

# The Acorn Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY259044
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 May 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Kathy Leatherbarrow

<b>Setting Address</b>	Ormskirk C of E Primary School, Greetby Hill, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2DP
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<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?

The Acorn Playgroup was registered in October 2003. It is located within Ormskirk C of E Primary School, on the outskirts of Ormskirk town centre. Children are cared for in a base room and a classroom which have toilet and kitchen facilities. The playgroup also has access to the hall, the library, the computer suite and a outdoor play area.

The playgroup is open term time only. Sessions are available from 09.00 to 15.15 Monday to Friday. There are currently 36 children on roll; of these, 22 are funded three- and four-year-olds.

There is a qualified manager. She manages a team of five permanent staff members who are appropriately qualified and experienced who work with the children. The setting supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities, and children for whom English is an additional language.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well as they benefit from being cared for in a clean and hygienic environment. They follow good hygiene practices by routinely washing hands before snacks and after messy activities. This is actively encouraged and well supervised by staff. The staff follow clear and effective procedures, which effectively reduce any risk of cross-infection and help to keep children healthy. For example, they clean tables with antibacterial spray and use appropriate gloves when changing nappies.

Snack times are relaxed, social occasions as children sit in groups and talk about different experiences with staff. All children fully enjoy their snacks, which are healthy and nutritious. For example, they are encouraged to try a range of different foods and express a preference, such as grapes, strawberries, celery and cherry tomatoes. Children understand that water is good for them and regularly help themselves to fresh drinking water from the cooler. They participate in cooking activities where they learn about different traditions and eating habits.

Children's individual health needs are discussed with parents. Staff are proactive at seeking training to ensure any specific health needs of children can be met, such as the administration of Epipens. There is a suitable first aid box in place and the majority of staff hold appropriate first aid certificates. This enables them to treat any child accordingly, should they need attention.

Children play activities outside on a daily basis which ensures that they receive plenty of fresh air and exercise. However, the outdoor area is not fully developed to extend children's learning. Children participate in a range of different activities to increasingly move their bodies in a variety of ways. For example, they use different equipment, such as climbing frames, tunnels, weave-through cones and kick balls.

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

The provision is good.

Children and parents access a warm and welcoming setting. They are developing a good sense of belonging through the warm and welcoming accommodation, which is enhanced as children's work is attractively displayed. All areas are well set out and offer children space and the ability for them to move around freely and independently. This is enhanced through a wide range of resources which enable children to learn and extend their play in a variety of different ways. The good range and quality of toys, equipment and resources are monitored for their safety.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place which are effective in promoting safety. These include detailed risk assessments which are reviewed and carried out in all areas inside and outdoors. Staff ensure all efforts and precautions are taken to prevent accidents happening.

The children are encouraged to tidy-up and put their toys away after sessions, and some are aware that if toys are left on the floor, 'children may fall over them'. The children take part in fire evacuations and older children have a clear understanding of why these are necessary. All children have daily access to safe outdoor areas with some interesting and imaginative activities, for example, they paint the walls and floor with bubbles.

Staff protect children by ensuring that they are clear regarding any issues of child protection. The management team works with other agencies to ensure a multi-agency approach to child

protection is maintained. Staff follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board's guidance and procedures and have detailed procedures to be followed in the event of any allegations regarding staff members.

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

The provision is good.

Children arrive confidently and are happy in the care of a supportive staff team. Staff are attentive to the children and are always down at the children's level, interacting with them. This offers them positive comfort and reassurance. There are very good relationships between the staff and children, which contributes to the children's well-being and enables them to receive daily care from familiar adults who know them well. The children enjoy their time at the setting with lots of fun and laughter, where the staff effectively stimulate children's development.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. They are able to plan effectively for the children's individual learning needs, using their starting points as a basis for their assessments and the planning of good learning opportunities. The staff know the children well.

Children have a good interest in learning which is enhanced by the good resources and play opportunities that are provided by staff. This ensures that they are motivated and interested. Children are making friends and developing their self-esteem well. Staff have good teaching methods and are able to question and challenge the children appropriately. There is good use of differentiation to ensure that more able children are challenged and less able children are supported. Children move on at their own pace, which is well documented through the good use of evaluations of the children's learning and linked clearly to the appropriate stepping stones.

Children are familiar with their environment and use the areas confidently, which enhances their independence. They select and make choices in their play and are able to move around to access the good range of resources. However, children are not always encouraged to develop their self-help skills as staff do many tasks for them, such as pouring drinks and fastening shoes and coats. Children are welcomed, separate from carers confidently and follow the daily routines well. Their behaviour is very good and they are building positive relationships with both staff and each other.

Children are able to complete simple problem solving tasks, for example, constructing different tracks for the trains. Children enjoy finding out how many different ways they can make up a number using their fingers. For example, to get the number four they can have two on each hand or three on one hand and one on the other. They confidently count to ten and some, more able, go beyond this. The use of numbers in their play is supported by action songs and games. They are starting to understand and use language in relation to size, position, weight and volume.

