



Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	510074
Inspection date	20 June 2006
Inspector	Angela Cole

Setting Address	Churcham Primary School, Churcham, Gloucestershire, GL2 8BD
Telephone number	01452 750467
E-mail	
Registered person	Acorns
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?

Acorns is managed by a voluntary committee of parents. It opened in 1996 and operates from Churcham Primary School near Gloucester. In September 2005, Acorns nursery joined with reception children at the school to form a Foundation Stage group. The nursery opens three days a week during school term times. Sessions are on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays from 09.30 until 12.15. Additional sessions may be held from the spring term.

There are currently eight children from three to four years on roll. Of these, six children receive funding for early education. Children come from within the village and surrounding rural area. The staff have experience of supporting children with learning difficulties, disabilities and learning English as an additional language.

There are three qualified teachers working with the children; the Acorns leader and the two teachers from class one. The leader is a qualified primary school teacher, who also has a recognised qualification in early years. The staff are supported by regular helpers, two of whom are working towards a qualification. Parents support the nursery through a duty rota. The setting is a member of the Gloucestershire Playgroup and Toddler Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in premises which are clean and kept at an appropriate temperature. They learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care, so they thoroughly wash their hands after outdoor play and before eating. Procedures such as daily cleaning of tables sustain high levels of hygiene and help prevent the spread of infection. Those who become ill are well cared for and the risk of catching infectious illnesses is minimised, as parents are aware of the importance of keeping sick children at home. Children receive good continuity of care through the sharing of information with parents about accidents and medication.

The children drink milk at snack times as a way to maintain their health and may ask the staff for water when they are thirsty. They begin to understand the benefits of a healthy diet and discuss foods that are healthy and those that are for occasional treats. They help themselves to a choice of fruit, and snacks are sometimes varied, for example, with fruit salad or buns they have prepared themselves.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities that contribute to their good health, including daily outdoor play. They run freely in the large field, dig the ground to plant their sunflowers, climb and balance on the challenging adventure playground equipment. They use a variety of resources, such as balls and cones, and learn to control their bodies on appropriate equipment in the hall. Children develop good small muscle skills, for example, to draw and paint with different tools. They gain appropriate independence regarding their personal care and tidying the play areas.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe on the well-maintained school premises. They arrive and depart safely as the building and grounds are kept secure. Staff are vigilant about children's safety at all times as they play indoor and outdoors. They develop detailed risk assessments on the premises and for outings and they make daily checks to minimise identified hazards. Children play with a range of good quality toys and

equipment that meets safety standards. The staff have access to appropriate school resources and those used by the children are all age and stage appropriate. Equipment in the hall area is made safely accessible through clear labelling.

The children learn to keep themselves safe. They listen to visitors such as the road safety officer and learn what to do in an emergency during regular fire practices. On a walk round the school field, they know to be aware of plants including nettles. Children know to follow rules for their own safety, for example, when they check that sticks are no longer than their fore-arm. They respond immediately to instructions such as the bell signalling a moving car on the playground and learn to take turns, for example, on the trampoline to keep themselves safe.

Children's welfare and safety is promoted through the staff's understanding of relevant issues and procedures. For example, they hold current child protection and first aid certificates and have a sound knowledge of the local child protection procedures. Any existing injuries are recorded confidentially. Staff have the backing of trained school personnel so they are confident that they could handle any concerns effectively.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at Acorns. They become familiar with the varied routine that includes regular outdoor play and quiet as well as active times. Their care needs are effectively met. The approachable staff have good relationships with each child who is secure and comfortable in their company. The interaction with the children is good as adults listen to and value what the children say. They respond accordingly to requests for pieces of equipment as children do not have independent access to a wide range of resources. The children are effectively involved in their play as they eagerly explore, for example, items on the display table including a tank of snails with attractive books to extend their interest.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make very good progress towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning. In communication language and literacy, children gain fluent speaking skills and enjoy learning new words such as 'pilot'. Staff use effective strategies to encourage them to listen to others, for example, as they share their news. Children become absorbed in the books they use for reference and explore rhymes they hear read from laminated sheets. When they are ready, children learn to sound and write some recognisable letters of their names. Children make very good progress in relation to their starting points, for example, in mathematical development. They have a good interest in numbers and counting to answer focused staff questions, including how many fruits are shown in a picture book. Children compare groups of objects and learn the meaning of one more or less through problems in routines and number songs. They accurately use a wide range of mathematical words describing shape, space and measure, including position words as they tell each other where to sit.

