



Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY318335
Inspection date	11 October 2006
Inspector	Mary Kilroy
Setting Address	99 Church Road, Urmston, Manchester, Lancashire, M41 9FJ
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Registered person	The Dan Leisure Group
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

Little Acorns was re-registered in 2006 and is one of ten nurseries owned by the Dan Leisure Group.

The setting operates from seven rooms on two floors of a large Victorian house, close to the centre of Urmston, Trafford. There is a fully enclosed area for outdoor play.

The nursery serves mainly the local area and is open five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 08.00 to 18.00. A small number of children attend from 07.30 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for early hours care. The nursery is registered to care for 71 children at any one time and there are currently 70 on role. The setting employs 15 permanent and some casual staff; of these 60% have an appropriate early years qualification and others are working towards

a recognised qualification in childcare. Support for the nursery is received from the Early Years Advisory Service in Trafford.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is supported by staff who have a clear knowledge of the setting's health and hygiene procedures. This helps children to learn the importance of having healthy routines. They understand about being healthy as they wash their hands before and after snacks, following toileting and playing out and after helping to clear up. Staff ask children why they need to do this and children demonstrate a good understanding of the reasons why. Children learn from effective role models, for example, by seeing staff wipe the tables with anti-bacterial spray after activities and before snack time. They observe clean areas and see staff regularly checking the bathroom areas for cleanliness. The risk of cross infection is reduced as children have their own individual facecloths, towels and bedding. There are appropriate nappy changing procedures on the bathroom walls for staff to follow and reminder notices to assist staff to wash the children's hands, as well as their own before and after handling food. Children's handprints are displayed as a visual reminder for the younger children. Cloths and cleaning materials are colour coded and there are lots of reminders to ensure that staff use the correct equipment. Children have individually marked bottles and feeder cups, baby utensils and dummies are placed in a steriliser when not in use. All children are excellent at tidying up and enjoy being helpers. Older children are independent in most self care skills, such as going to the toilet, wiping their nose with tissues and self-selecting fresh drinking water. Parents are kept well informed about any communicable diseases and lists of the exclusion periods are displayed. Children are protected by the good policies, procedures and effective routines.

Meal times are lovely social events and children chat on a wide variety of topics. Children are provided with a range of healthy main meals and snacks. Fresh drinking water is always available in every room. There are reminder notices for staff to offer water to the children, who are too young to ask. Older children's individual needs are met very well as they can choose their snack time and fresh fruit as they wish. Menus are displayed for parents to see. Allergies are discreetly recorded and are known to all the staff, who sign the back to confirm that they have understood them. The cook works a full day and is able to supervise the meals and dietary requirements very well. Parents all receive good feedback, either written or verbal, on what children have eaten and display boards are completed by staff and children, saying 'We have had some lovely meals today' and outlining what has been enjoyed the most. Children help to set the tables, they hand round the drinks and serve themselves. Placemats with children's name and picture, or just their picture, gives them a sense of belonging and emotional well being. They have control of the size of their portions and can have as much more as they wish. Children take part in activities on healthy eating, such as making pizza with healthy toppings, making fruit kebabs and fruit tasting. Young babies are held closely whilst feeding, older ones are learning to feed themselves and are holding bottles and spoons. Lunchtime is obviously a time that is enjoyed by all, as the children share their news eagerly.

Children have access to an outdoor area with hard surface, grass and well established trees for shade. This ensures that they have opportunities for fresh air and exercise daily. Older children visit local parks with the staff and their preferences and ideas have been incorporated in the planning for a new outdoor area. They have drawn pictures and listed what they would like to see there. Children benefit from planned nature walks, although there is limited space inside for large scale physical play. Suitable outdoor clothes are provided, such as Wellington boots and children love splashing in the large pools and taking advantage of naturally occurring events. Normally, crates and tyres are incorporated in the play activities, also sometimes an obstacle course is created to ensure that all areas of physical development are covered. Younger children enjoy dance and music and movement. The nursery has applied to join 'Learning through Landscapes' in order to further enhance outdoor provision. An effective sun policy to ensure children are well protected and remain healthy in hot weather. They understand about keeping healthy, such as having a minimum of five fruits and vegetables a day, getting fresh air and exercise and drinking more water during hot weather and after strenuous exercise. They understand that they need hats, coats and exercise to keep warm outside.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are learning about how to remain safe through age appropriate reminders from staff throughout the daily routine. Staff remind children to stand up or move carefully near spillages. They sweep or mop up water or sand from the tray with the children regularly, always explaining why they need to do this. The children understand why this keeps them safe, such as 'Let's put the sand back in the tray, in case we slip on it.' Staff remind children not to stand on chairs or throw toys and they clearly explain the consequences of their actions to the child and to others. Staff encourage safety when children carry or use tools and equipment by showing them the best way to handle them. A member of staff carefully explains why she needs to cut the conker so that children can see a cross section, as it is so hard that a very sharp knife and a firm base are needed. Individual room's fire action and fire procedure are clearly displayed in all rooms for parents and visitors to see. Staff practise the emergency evacuation plan with children and they understand the process. Thus, older children are starting to take responsibility for their own safety. The log record shows that children and staff remain calm and act promptly.

