



Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY257929
Inspection date	29 November 2006
Inspector	Angela Hufton
Setting Address	High Oakham Primary School, Nottingham Road, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 4SH
Telephone number	07749 047107 or
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Registered person	Little 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Pre-School registered in 2003 and moved to their current premises in 2005. It operates in the foundation unit at the rear of High Oakham Primary School, on the outskirts of Mansfield. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school serves children from the local and wider community. A maximum of 24 children can attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday during school term-times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:45 and 12:45 to 15:30. A lunch club operates from 11:45 to 12:45 each day.

There are currently 63 children aged from two to under five years on roll. This includes 23 funded children. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs five full-time and two part-time staff. All staff hold recognised childcare qualifications relevant to their post. The setting receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children understand and follow simple good health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands after using the toilet, messy play and before snack. They begin to understand why this is important as staff explain that germs can make them poorly. Staff provide good role models as they follow appropriate health and hygiene procedures. All areas of the provision are kept clean to ensure children's good health is maintained. Children stay protected from cross-infection as staff share a comprehensive sickness exclusion policy with parents to ensure children only attend the pre-school when they are well enough to do so. All children's first aid and medication needs are addressed well as staff are suitably trained and thorough documentation supports their practice.

Children are suitably nourished as they receive a good range of nutritious snacks to promote their health. Fresh fruit, vegetable sticks and dried fruit are a regular feature. Children are beginning to understand the impact of healthy eating as they take turns in being the snack monitor and choose from a selection available for that day. A particular favourite with the children being cubes of cheese. All children receive milk or juice during their snack break. They have good opportunity to address their own thirst needs throughout the day as drinking water is made available for children to access independently. Children stay healthy because staff are aware of any dietary requirements or food allergies they may have.

A suitable variety of activities are planned each week to enable children to benefit from playing outside in the fresh air each day or using some equipment indoors. Children begin to gain control of their bodies and the way they move during pre-school, through dancing to music or acting out a story, for example, repeating actions to 'The Bear Hunt'. Children have fewer opportunities for vigorous exercise, to ride tricycles or practise their climbing skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm and very welcoming environment with ample displays of their work to encourage them to feel settled and valued in the setting. All children stay safe in the setting as staff follow good security and safety procedures. Staff carry out a range of suitable measures to minimise potential hazards. For instance, they check toys, equipment and rooms when setting up. Any minor hazards such as a trailing wire are immediately dealt with. This ensures children can move around the setting safely and independently.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they follow simple rules when practising the emergency escape plan and stay within identified boundaries when playing outside. They receive good explanations from staff to help them to know how to prevent accidents, as a child running

indoors is asked to walk so they "don't fall over". Children stay protected as staff have a sound knowledge of child protection issues and attend relevant training to ensure they are following current procedures.

Children have access to a good variety of generally well maintained and safe toys. They make choices from the attractively displayed activities on offer. Children move confidently around the suitably organised setting, choosing whether to be active, take part in messy play or read books in a quiet area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and secure in the pre-school because staff take time to get to know them and build trusting relationships. They show a strong sense of 'belonging' within the setting and make choices about their play. They select activities and resources from the interesting and varied range available. Children form good relationships with both their peers and adults and enjoy being part of a group. For example, after snack time children join in singing activities. Children acquire new knowledge and skills as they learn through the practical play experiences. Staff deploy themselves well to support and extend children's learning by using questions to encourage their thinking. For instance while children make models or role play being 'hairdressers' staff ask questions that extended their learning. The pre-school children have opportunities to develop their knowledge through new experiences within the local community, for example, they enjoy visits from the police. Children's development is not always maximised as staff do not fully assess what younger children can do or identify what they want children to learn through planned and free play activities. Staff use relevant literature to guide their practice, such as the 'Birth to three matters' framework. This has yet to positively impact on the care and education of the children under three but is being actively developed.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make steady progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how to develop children's learning. Through effective questioning techniques, staff encourage children to think and predict for themselves. Children are spoken to by interested staff who involve themselves fully in the children's play. Each child's self-esteem is nurtured with lots of praise and encouragement. Children display good behaviour that is well managed by the committed staff. Daily planning ensures that children have opportunities to select their play from an appropriate range of activities. Currently, plans do not ensure that all aspects within each of the six areas of learning are given equal emphasis. For example, within physical development the aspect of using equipment, for instance climbing, is not regularly included. Consequently, children may not consolidate and build upon all of their knowledge and skills. Children are observed and assessed as they make progress. However, assessments are not always used effectively to extend or simplify targeted activities, or inform the next steps in learning for individuals and small groups.