Children enjoy meeting new ideas and skills to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. Very good use is made of the rich natural environment and of interesting school initiatives. These encourage children to investigate and look closely, for example, at mini beasts and items from the Victorian era. The children describe significant events for family and friends and gain a good awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others. For example, they explore Chinese New Year through masks and clothes, and light floating candles for Diwali. Children confidently operate simple computer programs to support their learning, printing patterns and recognising letters and shapes. There are no differences in learning between different groups of children such as girls and boys, for example, in creative development. All their creative efforts are valued. Over time, they explore a wide range of media and materials to mix colours and handle textures such as dry and damp sand. They engage in lengthy imaginative role play, based on their own first-hand experiences including air travel. They respond well through their senses, for example, discussing the smells and tastes of foods they prepare and using the style of master painters. Children build up a repertoire of songs, explore different sounds of instruments including drums and move rhythmically to music.

The play leader has an effective knowledge of the Foundation Stage and of how young children learn. She carefully plans the learning environment over time to provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences across six areas of learning. The planning and assessment of children's progress are closely linked through the stepping stones with informed, regular evaluation of the progress and interests of individuals. Children learn through the strong emphasis on play. They have free access to a basic range of resources in the hall in drawers and cupboards. Effective use is made of the whole school environment, for example, for imaginative movement based on stories such as a dinosaur hunt. Children benefit from the good balance of adult and child-led activities and effective use of spontaneous ideas for learning, for example, using a large box. The staff's methods and expectations challenge and support the children to achieve well. Overall, the integration of the nursery and reception class supports the younger children to have an immense range of experiences that extends their concentration, interests and learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children settle confidently as parents are well involved at the weekly sessions that include younger ones. Later on, the transition to school is achieved seamlessly with huge benefits for the children's care and development. In this small group, children are known and supported as individuals. Those with additional needs are well supported in close liaison with their parents and staff seek any necessary support from outside agencies to help each child to be fully included. The nursery provides resources that represent the children who attend as well as giving them experience of needs that are different from their own. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others.

The children are well behaved and polite in response to the expectations and kind, firm approach of the staff. They play well together, learning to share resources and

showing consideration for others. They enjoy taking turns in everyday tasks that give them responsibility such as helping to prepare the snack table. Children proudly show their completed sticker cards and gain self-esteem through the staff's warm praise and encouragement. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Children gain support from the staff's friendly, open relationship with families in this intimate setting and because they are cared for in accordance with their parents' wishes. Families receive comprehensive information about the setting which includes a detailed parents' handbook and regular letters. The frequent, informal two-way sharing of information between parents and staff enhances the children's development. However, parents do not have opportunities to add comments to the children's progress records to support their learning. Families are well informed about the curriculum and see the day's activities on a whiteboard that is prepared with the children's help. Parents are meaningfully involved in the children's learning through management and valued daily support. They provide and show resources such as chicks and continue activities at home including growing seeds planted by the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children are well cared for in premises that are bright, welcoming and well maintained. The teaching areas around the school are varied and children get used to the routines and different play spaces. These include bases in the reception classroom, an emerging outdoor classroom and in part of the hall where there is basic equipment in storage from which the children may choose. Displays on the walls show and value children's work. The teachers and regular helpers work well together as a team. They work directly with children to support their play and learning and are aware of when to let the children take the lead. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The system for appointing and vetting staff is robust and supports their continuing suitability. The documentation is clear and children's personal details are kept confidential. Policies are well-written for this setting and reviewed annually when parents have opportunities to contribute before a policy is adopted. The group has set up a log to record any complaint and this is compliant with Ofsted's requirements.

Leadership and management are good. The leader is highly qualified, well experienced and provides a very good role model to other teaching staff and helpers. She is very organised so the children feel settled and are well motivated. She monitors and evaluates the curriculum to identify strengths and areas for improvement and these are shared with the strong, supportive management. Together, they set clear directions which lead to improvements in the organisation of care and nursery education and the outcomes for children in the new Foundation Stage unit. The leadership and management are highly committed to promoting an inclusive environment in which every child matters.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the setting improved procedures to develop the risk assessments. Full assessments of risks to children are now completed for the premises, the outdoor play areas and for outings so that identified hazards are minimised and children are safe.

The previous education inspection recommended that the setting improved the planning to include challenges for the older or more able children and the opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning. The plans now contain suggestions to extend the challenges for children, especially in regard to learning letter sounds and undertaking simple problem solving in practical mathematics. They also take good account of children's own ideas and suggestions for extending their play. The nursery has successfully improved opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning. They receive comprehensive information about the activities so these can be extended at home. These improvements effectively support children to achieve as much as they can.

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):

- continue to develop the organisation of resources so these are readily accessible to encourage children to be independent learners (also applies to nursery education).

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):

- regularly share the assessment of children's progress through the stepping stones with all parents and carers so their observations are included to support the children's learning.

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