Children are learning about road safety when crossing the road, for example, on outings to local parks or to the library. Staff use age-appropriate activity packs, based on the road safety hedgehog programme with the children. When discussing road safety with the staff, a three-year-old child joins in the conversation to tell me that a 'red man means stop and green means go'. They play a traffic lights game to increase their knowledge and understanding of road safety and safe places to cross. Children remain safe through good procedures, safe and suitable toys, and equipment, which are purchased to meet recognised safety standards. Risk assessments are completed of all trips and staff check play equipment and the general area on trips to local parks. The premises are safe and suitable, with one exception that has already been identified by the provision. This is to be completed as part of the improvement to the outside area. The decking area outside currently does not have a safety gate at either the top or bottom, to prevent children falling. Children have visits from the fire department and staff

complete special safety activities at appropriate times of the year, such as fireworks and Halloween.

There is a robust policy for child protection. Children remain safe as all staff are aware of the procedure. The designated person has the latest guidelines. She has 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' and ensures her policy and procedures meet the guidance. Staff are kept up to date by training, policy files and staff meetings. Persons not vetted are never left alone with children and there is a 'buddy' system in place to ensure shadowing by cleared staff. The premises are safe and secure, identification is rigorously scrutinised and a visitors book is in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of stimulating play activities and there are excellent opportunities to enhance their tactile experiences, using treasure baskets and an abundance of heuristic play items and natural materials. Babies enjoy activity, musical toys and mirrors, and there are lots of sensory experiences for them, using lights and mobiles. There are clear shakers filled with interesting things, such as lentils and star lights on one wall. Babies are well stimulated and have lots to look at, such as shiny mobiles made from compact discs. Staff spend all their time interacting with the children and know their likes and dislikes and their individual needs very well. Staff always respond to babies babbling and very good interaction was observed. A large wall is devoted to the 'Birth to three matters' framework to keep parents well informed and all areas are well explained. Lovely photographs of the children illustrate how each area is met. 'I snuggle in' as an example of 'being together' is a particularly good illustration. At lunchtime, babies make patterns in spilled food and drink on the tray of the highchair. Staff allow time for them to enjoy this before wiping trays and hands, recognising that this is good for children's development.

Children access toys and equipment from shelves, self selecting confidently. There are collage, printing, glitter and pasta pictures on the wall, all children's own work. There are lots of different thicknesses of chalks and a variety of paper for mark making. Children have an easel for free painting. There is an appropriate range and good variety of baby books, with some board books for little hands. Some are about familiar daily baby routines, such as 'Wake up little Petal.' This increases babies sense of belonging. The staff write children's names on their pictures asking, 'Shall I write your name?' so that children can see words. All activity areas are well labelled and all storage boxes have pictures on of what is inside, to enable toddlers to confidently self-select. Staff gently and sensitively support, advise, praise and make suggestions, such as 'let's try it that way.' A new child greets a member of staff who enters the room with a delighted smile and says 'Hello.' Another child sings 'Old McDonald' and a member of staff confirms that the child loves this song.

Nursery education.