Letters and words are displayed and children are able to access and recognise their written name in the session, for example, children successfully self-register on arrival. Children are able to mark constantly in the session, for example, within the workshop area, malleable area, role-play area, in sand and creative area and book corner. More able children are able to

formulate some letters effectively and their skills are further enhanced through paints and role play. Staff frequently link sounds to letters and use flashcards and small objects to promote this. Children confidently talk about and recall stories they know well, for example, 'The Selfish Crocodile'. They sit in groups and listen to stories attentively.

Children confidently talk about past and present. For example, they discuss a recent trip on the train. They enjoy a range of construction activities and enjoy accessing the workshop to enable them to design and construct their homes in three dimensions. Children have a sense of community as they take regular trips to the library, church and shops. The children are learning to use technology in the session by accessing the computers, interactive white boards, cassette players, phones, tills, microwave and programmable toys. Children's awareness of cultural diversity is enhanced through the selection of resources and planned activities. For example, they look at children from countries around the world, such as Ireland, Egypt, China, Brazil, Russia, Japan, Spain and India. Children have sound opportunities to explore and investigate through well prepared topics, for example, they grow beans.

Children initiate creative play themselves through access to the paints, creative materials, sand, water and malleable activities. They explore these and make masks using a variety of tactile materials. There is a variety of equipment for construction which stimulates the children's design skills. Children participate enthusiastically in songs and actions in small and large groups. For example, three children began a game of 'farmers in the den', which ended with 12 children participating. The well resourced role play area is altered regularly to stimulate the children's imagination. They express and communicate their ideas well when acting out role play situations.

Children move confidently around the setting and aware of the space and obstacles around them. They are clear about safety outdoors and how to walk down the steps appropriately. They have a range of tools that support and develop their fine motor skills, for example, malleable materials, jigsaws, pens, brushes and scissors.

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

The provision is good.

All the children, parents and carers are warmly welcomed into the setting and greeted by staff members. They feel valued because staff create an environment where they are treated fairly, equally and with respect which ensures that the children develop a sense of belonging, and this enhances their self-esteem. Children are making close friendships, for example, they hold hands and state 'we are friends'.

There are some good quality resources and activities that provide children with some good opportunities to start to develop their insight into the wider world. They have access to many books which reflect positive images of people from other religions and cultures, such as, 'children just like me' and 'what I believe'. Children gain further insight through topic work. They extend their learning as they look at different countries such as Russia. They look at some of the differences and display their names in both English and Russian.

The nursery has a positive attitude towards providing an inclusive environment. The staff adapt the facilities and resources to be inclusive. They work with parents and other agencies when required to ensure that children with learning difficulties or disabilities are dealt with through a multi-agency approach. Children's behaviour is good. Behaviour management techniques are based on the children's ages, stages of development and understanding. Therefore, as a result

the children are comfortable and aware of the boundaries that are in place. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Open and friendly relationships with parents contribute to meeting children's needs successfully. Staff and parents are relaxed in one another's company and detailed information is provided and shared. All children's records are accessible and there are clear links made to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the stepping stones within the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Staff complete regular observations, which give parents a good idea of what their children are learning and what they have achieved. Plans, topics and activities are displayed in all areas for parents to view.

Newsletters engage parents in their children's learning by encouraging them to be involved in activities that can be done at home. For example, children take home a picture about rail travel. Parents are requested to take their child on a train journey where they complete some questions together, such as, 'how many tunnels did you go through?' 'did you see any animals?'

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Recruitment and vetting procedures are sufficiently rigorous and robust to ensure children are well protected and cared for by staff with relevant experience, knowledge and skills. Staff training and development is well promoted within the provision and staff have good access to training courses. As a result, staff are well motivated, work well as a team and act as good role models. Space and resources are organised well, enabling children to initiate their own play.

Practitioners have high regard for the well-being of all children and are attentive to their needs; children receive good adult support and attention. All information is stored appropriately and maintains confidentiality. However, some documentation requires updating. Good policies and procedures are in place, which are well implemented by staff and work well in practice.

High adult to child ratios enable all children to have plenty of interaction, which positively supports children's care, learning and play. Group size and staff deployment contribute appropriately to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement.

The leadership and management are good. The provision benefits from strong leadership and management which contribute to the promotion of the outcomes for children and children's progress towards the early learning goals. The manager has a clear vision for nursery education and a strong focus on the personal development of children. The setting works well with outside agencies to ensure that all children's needs are met appropriately. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides. The manager is enthusiastic and committed to the ongoing assessment and development of the provision.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection the setting has made good progress. Snack time has been reviewed. All children enjoy a social, relaxed environment where they sit and enjoy their snack, eating from plates. This encourages good social and personal skills. The setting has reviewed the child protection policy, which is now consistent with the government booklet 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'. It also includes a procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer.

## 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 all documentation is reviewed and kept up-to-date.

### 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):

- develop the outdoor provision to extend the good learning experiences provided indoors (also applies to care)
- further promote children's independent skills.

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)