



Little Acorns Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 253462

Inspection date 21 July 2005

Inspector Beverly Kemp-Russell

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Registered person Little Acorns Pre-School Playgroup

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?

Little Acorns Preschool is committee run and opened in 1999. It operates from the village hall and primary school in the village of Ingham, near Lincoln. The pre-school offers sessional day care to children from the local area and surrounding villages.

There are currently 38 children aged from 2 to 5 years on roll. This includes 16 funded three and four year olds. The setting supports children with special educational needs.

The pre-school opens three sessions a week, term time only. Sessions are from 09.00 to 11.30 hours and children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are eight staff working with the children. Two staff hold an appropriate early years qualification including the manager and four staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Practitioners follow clear procedures for maintaining hygiene which ensures that the children are cared for in a clean and healthy environment, for example, tables are wiped with anti-bacterial spray prior to being used for food. Children are encouraged to become independent in promoting their own good health such as routine hand washing before food and children show confidence in using this ability. Children's health is promoted by well organised health and medication records. Staff hold current first aid certificates which helps maintain children's health.

Children help prepare a very good choice of snacks which include a large variety of fruit such as passion fruit and avocado so that healthy eating choices are promoted. These are also regularly discussed so that children are aware it is part of maintaining health. Practitioners ensure that children always have access to water throughout the session to ensure they are well nourished.

Children enjoy regular opportunities for physical activities and are skilled at using a range of small equipment to promote co-ordination skills. Children make much use of the outdoor area to run and play in the fresh air each day. There is plenty of good provision for children to use equipment such as sports equipment, tricycles, climbing frame and a slide to develop their large body skills. Staff discuss how fresh air is good for you and link to healthy life styles.

Children are able to rest and sleep according to their needs and the wishes of their parents. Staff provide comfortable scatter cushions and a carpeted area for children to rest and relax.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment which is well maintained and safe. Staff ensure that safety procedures such as regular fire drills are completed and recorded to ensure the safety of the children. Risk assessments are completed to help staff minimise hazards which may harm children.

Children use appropriate equipment such as low level tables and chairs to sit, eat and play safely. They also use a suitable range of developmentally appropriate resources which are regularly checked for safety. Staff use explanations about safety

so that children are able to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Staff help to create a stimulating environment for children by providing furniture, toys and equipment to meet the varying needs of children, such as the outdoor climbing frame. The building is kept properly secure so that unwanted visitors do not gain access to the setting or present a risk to the children.

Children are well protected because staff have a good understanding of their role in protecting children and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. Staff are aware of main signs such as injuries in odd places, inappropriate explanations and changes to behaviour. They are aware of the need to record this in the incident book and to report to their manager. Children are protected by staff's awareness of child protection guidelines and sound procedures support the manager in protecting children from abuse.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The care and play experiences for children in the pre-school are good. Children are content and settled and enjoy close relationships with their carers. Staff provide activities and resources in order to give children a mix of active and quiet times. They plan and provide a good range of learning opportunities for children which include both adult directed and free play activities such as small world, puppet theatre and making musical instruments. Staff's interactions with children are carefully balanced to ensure children are able to initiate their own activities and explore freely but are given time for activities which need more support and direction.

Regular discussions with parents ensure that young children benefit from and experience familiar home routines for eating and resting helping them to feel safe and secure. Children show interest in what they do such as preparing and tasting fruit and are often intrigued by resources such as the computer. They are beginning to experiment with sticking activities and like to dress up and use the home corner. They have a wealth of opportunities to access activities to develop their creativity. Children make choices from a good range of resources provided each day and they are fully absorbed throughout the session. Staff provide worthwhile activities to observe and use assessments to ensure children are moving towards the next step. However, assessment records do not clearly evidence the observations made by staff.

The quality of teaching and learning for three and four-year-olds is good. Most staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They offer support to children and are enthusiastic in their role. However, there are some missed opportunities to extend children's thinking and provide sufficient challenge for more able children in some areas of learning. All staff have attended short courses and have experience of caring for children, they gently guide children and use questioning techniques which extends their language and thinking. Staff meet with parents initially to record children's starting points on pre-assessment forms to ensure they are aware of observing progress. Children's ongoing assessments are shared with parents. The assessment of children's progress towards the early

learning goals identifies what they need to learn next. Plans show how all aspects of the stepping stones are covered and are based on children's interests and on the progress they are making.