Children are encouraged to be active thinkers and they question and join in conversations eagerly. There is an excellent, stimulating mark-making area with a good selection of writing materials and a range of varied equipment to support children's emergent writing skills and for

joining and building. Children have lots of opportunities to recognise and write their names, there is a board with alphabet pockets and children find and recognise their name and post it in the appropriate pocket. Children see lots of examples of print on labelled boxes and notices, such as 'two children can work in the mark making area'. Staff remind children to either write their name, or have staff write it on the back of their work 'So that Susie knows whose it is.' Children access letter charts and books and are good at identifying the initial letter of their name. There is an excellent listening centre with story tapes and compact discs, a children's tape recorder and sound books. It is well used by the children. There is a basket of name cards for children to find their own name. Children write recognisable letters, which are correctly formed. They link sounds to letters easily. They are excellent communicators and join in adult conversations very confidently as they recall their own experiences. They thoroughly enjoy experimenting with language. Children confidently recite songs and nursery rhymes, such as 'Twinkle Twinkle' and make a diamond pattern at the appropriate time. Children however do not see everyday print, such as a newspapers, catalogues or have easy access to a note pad near to the telephone in the role play area. Therefore, children miss opportunities to learn that everyday print has meaning and that writing is a purposeful activity.

Children are counting reliably to five and some can even count down. They use good language to compare shape, position, size and quantity. Children count five fingers, five little ducks on a glove puppet. A child removes 5 items from the washing line. Number features strongly, throughout the day as opportunities arise naturally. Through sand, water and baking activities, children learn about capacity, volume and weight. Children use appropriate mathematical language in context, such as really heavy and filled right up! They assemble pictures of gingerbread men in the correct order of size. They have made pictures of themselves and arranged them in order of height identifying 'who is the tallest?'

Children have good opportunities for understanding about the natural and wider world through first hand experiences, books, themes and the celebration of festivals. They enjoy turning over pictures to see what is the same and they are very skilled at remembering where the pictures are and sorting them into pairs. Children enjoy nature walks to collect natural materials for an Autumn collage, such as leaves, conkers and acorns. They match them to pictures in books and discuss textures and colours. The children are enthusiastic learners when describing their Autumn leaves, for example, 'Autumn turns them brown and they get a bit dead'. Children have opportunities to sample exotic fruits from around the world, linked to the book 'Hanza's surprise.' Children are learning about the senses, 'We touch with our hands' and handle different textures of material and they also explore different scents, such as garlic. They learn about the life cycle of frogs and grow sunflowers and beans, linking this with the 'Jack and the beanstalk' story. Children explore the local area with staff during walks to the park; however, their first hand experiences and knowledge of the area in which they live is not developed to it's full potential. Children study the lifecycle of mini-beasts, such as frogs, in detail. However, the meadows close by and the nearby farmer's market have not yet been accessed by the children, thus limiting their direct experiences. Children have excellent opportunities to use tape recorders, a computer, walkie talkies, calculators, magnets and tills. They access programmable toys to increase their understanding of information and communication technology. They build and construct using a wide range of objects and use these tools with confidence. Children take part in lots of activities about shape, texture, form and space. Children identify shapes above their

pegs. They enjoy and contribute enthusiastically to singing activities, music and movement and role-play. They use a wide range of creative and stimulating materials, such as free painting and some of the children make handprints of their own free choice. Children's work is highly valued by the staff.

Children demonstrate skill and competence when using tools and materials. They are confident, enthusiastic and are well behaved. They participate fully in a wide range of activities, sharing and taking turns. Most children are making friendships and have good relationships with staff and the other children. They show great concern for the feelings of others. Children work well in groups and alone, speaking clearly and confidently. They learn about people with other lifestyles or needs in ways that hold meaning for them. They are particularly sensitive to the dietary needs of children whose first language is not English. Children take responsibility for their environment as they match up toys and equipment to the correct boxes.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Parents are fully consulted on children's starting points. Staff use a pre-school tick list to keep track of how many directed activities children have completed daily and this is used for planning the child's next steps. The staff assess children at settling in visits, using parents information and sometimes feedback from other settings. Most children have progressed through the nursery and their previous monitoring and assessments are used to inform planning. There are parents evenings to share information. Parents spend an hour initially with the nursery teacher, who liaises with the child's key worker to go through all observations. Recording is very clear for parents to see. The nursery teacher states that parents expect regular feedback on the stepping stones, as they want to continue them with their children at home and many already do so. They want suggestions on how to help their child to learn. There is lots of information available at the nursery for parents to access. Planning is displayed up on the walls for parents information. There are lots of good observations which are then transferred to children's individual files.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children see good examples of positive images of all areas of equal opportunities throughout the provision. Children whose first language is not English are progressing really well. Children who spoke little English only a few weeks ago are now able to join in adult conversation as they recognise words, they are growing in confidence and are settled. All children have a good sense of self and belonging. They know the routine very well and join in everything with enthusiasm. Children are very sensitive to the needs of children who are learning English. Children proudly display their superstar stickers for good work. Toys that reflect positive images of different lifestyles, such as a Japanese dining set with food and utensils, which is very popular with the children. Welcome signs in other languages are displayed, and there are colourful children of the world displayed on the walls. Children enjoy the Handa's surprise, a book, which staff link to sampling exotic fruits from around the world. Children celebrate festivals, including Eid & Ramadan. There are lots of boxes based on different themes, containing artefacts to extend children's learning. Staff use seasonal activities to increase their understanding of the wider world. There are visits from the local community including the vet, the local fire service, a nurse and a lolly-pop lady. Children learn about the jobs people do through a 'People who

