



## Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	310440
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 October 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Ann Lee
<b>Setting Address</b>	Summer Hill School, Poverty Lane, Maghull, Liverpool, Merseyside, L31 3DJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 284 0796
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<b>Registered person</b>	Lesley Briscoe and Jane Weir
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Day Nursery opened in 2000. It operates from a classroom attached to Summerhill Primary School, Maghull, North Liverpool. The nursery serves the local area.

There are currently 56 children aged from two to five years on roll. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently no children with additional needs and/or disability and none who have English as a second language.

The group opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 8.00 a.m. until 18.00 p.m.

There are five members of staff who have early years qualifications and one trainee. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP.)

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children benefit because they are cared for in a warm, clean environment where staff take good measures to keep them free from infection and cross contamination. The nursery is thoroughly cleaned each day and the staff also follow daily rotas to ensure that the toilets and kitchen are regularly checked, bins are emptied and appliances washed. Disposable aprons and gloves are used by staff when preparing and serving food and when changing nappies to prevent the spread of infection.

Children become more independent and learn about good personal hygiene because they are encouraged to wipe their nose, wash their hands appropriately and dry their hands with paper towels. Staff are trained in basic food hygiene and they also have access to detailed information which enables them to ensure that food preparation areas and equipment are clean and hygienic. Colour coded chopping boards are used to prevent cross contamination and the fridge temperature is monitored daily. However, children do not always use plates and cutlery at snack time which does not fully promote good hygiene or table manners.

During the term time children are provided with a healthy diet from the school kitchen. The menu is well balanced and children have a choice about what they eat. During school holidays staff use two local shops who provide sandwiches and salad or a toasted meal at lunch times. Drinks of milk or water are offered throughout the day and children are encouraged to become more independent as they pour their own drinks and choose their snack from the variety of fruits, salad items, raisins, meat or cheese on offer. In summer the children grow their own vegetables in the garden and they enjoy preparing and eating food they have grown so that they learn about healthy eating.

Staff are trained in first aid and all of the necessary documentation is in place to help safeguard children in the event of illness or accidental injury. Parents provide information about any special dietary or medical requirements so that staff can meet their children's individual needs well.

There are daily opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. They use the outside play equipment including the climbing frame and slide, ride wheeled toys showing good control over their bodies. Children confidently use a wide variety of equipment and they practise their small motor skills when painting, cutting with scissors, digging in the sand and manipulating play dough.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are secure in the nursery because visitors are monitored and children cannot leave the premises unsupervised. They are cared for in a bright, warm and welcoming environment where the space is well organised so that they can move about freely and explore. The walls are

decorated with colourful posters and children's art work so that they feel that they belong in the setting.

Staff are aware of safety issues and ensure that children are closely supervised at all times. Risk assessments and hazard checks are carried out to identify and deal with safety issues in order to minimise the risk of accidental injury to children. Thorough procedures are in place to ensure that children are safe on outings. Staff take parents' contact numbers, registers and mobile telephones with them in case of emergency. Parents give written permission for children to be transported in a vehicle.

Children learn to keep themselves safe when they practise the fire drill and on outings when they learn to cross the road safely. They also enjoy visits from the local fire safety officer, community police and lollipop man who talk to the children about fire safety, stranger danger and road safety.

There is a wide variety of suitable toys and equipment which are safe and of good quality. They are easily accessible to children and are stored on shelves and in transparent boxes. Many of the boxes are labelled with pictures of the contents so that children can make choices about what they do. Staff create areas for different play, such as sand and water, book corner, creative area and role play so that children can enjoy a stimulating range of activities. There is also a fully enclosed outside play area which is accessible from the playroom and provides opportunities for children to develop their motor skills and grow things.

Staff have a good understanding of how to protect children. They recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know the appropriate procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child. Staff regularly update their training in child protection and understand their role and responsibilities. All of the relevant information, such as telephone numbers for the Social Services Department are available so that staff can deal with concerns quickly and effectively.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Staff create a calm and friendly atmosphere in the nursery so that children settle in quickly and feel happy and relaxed. Children develop good self-esteem because the staff develop close affectionate relationships with them, and their art work is displayed. They are confident and independent because the staff encourage them to go to the toilet by themselves, pour their own drinks and help to tidy away the toys. They also collect their own coats from the cloakroom and try to dress themselves. Staff praise their efforts and achievements so that they feel valued and appreciated. Children play happily together, behave well and are secure and well occupied.

A good range of interesting activities is planned using the 'Birth to three matters' framework so that children make progress in all areas of development. They collect leaves in the local park, and use them to make 'Autumn' pictures. The children enjoy the feel of thick paint as they gleefully rub their hands together and mix the colours to make patterns before sticking on the leaves. They learn good communication skills because the staff talk to them, listen carefully and join in their play. Staff encourage children to talk about their experiences outside the nursery, such as holidays and they read stories and involve them in singing songs and action

rhymes. Children learn to understand their feelings and emotions through discussion and with the use of puppets. Staff help children to recognise numbers through every day activities and during play. Children count confidently and show increasing skill in recognising numbers, shapes and letters. Staff introduce number during conversation and activities, such as singing rhymes and throwing the large dice.

Children are imaginative and they enjoy role play in the home corner and using a wide variety of small world toys. Their creativity is promoted through singing and dancing, painting, model making and when they explore different materials, such as sand, water, pasta and play dough. They learn about the wider world on visits to local shops, parks and the library. The visits are often linked to planned activities as when the children visited the local pet shop to buy gold fish. Visitors such as fire officers and community police visit the nursery to talk to the children about their work and about personal safety issues.

### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good and staff use appropriate assessment methods to monitor the children's development. Staff have an understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Children are happy and interested in their play and they confidently explore their environment. Their independence is promoted because they are encouraged to dress themselves, help tidy away the toys and go to the toilet on their own. The key worker system helps staff to develop close relationships with the children and this promotes their self-esteem and helps them to feel secure and settled in the nursery. During planned activities children are grouped appropriately to take account of their age and stage of development so that they make good progress. When children are engaged in self chosen activities, such as role play, staff intervene to challenge them to think and to extend their play. The space, resources and time are well organised to support children's play and learning.

Children show curiosity and express their feelings when painting as they enjoy the feel of thick paint and mix different colours using their hands. They enthusiastically take part in group activities such as singing and story time and staff help them to understand about feelings with the use of puppets, books and discussion. There is a friendly, cheerful atmosphere in the group and children demonstrate kindness towards others. They are well behaved and respond well to the staff who act as good role models. Children are given plenty of choice about what they do so that they become confident and independent. They look at photographs of themselves which are displayed on the wall and talk and laugh together as they point at the pictures.

Children communicate well because staff engage them in purposeful conversation, read stories and encourage them to sing songs from memory. There is a wide selection of books which children enjoy looking at and they also visit the library so that they can borrow reference books for particular topics. There are many examples of writing on display so that children become familiar with the written word. Areas for play and boxes of toys are labelled and children practise their mark making skills using a wide range of writing materials. They take a clipboard and pencil on outings to the shop so that they can write lists of purchases and they also practice writing in the role play area when they pretend to make appointments in the 'doctor's surgery'.

Numbers are also included in the wall displays so that children become familiar with numerals. Staff take every opportunity to encourage children to count and recognise numbers. They can count to ten with confidence. They also count the number of cars during imaginative play and sing songs which involve counting such as 'five currant buns'. Children have fun together as they use a large tape measure to measure distances and objects in the room. They cooperate well as they use the tape measure together and take turns to be the leader who does the measuring.

Children's creativity is promoted through an interesting and varied range of activities. There is a good selection of items, such as cloth, paper plates, polystyrene shapes, paper, scissors, glue and play dough so that children can create models, collage and paintings. Children enjoy music, singing and dancing and they play imaginative games using a wide variety of role play equipment. Staff regularly change the role play area so that it becomes a doctors surgery, shop or travel agents. This maximises the play opportunities for children.

Staff devise activities and outings which help children to learn about the wider world. They learn about living things as they observe how caterpillars change into butterflies and they grow vegetables in the garden. Staff encourage children to notice the changes in the seasons and the weather during their daily outdoor play. They regularly visit the library and they shop for baking ingredients in the supermarket. They also enjoy visits to the pantomime at Christmas. Visitors to the nursery, such as the fire officers and police help children to understand about 'people who help us'. There are good opportunities for children to learn about technology because they have access to a computer and use the mouse and keyboard with confidence. They also operate the music centre and play with telephones and calculators during role play.

Children have at least two periods of outdoor play each day so that they can practise their physical skills. They are very active and well coordinated as they climb, balance and ride wheeled toys. When they cannot go outside staff ensure that children can enjoy physical exercise indoors, such as dancing to music, circle games and action rhymes.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Parents provide information about their children so that staff can care for them according to their individual needs. All children are made welcome, including those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and staff ensure that any necessary equipment is available so that they can be included in all of the activities. For example, ramps have been fitted to allow wheelchair access into the nursery. Staff work with parents and other professionals, such as speech therapists to meet children's needs and ensure continuity of care.

Children learn about the wider world through a good range of suitable resources. These include books, dolls, puzzles and small world toys, which provide them with positive images of different cultures, religions and disabilities. Role play and arts and craft activities are also used to help children to learn about different festivals and appreciate diversity. For example, during Chinese New Year staff used drapes, lanterns and dragons to transform their home corner into a Chinese house. Children also visited the library to find reference books and learn how Chinese people celebrate the festival.

Staff act as good role models. They are kind and approachable and follow their comprehensive behaviour management policies to help children to be well behaved and cooperative. They build children's self-esteem with lots of appropriate praise and encouragement and they encourage them to be polite, to share and to take turns. Puppets and books are used to help children to understand about feelings so that they are kind and considerate to one another. Children are well occupied and interested in the activities available so that they do not become bored or disruptive. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of partnership with parents is good. Parents are made welcome at any time and they are invited for introductory visits with their children so that they feel reassured and children settle in quickly. They complete an 'All about me' booklet which gives staff information about their children's family and likes and dislikes so that they can meet their individual needs. Information is recorded on admission forms and the necessary permissions are in place to ensure that children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. Parents know their children's key workers and talk to them regularly so that they can share information. Staff complete diaries for the younger children and parents are invited to look at developmental records and examples of their children's work so that they learn about their progress. There is a parent notice board which displays information for parents and a suggestion box for their comments. A box of books is left in the reception area and parents are encouraged to take one home to read with their children. However, there is little written information about the Foundation Stage curriculum so that parents can be actively involved in their children's learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

There are good procedures in place for the recruitment and induction of new staff. This ensures that children are cared for by suitable qualified staff. Children are protected in the setting because they do not come into unsupervised contact with people who have not been vetted. The correct adult to child ratios are always maintained so that children are well supported and supervised. There are also contingency plans in place for staff absences to ensure that there are always sufficient staff on duty. Staff are well supported through regular team meetings and appraisal. The nursery's strong commitment to improvement is reflected in the programme for staff training and participation in the Pre-School Learning Alliance quality assurance scheme. This commitment helps to maintain and improve the quality of care and learning for children.

There is a key worker system in place which promotes consistency and encourages discussion between staff and children. The small groups enable staff to build effective relationships and get to know individual children well so that they feel safe and secure. The key worker system also ensures that parents are able to talk to someone who has a close relationship and better understanding of their children. Space and resources are well organised to allow children some freedom of movement and easy access to a wide range of toys and equipment.

All of the necessary documentation is in place to safeguard the welfare care and learning of children. The records, policies and procedures are stored confidentially and they are regularly reviewed and updated in line with current legislation.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The providers and managers work well together to ensure that children are provided with good quality care and education. The nursery is well organised to provide a warm, comfortable and stimulating environment where children feel secure and happy. The providers value their staff and have good systems in place to monitor and evaluate children's progress. There are good staffing levels in place and staff are encouraged to update their training regularly. The operational plan sets out the aims and objectives of the nursery and there is a full range of policies and procedures in place to safeguard the welfare of children. All new staff receive induction training and rotas are displayed to ensure that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities. This ensures that children are safe and helps them to make good progress. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection the childminder has carried out all of the recommendations in order to improve the health and safety of children. There is now a fire blanket in the kitchen, children wash their hands appropriately and the toys and equipment are regularly checked to ensure that they are clean and safe. Parents are provided with information about infectious disease so that they know when their children should not attend the nursery to prevent the spread of infection. Children no longer bring sugary snacks from home to share with the other children.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration 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):

- provide suitable utensils, plates and cutlery at snack time



## **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):

- provide information for parents about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the early learning goals so that they can be actively involved in their children's learning

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)