Children are confident and keen to get involved in activities. They form good relationships with staff and other children, willingly helping younger ones with tasks such as using the mouse on the laptop. However, some staff miss opportunities, particularly at snack times, to help children develop independence skills. Children are aware of the expectations of staff and behave very well.

Children are very able speakers using complex sentences to explain and recall past events. They listen carefully and talk confidently during circle time. Children enjoy making marks and can form some recognisable images; some can also recognise some letters and their sounds. However, there are limited opportunities for children to write for a variety of purposes. Children enjoy books and participate in story telling. Children count by rote well, with more able children eager to count well beyond 10. They know the names of common shapes and use some size language in their play such as big and little. However, staff miss some opportunities to introduce children to simple calculating and problem solving.

Children are able to join construction pieces together with some purpose such as to make a train track. They have a growing awareness of other cultures, as they celebrate some festivals and are provided with a good range of resources to help them to explore and learn. Children's knowledge of the natural world is developed through activities such as growing things and observing and discussing the weather. Children enjoy moving in different ways such as climbing, running and jumping and use appropriate resources. Children know most colours and have the opportunity to create and design for themselves. They know a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes and really enjoy involving others in imaginative games. Children have very good access to craft activities to develop their creativity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children are cared for by staff who work with parents to meet individual needs and ensure all children are fully included. All children and parents receive a warm welcome from staff who are sensitive to each family's circumstances. Each child is known as an individual and time is spent making sure their needs are met and continuity of care is offered. Parents views about their child's needs are actively sought before the child starts at the setting, and on a regular basis throughout their time there. Parents receive comprehensive information about the Foundation Stage to enable them to be involved in their children's learning. Staff ensure that parents know how their child is progressing and developing by regular verbal contact and meetings.

Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and through acting as good role models and using appropriate methods, such as consistent and gentle reinforcement of rules, children learn good manners and to care for others. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff, building their confidence and self esteem.

Staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children by making sure they are valued, enabling them to share their experiences with each other and staff. Children are beginning to understand and respect differing needs and cultures through planned activities and have opportunities to use resources to support their learning. Children's knowledge of the local community is increased by them getting out and about in the village. They have opportunities to attend the adjoining school which helps them feel secure. Children's opinions and achievements are recognised and praised by everyone in the group. All of this contributes to fostering children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development well.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are well cared for and protected by an enthusiastic and caring staff team. Staff move around the room to maintain suitable ratios to keep children safe and support their care and play. Most policies and procedures are known by the staff and are in the main effective in promoting children's health and well being. However, children's records are not up to date. Children are cared for in a secure environment and staff are effective in promoting children's health and well being. The needs of the range of children for whom the setting provides are met. Staff are attending training courses to enhance their knowledge and understanding and have experience of caring for children in a variety of roles.

Leadership and management for nursery education is satisfactory. The manager's commitment to training and the support of the mentor teacher are bringing about improvements in planning and assessment. The manager is able to identify the settings strengths and weaknesses and staff monitor and evaluate their educational provision to ensure they have a sound focus for future improvements for children's learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the pre-school was asked to make a number of improvements to its provision for children. For the care they were asked to: produce an action plan outlining how the group intend to meet the qualification criterion for staff; devise a system for planning and implementing a suitable range of activities for children, which is appropriate for their stage of development; devise and make available to parents, a written statement on special needs which is consistent with current legislation and guidance; to update child protection policies and procedures. For nursery education they were asked to: increase staff's knowledge of the Foundation stage of education; ensure planning and assessment are linked to early learning goals; develop the use of planning, evaluation and assessment to provide extension activities for more and less able children.

Since the last inspection the pre-school has made good progress in addressing these issues. There are two staff who are qualified and four staff who are working towards a relevant qualification. Planning ensures that a suitable range of activities are

provided for children, which are appropriate for their stage and encourages development in all areas of learning. Policies and procedures have been up dated and now include a statement about special educational needs.

With regard to nursery education, since the last inspection there have been some changes and the pre-school has made sound progress in addressing the issues mentioned. Planning and assessment are linked clearly to the early learning goals. However, there are still some staff who need to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage of education to ensure they are providing sufficient challenge for more able children.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- update current child care records to include consent to seek emergency medical treatment or advice and consent to take children on outings.

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 some staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure they are able to clearly identify what children need to learn next and provide sufficient challenge for more able children
- develop further assessment records to include more observational evidence to clearly identify children's progress

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