help us' theme. Lovely pictures are taken of all the activities and all children thoroughly enjoy recalling visits, past events, and activities. Some children have parents who can sing or speak in other languages. They bring in books and items of interest. Staff build on these links and extend them very well. Children complete pictures of 'Who is special to me.' They draw their own houses and are pictured enjoying time with family and friends. Their self portraits are displayed and they bring show and tell items from home in the group. They look at facial features in a mirror and paint what they can see. This leads on to activities on valuing differences. Staff discuss feelings with children, they talk about sad, happy, and being tired. The nursery are developing a 'Links within the community' display within the reception area. Children plant sunflowers and the new outdoor area will have bird feeders to attract children's attentions to wildlife. There are opportunities for children to dig and observe mini beasts in the grounds.

Children sing the please and thank you song at mealtimes and thank the cook, for their meals. They are considerate and sensitive to the needs of other children. Behaviour is excellent and the staff are good role models in their interaction with children and with one another. Staff are fair and consistent in their approach to managing behaviour and encourage and praise positive behaviour as it naturally occurs. Unwanted behaviour is clearly explained at the children's level of understanding. There are children identified with additional needs and these children's progress is reviewed regularly. There are children with English as an additional language they are all making excellent progress. There are two named staff for special needs and both are trained to work with children with a disability as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO).

Partnership with parents is good and an excellent exchange of information is apparent. Parents stated that they are extremely satisfied with the care of their children. All would know how to make a complaint, if necessary. Parents particularly stressed how well staff coped with individual needs, particularly around feeding difficulties, and their endless patience, time and care. They are extremely pleased with the all round care, the sensory room, good settling in procedures and the good and consistent staff. They like the happy, relaxed atmosphere. They recognise and appreciate the changes that have been made and are still ongoing. The nursery have started social events for parents to attend and to meet one another, for example reflexology and Indian head massage. Children love their reward badges and receive effective praise for helping to tidy up and staff place a high priority on this. The cook is experienced at providing for all types of individual dietary needs, several children cannot have dairy products and all children had special meals and scones at tea time. The nursery tries hard to provide dishes that all the children can eat so that no child feels excluded. Children know that others have dietary needs and preferences, such as no dairy and Soya milk. They understand why some children eat different food and tell staff 'It would make them poorly if they had cow's milk.' The children's spiritual, moral, social, cultural needs are fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All staff are vetted and new staff are never left alone with children. There is a 'buddy' system in place to ensure shadowing of new staff members. There is a full staff induction programme, which includes all health and safety and child protection procedures. The nursery accesses the

local authority training programme and also provides in-house training for all staff. Training needs are regularly identified by observing team members in practice and at one to one sessions. All staff complete a training plan with the manager to identify training needs for the next twelve months. All staff have completed training in the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Early Learning Goals. Room layouts are very well planned and staff monitor activities that children have completed to ensure that all areas of play and development are accessed.

Leadership and management is good. There is a two monthly team meeting with an identified training needs being addressed. Recent topics have included observations and 'Every Child

Matters.' Good long, medium and short term plans are in place. The deputy manager has two hours non-contact time daily and this assists with the completing of planning and profiles. Meticulous monitoring of progress involves all members of staff and includes a pre-school tick list to keep track of how many directed activities children have completed, ensuring that there are no gaps in their learning and experiences. Planning is thorough and comprehensive feedback to parents on 'where their child is at', is clear and well explained. There is constant evaluation on where children are developmentally and which areas need additional support. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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 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 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 the steps from the decking area to the garden are made safe

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):

- increase children's knowledge and understanding of the world by providing first hand experiences in the local area and extend facilities for children to recognise print and develop their handwriting across the curriculum

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk