



Ruardean Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511782
Inspection date	05 July 2006
Inspector	Karen Elizabeth Screen
Setting Address	School Road, Ruardean,, Glos, GL17 9XQ
Telephone number	01594 542461
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Registered person	Ruardean Acorns
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 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?

Ruardean Acorns opened in 1999 and serves the local area. It operates from a portacabin within the grounds of Ruardean Church of England Primary School in Gloucestershire. The pre-school is managed by a voluntary management committee of parents and a school representative. It is led by a manager who is responsible for the overall organisation and daily management of the group. Children use the portacabin playroom, the adjoining school hall and adjacent toilets. There is a secure

enclosed garden area for outdoor play. Children also make use of the school grounds and playing field.

A maximum of 23 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 28 children on roll, aged between two years eight months and four years and 10 months. This number includes 13 funded three-year-olds and 10 funded four-year-olds. The group opens four days a week during school terms. Sessions are Tuesday from 12.45 to 15.15, and Wednesday, Thursday and Friday between 09.00 and 15.15. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

Five staff currently work directly with the children. Most hold appropriate early years qualifications. The manager and deputy hold a Level 3 qualification. Of the remaining staff, two are qualified to Level 2. The pre-school achieved the quality assurance award, Bristol Standard for Early Years, in September 2005. They receive support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Older children are very independent in their personal care. They are aware of the importance of personal hygiene and remember to wash their hands after visiting the toilets. Younger children who need assistance in completing personal tasks, receive a high level of support. Staff act as good role models and encourage children to practice good hygiene. In addition, they use 'Shaun' the puppet to reinforce important messages such as wiping noses and putting the tissue in the bin.

Children's welfare is safeguarded through good record keeping of children with particular health requirements. There is always a member of staff on duty who holds a valid first aid certificate. All staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the treatment of minor accidents and the administration of medication.

Children enjoy the range and variety of healthy foods and snacks provided and understand which foods are good for them. Children learn to pour their own drinks when they are thirsty, because they have plenty of practise pouring their own from the readily available jugs of water. Children are encouraged to think about keeping healthy when playing outside. For example, older children are aware of the importance of wearing hats to protect them from the sun. Children enthusiastically join in with star jumps and work together to 'make waves' with the parachute.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The pre-school is warm and welcoming for children with comfortable child-sized furniture, displays of the children's own work and up-to-date named photographs of the children displayed on a large piece of furniture. The environment is also

welcoming to parents, with helpful information posted on the notice board outside, for example, information about future activities, and photograph albums showing pictures of the children at play, sorted into the six areas of learning supporting the Foundation Stage. Children are interested and want to play with the available toys and resources, which are safe and in good condition. They are attractively displayed and most are easy for children to select for themselves. Children are able to move independently between the inside and the enclosed outside area. This is because staff have well thought-out plans for making the most of the space, including the covered veranda area which is used on a daily basis.

Children are able to move safely around the well-maintained premises, because they are supervised by vigilant staff. In addition, children rehearse safety rules before going outside to play in the school playground. Communication between staff and management for reporting and acting upon potential risks is robust. Risks to children from accidents have been substantially reduced through the close attention paid to regular, well documented risk assessments and safety checks. Risks to children from fires have been minimised through well thought-out emergency evacuation procedures. Children's safety and welfare is promoted by enlisting parents support in following relevant procedures when collecting their children, and through challenging visitors to identify themselves. Children are well protected by knowledgeable senior staff, who are aware of the possible signs of children at risk and of their responsibility to report their concerns according to local child protection procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are curious and have a positive approach to new experiences. Their confidence and self-esteem are raised by staff who are sensitive to their needs and know them well. Children make friends with their peers, and develop excellent relationships with the warm and friendly staff team. Children are happy and keen to attend. For example, a child bounds into the room and heads straight for a member of staff to share his news, another resists leaving when it is time to go home. Staff take care to prepare the setting in a way that engenders a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Children are warmly welcomed, and sit with their key worker to share their news and 'read' books. Children make confident choices from the activities provided and are interested and enjoy their play. They learn to take turns and cooperate very well with others. Children benefit from staff who are interested in what they say and do and who are involved in their activities, such as joining in 'buying a holiday' from the 'travel agents'.

