

Acorns Nursery Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	136090
Inspection date	22 June 2007
Inspector	Valerie Anne Curotto
Setting Address	Axa Centre Bristol, Brierly Furlong, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, BS34 8SW
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Registered person	Acorns Nurseries Ltd
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?

Acorns Axa Nursery opened in 1996 and is one of a group of privately managed, workplace nurseries, run by the Acorn group. It is located on the Axa site in Stoke Gifford, South Gloucestershire. Children attending the nursery come from a wide catchment area. There are 57 children currently on roll, aged between five months and five years of age. This includes 20 children receiving funded nursery education. The majority of children attend on a part time basis.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday, from 08.00 to 18.00 hours throughout the year, excluding public holidays. It operates from a purpose-built, single storey facility with an enclosed outdoor play space and garden. The baby unit can accommodate up to 15 children under the age of two and has a separate sleep room and bottle preparation area. Older children have use of three other rooms for their activities. The manager and seven members of staff work with the children. All have an early years qualification. A qualified teacher works with the older, funded children once a week and a housekeeper and cook provide additional support. The setting receives support from the local authority. The setting is registered to care for up to 30 children under five years of age, at any one time.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children develop everyday routines which increase their understanding of health and hygiene. As a result, children learn to recognise their own needs and take appropriate action. For example, they independently dry their hands and dispose of paper towels. They regularly use their labelled drinks bottles as staff encourage their use and make them accessible outdoors. Areas used by children are cleaned throughout the day and good routines are in place to promote hygiene within the setting. For example, staff follow clear procedures for sterilising soothers and bottles which safeguards babies' health and children's individual bedding and mats are cleaned daily. An extensive sickness policy promotes the health of all children and provides useful information to parents. Effective arrangements are in place to record accidents and children's medication, which promote their welfare.

Children's dietary needs are met as menus are well planned and take into account the ages of children attending. Colour coded plates and clear information to food preparation staff ensure individual requirements are catered for. Children enjoy their food and seasonal menus incorporate a good variety of fresh fruit and vegetables. Regular cooking activities and spontaneous discussion develop children's understanding of healthy eating. Children develop positive attitudes to food as they sit with staff in small groups at meal times. Older children are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle as regular exercise is incorporated into their daily routine. Babies benefit from outdoor activities, such as pushchair rides around the on-site lake and activities on mats in the garden.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Age-appropriate play equipment is provided in each base room and suitable resources, such as high chairs and cots are readily available to meet young children's needs. Babies spend much of their day in a self contained environment. Here they have space to investigate their surroundings in safety and use a range of supportive equipment as they increase their mobility. However, the grouping and supervision of children at other times is not sufficient to meet their needs and promote their safety. For example, at lunch time when the baby unit is used as an additional rest area and children of mixed ages come together.

Children are safeguarded as the premises are secure and entry is monitored effectively by staff. Action to be taken in the event of a fire is clearly displayed and understood by staff, to promote children's safety. However, the frequency of fire drills is not consistent to ensure all children are familiar with evacuation procedures. A rolling programme of first aid and child protection training ensures staff have up to date knowledge which promotes children's wellbeing.

Attractive displays of children's work present a welcoming atmosphere for children and their families. Children benefit from a purpose-built environment with child sized facilities. A good range of resources are well organised throughout the nursery in low level units and drawers. This ensures children are familiar with what is available and they regularly request favourite items. Space is used effectively at times as older children in small groups concentrate during structured activities. Children use a range of environments as varied use is made of other areas, such as the outdoor space and sports hall.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a relaxed and friendly atmosphere where they relate warmly to staff. They are grouped appropriately for much of the day and develop a strong sense of identity with their key worker groups. As a result, they are generally content and well occupied. Older children are enthusiastic and inquisitive during structured, adult-led activities. Staff rotate resources well to reflect children's general interests during free play. Children's creative work is displayed throughout the setting and is linked to themed activities. They engage in a wide range of creative activities using dough, paints and sensory materials. Babies particularly enjoy new experiences as they investigate treasure baskets thoughtfully put together by staff. They explore new textures and sensations as they use different materials such as paints, jelly and 'crunchy' cornflakes.

