

The Acorn Childcare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY270525
Inspection date	02 November 2007
Inspector	Lynne Milligan
Setting Address	RAF Cosford, Albrighton, Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV7 3EX
Telephone number	01902 377221
E-mail	
Registered person	The Acorn Childcare Centre
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acorn Childcare Centre is located in the grounds of the RAF Cosford airbase, near Albrighton in Shropshire. The nursery occupies a purpose built single storey building.

The nursery serves the R.A.F. and the local surrounding area. The setting is open Monday to Friday from 07:45 until 17:15. There are currently 76 children on roll, of whom 22 are funded three and four year olds. The group has appropriate procedures in place to accommodate children who have special needs or who speak English as an additional language.

Children access a routine which accommodates a mixture of free play and structured activities. They have access to a large, soft surface area with flower beds and a vegetable patch adjacent to the building for outdoor play.

There are 18 members of staff who work with the children, holding suitable early years qualifications. They access regular training on early years issues and receive support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well through good opportunities for physical exercise and activity in the outside play area. Children enjoy physical play on a daily basis, they are using their bodies to explore space, weight and strength. They develop large physical skills as they run, jump and climb on and off the frame and slides. They enjoy running up and down over the little bridge, screaming with excitement as the 'troll' tries to catch them. They enjoy playing with water and sand and have opportunities to climb, move under, over and through equipment. Children are learning to identify many different types of fauna and flora and how to take care of their environment. They have responsibilities for the planting and maintenance of crops in their vegetable patch which the children cook and then eat as part of their understanding of healthy eating. Learning is extended in all areas as the outdoors is seen as an extended classroom. The doors to the outside area are often left open so children can take work outside and colour or paint in the sunshine. The outdoor curriculum is extensive to ensure activities meet all areas of learning consistently throughout the year.

Children have many good opportunities to develop fine motor skills as they use equipment such as rolling pins, cutters and scissors for cutting, making shapes and sticking. They use pencils and scissors confidently and paint with various tools and brushes of different widths and sizes. They learn to dress independently, when, for example, putting on and taking off their cardigans and coats.

Considering children's overall well being and health is high on the agenda. The nursery has a healthy eating policy and an extensive understanding of the benefits of providing children with nutritious food. Snacks and lunches are freshly prepared and home cooked by an experienced, motivated cook who works closely with staff and parents to monitor the menu and ensure that the meals provided are seasonal and very nutritious. Fresh drinking water is available throughout the session and children pour their own drinks at snack times, helping themselves to tasty treats such as fresh fruit which is pureed for babies and crumpets or pancakes. Children skilfully use utensils to butter their own snacks and pour their milk. Staff liaise well with parents, ensuring that any children's special dietary requirements are appropriately met. Children and staff talk about how nice and healthy the food is and display pictures of their favourite foods in the dining room. Good hygiene practices are carried out by staff, who understand the importance of good role modelling. Procedures such as wearing gloves and aprons for nappy changing and continued cleaning of furniture, equipment and resources protect children from the spread of infection. Older children wash their hands without prompting and know why they need to wash them as they say 'it makes them clean' so they can eat their snack. However procedures for hand washing are inconsistent at times which means children do not always wash their hands thoroughly. Procedures in place are consistent to ensure any specific medical need is responded to immediately. Parents are promptly informed of any illness within the setting to ensure they are able to fully protect their children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from this warm, clean and stimulating environment. Children's health and lifestyle is well promoted through first-rate provision and encouragement to generally enable development of self-care skills. They are encouraged and supported in achieving and being

responsible for their own needs. Children move safely around both the inside and outside areas. For example, when escorting children to the outside play areas staff ensure that they carry out head counts, supervising them closely and carefully.

Admission to the building is closely monitored, ensuring no unauthorised people have access to the children. All visitors use the intercom and are required to sign in and out of the building. A complete record of everyone on the premises is maintained at all times, helping to protect the children. Recruitment procedures are robust and ensure that only those adults suitable to work with children are allowed to do so. Children's welfare is additionally promoted through the management's extensive knowledge and pro-active skills with regard to their safety. For example, written risk assessments are carried out to identify hazards with regard to use of equipment, spaces within the nursery school, considerations for outings and use of transport.

All children have access to a exciting range of quality toys and resources, which are suitable for their ages and stages of development. Resources have been carefully chosen to support children's play and are regularly checked for hygiene and safety. Toys are made easily accessible and at the children's level so they can independently select resources. Young children benefit from using heuristic play resources, such as pots and pans and natural materials, to enhance their play experiences.