Some daily routines are used effectively to support children's independence. They take off and hang up their own coats; choose and put on protective aprons; wash and dry their hands after

using the toilet. Children use numbers confidently in their play and easily count to five, with some more able children confidently counting well beyond this. They order numbers during group times when singing simple counting songs and begin to understand the concept of taking away when they count how many pieces of cheese are left after one has been taken away. Children work cooperatively together as they solve problems, such as working out how to build higher towers with differently shaped wooden bricks. They select different tools and resources including scissors and hole punches. Children have some opportunities to recognise and write their name through routine activities such as naming their creative work. Their mark-making skills are satisfactorily fostered through focused activities in the designated area. Additional opportunities are also provided to extend children's skills through writing for a purpose, such as taking and recording appointments during role play. All ages of children use books appropriately, holding them correctly and turning one page at time, demonstrating their knowledge of how books work. They re-tell familiar stories in their own words. Children enthusiastically create with dough, clay or paints on a daily basis. A range of art and messy play opportunities allow children to satisfactorily explore shape, colour and texture. They develop their imagination well through a variety of interesting role play situations and enjoy putting actions to music and singing familiar songs, which they do with confidence. The children know about and use everyday technology in their play, for example, using a mobile phone in their imaginative games. Opportunities to use programmable toys and equipment are more limited. Children make models with a selection of construction materials, demonstrating their design skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed and included in the life of the setting. They are settled and happy because staff spend time getting to know them. Parents receive good levels of information about the setting through booklets, newsletters and the notice board. Children have continuity in their care as their parents exchange relevant information with staff at the beginning and end of each session. Partnerships with parents and carers of funded children is good. Clear information about the Foundation Stage and curriculum is made available to parents. They receive detailed information about their child's progress through informal discussion, full access to developmental files and regular parent's evenings. Parents have some opportunities to contribute to their child's assessments. Targets for children's next steps in learning are shared. As a result parents are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's early development at home.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All ages of children develop a sense of community as they talk about the local area. They learn about their own and other people's beliefs as children take part in suitable opportunities to further their knowledge of all aspects of diversity. For example, children learn that men and women can be ballet dancers. Consequently, children begin to form positive views about the wider world. Children form respectful relationships with adults and their peers.

Children behave well and they play cooperatively with their friends, for example, taking turns in the hairdresser role play area. Their use of good manners, kind words and actions are

continuously celebrated by the staff through the use of verbal praise and 'happy faces' displayed on a board for them to relate to. Children consistently demonstrate their awareness of the setting's simple boundaries of right and wrong. For example, a child knows that swinging on his chair is wrong as the consequence could be "I might fall back and hurt me". Staff provide a good role model for children's behaviour as they always treat the children and each other with kindness and respect. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are suitably supported as key staff, parents and relevant professionals work closely to ensure their needs are met.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's development and welfare are promoted as clear policies and procedures are in place and consistently applied by staff. The registered person has kept the regulator informed of all changes, in order to protect children. Each child's sense of well-being is actively promoted as staff meet their emotional and individual needs. Good levels of staff at each session and their deployment around the room positively supports children's care and play. However, at times the organisation of space and large group activities does not ensure all children are able to take part at an appropriate level. Children benefit from staff being qualified and attending additional training to improve their practice.

Leadership and management of funded children is satisfactory. Appropriate induction, supervision and appraisals for all staff are being developed to ensure they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. The staff work well as a team. In addition they work in partnership with development workers from the local authority to identify strengths and address any weaknesses to improve the service they offer to young children. They develop any identified improvements into practice.

Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to two recommendations. They agreed to develop the system for producing risk assessments and to ensure that toys and equipment are clean, with books accessible to children. Daily written check lists are now in place to promote children's safety and most toys and equipment are clean and in good condition. Books are now easily accessible to children to support their independent choices and to promote their enjoyment of reading.

At the last nursery education inspection the setting agreed to three recommendations. The first recommendation was to improve staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and their ability to make teaching methods and organisation of resources effective. This has been addressed by staff attending relevant training and some gaining further qualifications. Resources are now effectively organised to be easily accessible thus promoting children's independent choices.

The second recommendation was to develop management support for monitoring and evaluating the education provision to ensure all aspects are equally covered and that teaching is effective in helping children to learn, including prioritising staff development. Staff appraisal systems have been put in place and are being developed. Relevant staff have attended training to improve their teaching and overall planning is now designed to cover all areas of the curriculum. Whilst these improvements benefit most children's overall progress the learning needs of individual children are not yet being fully met. This has been carried forward for continued improvement.

The final nursery education recommendation was to improve the information given to parents and help them become involved in their child's learning. Numerous displays and information leaflets are available to parents to explain what their child is taking part in and how this supports their learning. Parents are able to contribute to their child's records at any time and regular meetings with their child's key worker take place on a formal and informal basis to share information. This encourages parents to be involved.

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.

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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):

- improve the frequency of outdoor play and provide more challenging activities to develop children's physical skills
- improve the organisation of sessions to limit the amount of whole group time and provide more opportunities for small group work and children's self-directed play and learning (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):

- ensure observations and assessments are thorough, evaluated and that the information gained is used effectively to guide planning
- continue to improve planning to more clearly identify learning intentions and make more effective use of focused activities, ensuring activities can be differentiated for individual needs and build on children's interests and next steps in learning (also applies to care).

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