Children's concentration is very good. They are encouraged and supported to use all of their senses to test different materials, such as fir cones, soft fabrics, water and playdough. Staff offer effective support through well-timed interventions, such as knowing when to assist and when to leave children to explore on their own. Children make decisions about their own play and learning. They politely make their needs known, for example an older child explains to the inspector that he wants to make a roof for his house, and would like some assistance to hammer 'tick-tack' wooden shapes to a board.

Children learn to predict what will happen next and to extend their skills in a secure environment. This is because the plans, patterns within the day and the weekly routines, are well established. Planning is undertaken for pre-school children and is used as a basis for the day. These are not rigid however, and are subject to change according to the children's interests and needs. However, opportunities for children to initiate, plan and make decisions about their own play and learning, are not always fully considered and provided. Staff recognise that the Birth to three matters framework is a useful tool for planning appropriate experiences and tracking children's progress, and use it to support their work with young children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff provide good opportunities for children to practise and develop in all areas of learning over time. The curriculum provides relevant and stimulating experiences to support all areas of the Foundation Stage, but the balance between opportunities for children to initiate and plan activities, is marginally weighted in favour of an adult-planned programme. Plans clearly show the purpose of the activities, and examples of the skills and language staff are hoping to encourage, are usually displayed for staff and parent helpers to refer to.

The manager has a secure knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones towards early learning goals in the Foundation Stage. This is evident in planning, observations and assessments, which are used well to support different stages of children's individual development. However, individual staff have variable knowledge and expertise in their use of the Foundation Stage to promote children's learning. Although all staff are involved in the planning process and meet at the end of each week to review plans for the week ahead, they are not sufficiently involved in the planning process. However, through their process of self-evaluation, the pre-school have recently identified this as an area for future development.

Group size for planned activities is good and allows children to participate fully. Organisation of 'circle time' is also good and allows children to concentrate and learn effectively. They are able to contribute, and use the opportunity to express their feelings about personal or significant events. Although there are no children present with learning difficulties, through discussion senior staff demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the process of identification, and measures for supporting individual children

Children respond well in a caring environment where they learn to consider other people's needs as well as their own. They learn to be cooperative and work well together, for example an older child crosses the room to help a younger child who is struggling to complete a computer programme. Children are very aware of behavioural expectations, and all stop to listen after the whistle is blown, when they are playing outside with the parachute. They listen intently to stories and answer related questions posed by staff. Children show increasing independence in selecting and carrying out activities, but some opportunities for encouraging children to become active and independent learners are not always sufficiently well fostered.

Children demonstrate good speaking skills, such as describing in 'circle time' what

they have been doing in the morning before they came to the pre-school. Children learn to take turns, negotiate and organise their play. They use talk well to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what is happening next. Older children are beginning to recognise and write some familiar words, such as their own names. Activities, such as role-play in the 'travel agents', are exploited by staff to include writing for a purpose, such as making a note of where the customer wants to travel. Children have a clear understanding that print carries meaning, for example a young child independently chooses a book and begins to 'read' it to himself. However, he does not choose to read it in the book corner, which does not benefit from comfortable seating.

Children show a keen interest in number and counting. Their understanding of simple calculations is fostered in everyday activities, for example counting out the number of cups needed for snack time. Children enjoy singing number rhymes, learning to subtract by one or two depending upon the rhyme, and smile widely as they clap out numbers on a tambourine. They show confidence and offer solutions to mathematical problems posed by staff, such as "How many will we have if we add one more?". Children benefit from staff who encourage children to test their predictions, such as "How many jugs of water will it take to fill the small container?" and encourage them to continue to find out if they have estimated correctly.

Children have a good understanding of past, present, future and change over time, such as noticing how the leaves have grown since the beginning of spring. They enjoy examining objects and living things to find out more about them, such as investigating fruit and vegetables to find their seeds. They are encouraged to learn about the natural world through direct involvement, such as making marks in frost with their fingers. Children use information and communication technology well to support their learning, such as completing a software programme to match the colours of furniture and household items. They are supported well to develop their knowledge and understanding of how computers work, through explicit teaching and imitation of others.

Children respond enthusiastically to rhythm and music as they sing a song about parts of the body. They show increasing awareness of their own bodily needs, for example an older child remarks that she is hot and helps herself to a drink of water. Children collaborate well in activities which require each to play their part, for example making the parachute lift off the ground and into the air. Children show an awareness of space, themselves and others and move with control and co-ordination; supported by staff who plan a good range of opportunities for children to practise skills which refine their control and coordination, such as jumping off high gym equipment.