All children enjoy songs and stories as part of their day. Older children use their imaginations to create favourite stories as staff encourage them to 'slither like snakes' through the woods. They enjoy music and movement and learn how their bodies work as they 'stretch and grow'. Younger children discover different sounds as they tap musical instruments and learn to copy actions to hand rhymes. In addition to regular use of the outdoor area, children enjoy physical activities such as obstacle courses in the sports hall or walks around the on-site lake. Staff continue to develop their use of observations to track children's progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A wide range of good quality resources are available to support all six areas of children's learning. Adult-led activities reinforce children's understanding of shape, number and mark making as children use sand, stencils and magnets. Children learn positional language and develop sequences with a range of coloured camels, elephants and bears. However, support for children's free play is less effective as not all staff involved in their care are as secure in their understanding of the Foundation Stage. As a result, children lack consistent support to further extend and reinforce their learning.

Long term planning ensures that stepping stones within the Foundation Stage are progressively planned for over the year. Short term planning incorporates children's interests and staff respond to children's specific requests for games and creative materials. Staff make imaginative use of creative materials, such as scented paint and glitter dough to extend children's interest and sensory development. The frequency and content of children's observations are not yet consistent to effectively track children's progress. This limits evaluation of the impact of activities on children's learning. However, staff are taking appropriate steps to link assessments to planning, with support from the local authority.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued within the setting and their sense of belonging is nurtured well through individually named drawers and pegs. An end of year ceremony marks the transition from nursery to school and fosters children's sense of achievement. Keyworkers have a good understanding of their children's needs and individual routines, such as resting and feeding, are observed for babies. Children generally behave well as staff use positive strategies to manage their behaviour and reinforce expectations. Older children learn to take responsibility and

develop routines which promote their independence. These include handwashing, tidying up and putting items in their drawers.

Children develop an understanding of diversity through topic work and themed days. In addition, they make use of favourite resources, such as multicultural dolls and puzzles, which are readily available, during free play. Children meet teachers from the local schools as the setting develops beneficial links with the local community. Children with additional needs are supported appropriately as parents and outside agencies, if necessary, are involved in planning for their care and education. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. A wide range of information is available to parents about their children's care, through a prospectus, parents' pack and noticeboard displays. Formal parents' evenings supplement daily contact with staff and provide useful information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, day to day arrangements for sharing information about activities and how these impact on children's development are not extensive. Parents comment positively on the friendly staff and the care their children receive.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A wide range of policies and procedures support children's care appropriately. These continue to be reviewed and updated to reflect provision within the setting and provide meaningful information to parents. Appropriate recruitment and induction procedures are in place to safeguard children and ensure the suitability of staff. Children benefit from a small, consistent staff team who provide continuity of care within the setting. They are offered a suitable combination of small, structured groups and free play throughout the day. However, the organisation at times of available space, staff and resources does not fully promote the wellbeing of young children.

There is a strong commitment to staff development as the provider ensures a rolling programme of training in key areas which promotes children's welfare. Suitable developmental frameworks, such as Birth to three matters are in use, although these have yet to impact fully on planning and the use of assessments by staff. Areas for development within the Foundation Stage are recognised by senior staff and they continue to take appropriate steps to improve provision for children. Leadership and management is satisfactory. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two actions were made at the last inspection of children's care. One has been addressed fully to improve outcomes for children as baby unit supervisors are now suitably qualified. There has been some improvement regarding the second which related to the sufficiency of staff working directly with children. While staff ratios are generally good and staff breaks have been staggered to ensure sufficient staff are present, there are times when organisation is lacking regarding the grouping of children, resources and staff. As a result, the needs of younger children are not consistently met. Two recommendations relating to children's care were also made. Documentation, including policies and procedures, has been reviewed to ensure it relates to the National Standards in England, although some minor inconsistencies remain. Staff awareness of the Code of Practice for special needs has improved, supported by a more comprehensive policy.

There has been sustained improvements towards a number of recommendations made at the last inspection of children's education. Key staff are now responsible for planning the curriculum and this has impacted well on structured activities. However, not all staff are able to promote learning outcomes at other times. Short term planning continues to develop links to children's assessments to more fully support planning for individual children's learning. Good progress has been made to increase opportunities for children to have more independent access to creative materials and use everyday technology. For example, creative resources have been reorganised effectively and children now have regular access to a computer. They confidently operate a mouse and use simple matching programmes.

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):

- ensure the grouping of children and the organisation of resources is sufficient to meet the needs of babies and promote their wellbeing at all times
- continue to develop children's assessments to link more effectively to planning for children under three and ensure that policies and procedures reflect practice within the setting

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 develop planning to support staff interaction with children and provide additional information to parents about their children's learning
- continue to develop children's assessments to further support planning and evaluate the impact of activities on individual children's development

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