give clear explanations and reasons for their expectations, so the children receive good support to behave well and feel secure. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The children are valued and respected as individuals. This helps them to learn to consider each other fairly, to share resources such as clay and take turns, for example, with wheeled toys. The staff meet the children's needs well and they are very aware of their particular requirements. Children with learning needs or disabilities receive a high standard of support in close liaison with their parents, as staff strive to secure the maximum help from outside agencies.

Partnership with parents is good. Children's individual needs are met well, as a result of the strong partnership between parents and staff. Continuity of care is ensured through effective verbal and written procedures, which ensure the children are cared for in accordance with their parents' wishes. Staff and parents exchange much information, for example, through a detailed questionnaire and termly reports to which parents add helpful comments. Families are warmly welcomed and have meaningful involvement in their children's learning, for example, through strong management and valuable, informed support during the sessions.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children receive effective care and very good education, as a result of conscientious and competent organisational skills. The systems to check the initial and continuing suitability of staff are robust. Staff receive a sound induction and children benefit from teaching that is enhanced by a full training programme for key adults. The pre-school operates effectively, under a detailed operational plan to foster the children's safety and welfare. The premises are effectively organised, so children have variety of play spaces and ample adult support in appropriate small groups. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The day-to-day documentation is maintained to a good standard and the welcome brochure is being revised. The group has set up a log to record any complaint and this is compliant with Ofsted's requirements. Some written policies and procedures are not up-to-date, nor sufficiently expanded to reflect the setting's current good practice. Families easily access information on informative notice boards, such as the committee minutes, and planning sheets are openly available each session. There is good regard for confidentiality throughout the pre-school.

Leadership and management are good. The dedicated committee provides very good, clear, supportive management for this thriving pre-school. The staff work well together, to give children sensitive encouragement to individually extend their development and learning. They are highly committed and effective in promoting an inclusive environment, in which every child matters.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the pre-school improved procedures for registering children and the persons working with them. The registration system is now extended to include times of arrival and departure of the children, visitors and staff. This has improved the organisation of the setting to enhance the welfare of the

children.

No significant weaknesses were noted in the previous education inspection. The pre-school was asked to further consider the provision of a wider range of opportunities, for children to explore technology and to consider parents' awareness of the objectives for free-choice activities. The children now show good interest in a variety of computer programs that support their learning, for example, in mathematical development. They are keen to take turns to programme a 'bee roamer' that stops at a specified number or letter on a grid specially made by staff. Such activities effectively support the children's communication, language and literacy learning and mathematical development. Staff now support rota parents to be highly involved in the children's activities, by making the expected learning from free-choice activities openly available. Parents gain a good understanding of the Foundation Stage, so they successfully work in partnership with the staff to support the children's progress.

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 the 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):

- review and extend the written policies and procedures to reflect the current good practice in the group.

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):

- continue to develop children's opportunities for outdoor learning across the six areas of learning.

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