Children engage well in imaginative play based on their own experiences, such as an older child telling another "I need the table cleared so that I can work". She then sets out the items she needs to "do some work" including paper and pencils. Children explore the sounds of different instruments with enthusiasm, as they learn to link sound and movement through energetic participation in music sessions. Children enjoy combining different media and materials, but the organisation of resources does not always encourage children to extend activities for themselves, or to explore and research their own ideas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are valued as individuals and the staff work hard to ensure that all children can be involved in any activities on offer. Children learn to appreciate and value each other's similarities and differences, for example, staff use books and resources especially chosen to reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural differences. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.

Children are very well behaved. Staff provide excellent role models through their calm and polite manner and have reasonable and realistic expectations of children's behaviour. They set and maintain clear and consistent limits, using positive behaviour strategies. Through discussion, staff display a 'can do' attitude towards finding solutions to any difficulties affecting the inclusion of all children. In addition they attend regular special needs training and seek advice and support when appropriate.

Partnership with parents is good. Positive relationships between the staff and parents, contribute to the children's confidence in the staff. Close partnership with parents is achieved through the good quality information provided about the organisation of the pre-school. This strong link is also achieved through the daily exchange of verbal, and some written information regarding many aspects of the children's lives whilst in the group and also at home. Although parents' meetings give parents the opportunity to discuss their children's learning in detail, information parents receive about the Birth to three matters framework is less enlightening.

Staff ensure that parents' views are regularly sought and acted upon, for example through the use of questionnaires. Parents are also invited to make suggestions for improvements at any time. Children are developing a sense of belonging through the very warm welcome extended to their whole families. Parents feel able and welcome to discuss their observations of their children's learning at any time, but some are unaware that they can add their own comments and observations to their children's files, this means that records are not quite as full and accurate as they might be and that parents' knowledge of their children is not always fully exploited, to support and develop the learning opportunities provided by the pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children's welfare is promoted through comprehensive, well-organised and well-maintained paperwork. Policies and procedures have been developed by the setting for the efficient management of the provision. The staff and committee take positive steps to ensure that parents are kept well informed about all policies and procedures. This includes reviews of all documents, which is done annually or sooner if necessary, in order to reflect any important amendments. Registers and records meet regulatory requirements and are easily available at all times. Emergency numbers are clear and easily available both on the premises and on outings. Detailed personal information

and permission for specific activities is obtained well before the children are due to attend and is filed securely for each child.

Leadership and management is good. Children are well supported. Effective links between the staff and committee help to ensure the smooth running of the pre-school. Staff and committee have a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to continual improvement. Staff are fully involved in devising their own training plans to enhance their practice, and are supported by the committee. They recognise that their practice will benefit from future training and development in shared planning, and improved delivery of the curriculum. The team work very well together and use their time efficiently to organise space and resources, such as seamless transitions as the afternoon staff arrive and the morning staff depart. The manager ensures that she and her assistants are deployed to the best advantage to ensure that children receive excellent adult attention.

Improvements since the last inspection

The pre-school have made good progress in addressing the recommendations and points for consideration raised at the last combined inspection. They have improved the organisational issues identified to improve the quality and standards of care. The pre-school promote children's safety by ensuring that secure systems are in place to ensure that all adults working with, or in sole charge of children, are suitable to do so. They also promote children's learning and development by ensuring that staff and parent helpers are given clear direction regarding their roles and responsibilities during the session.

The pre-school have introduced a number of measures to improve the planning and teaching issues raised to improve nursery education. Through planning, they emphasise the opportunities for developing children's physical awareness and competencies within a rich and varied programme, which focuses on their physical development, for example, through balancing on wobble boards, developing their co-ordination and timing as they complete star jumps together, and also drawing out their physical competencies in other activities such as threading laces and making playdough 'worms'. In addition, staff include a variety of interesting opportunities for children to develop early writing skills, for example by encouraging them to form letter shapes in foam and sand. They also support individual children to build on what they already know, through secure links between assessment and planning.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since April 2004.

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.

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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):

- further improve the provision for children to extend creative opportunities for themselves, or act upon their own ideas (applies to education also)
- ensure all staff have a secure understanding of the curriculum used to support children's learning and are fully involved in planning (applies to education also).

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 improve the delivery of the curriculum, to encourage children to become active and independent learners (applies to care also)
- further improve communication with parents, paying particular attention to using a variety of ways to share information about children's learning and progress (applies to care also).

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