Children's welfare is given very high priority and safeguarded by the staff's sound knowledge of child protection matters. Staff have attended child protection training, they know the indicators of abuse and the procedure to follow for reporting concerns. Links are maintained with other agencies and any issues or concerns are acted upon promptly, protecting children. The children are further protected through ongoing training and personal development and very keen interest to ensure all children are protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children relish their time in the setting. They have an excellent attitude to learning and are happy, settled and purposefully engaged throughout the sessions. The children are enabled to become familiar with their surroundings, to explore and develop solid relationships with staff and peers. Time is used well to enable the children to make choices and to develop their chosen task, to lead their own learning and experiences. Children's ability to do this has been extended by the excellent implementation of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the absolute belief in its ethos of child-centred learning adapted by staff. Routines are specific to individual children's needs. Children are extremely confident in their interaction and relationships with staff and peers. The excellent range of activities and resources enable them to explore and create using all of their senses. In this way the children gain knowledge of the world around them and start to build their own identities within it.

New experiences introduced to the children include exploring textures such as jelly, paint, water and spaghetti. They go out into the local environment to see the farm animals, visit the park and play in the well equipped, soft surface outdoor area. In all the rooms the children delight in a variety of activities that include smelly bags, balloon play and cooking. They are beginning to develop an awareness of colours as they glue various pieces of materials onto their collage. Staff point out the differences between the dark and light brown pieces of fur. Children copy staff as they feel how soft it is by holding it up to their noses with staff giggling with them as it tickles. Spatial awareness is developed as babies reach and grasp for toys, changing them from one hand to another and then up to their mouths, using all their senses. Outside they

manoeuvre round obstacles as they crawl in and out of tunnels and chase staff in a game of tag. Exciting and stimulating plans help children discover their creative ability as they use prints to make pictures of vegetables and leaf painting. Staff fully appreciate that providing excellent learning opportunities and resources facilitates true independent learning.

Nursery Education

The teaching and learning is outstanding, consistently inspiring and challenging for all groups of children. It is rooted in expert knowledge of the Foundation Stage, varied, interesting and shows a robust understanding of how young children learn and progress. The activities and experiences provided are stimulating and enable children to initiate many aspects of their own learning, make independent choices and prioritise their self-esteem and confidence as firm foundations for developing to their full potential. Assessment is rigorous and the information gained is used very effectively to guide planning, especially during the key worker groups. Staff as a team share information regarding specific children's progress and ensure they fully benefit from other groups such as language, physical skills and self-esteem. A highly stimulating and welcoming environment is provided. Activities and experiences are well matched to children's needs and interests. Staff consistently make excellent use of time and resources to support children's learning. Continual and thorough monitoring of procedures enable practitioners to maintain high standards of teaching.

The children are truly motivated learners; they are able to concentrate for long periods of time on self-chosen tasks. A group of 3 and 4-year-olds sit on the carpet with building blocks. They negotiate with each other as to who is going to build which piece. They excitedly discuss the need for a gate. Other children say we need a chimney and so start to compare their ideas with the one on the dolls house behind them. They are captivated in their design, moving around to look at it from different angles so it's just right. Staff watch closely, offering ideas in order to extend their learning. Children listen attentively and then discuss further the shape of the roof, again comparing it to the triangular shape on the other house. This activity has enabled them to show what they know, create, make independent choices and expand their concentration, develop mathematical skills and use design to support learning. Within all the activities and experiences provided by staff, children gain and use a whole remit of skills and challenges to aid their learning. They show high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration and use all their senses to actively explore a stimulating range of new experiences. They learn new language to describe the features of the sunflowers in their garden and that the gazebo looks like a hexagon. Children are able to confidently name the colours of the bean bags inside the gazebo and match the name of a colour to a piece of their clothing in a game before snack time. The children begin to make marks and representations through these creative means. Children's writing skills are exceptional as they label their pictures of the chickens, adding personal comments such as how funny and greedy they are. They independently write their names alongside those who are in their family, spelling out the letters and indicating with extreme skill which one is the capital letter. They are able to identify letters out of sequence on the alphabet snake outside and also point to the letter that their friends name starts with. Children understand that print carries meaning as it is used in different areas throughout the nursery. Old diaries are used in the role play area along with paper and pencils to write lists with outside.

Children learn about measuring and calculating through their everyday activities. They count well up to 20 with many older more able children counting correctly to 30. Mathematics is introduced as a way of calculating how many children can play in the sand at any one time, deciding if they have too many or not enough. This is an indication of how effectively children

are learning to use mathematical ideas to problem solve. They practice shape and size in everyday play as they use positional language such as before and after, in front and behind. They compare their height to that of the sunflower they have grown, indicating with their arms how much bigger it is than they are. Children can successfully recognise rectangles, knowing that it has two long sides and two short sides and that squares have four equal sides. As children manipulate the play dough, they calculate halves and quarters as they use tools to divide it up. As a result children are competent and confident learners in mathematical development.

The children are extremely self-assured; they work and play effectively on their own and with others. Behaviour is excellent; they negotiate with others and take responsibility for their actions. They have an excellent awareness of right and wrong in line with their age and stages of development. They gain a well-developed respect for others and their beliefs, cultures and traditions. Through well planned and very knowledgeable displays, activities and stories the children learn about the diversity in their community and the world around them. The children are actively engaged in planting, growing and planning of the outdoor area, they are able to offer their opinions and discuss their ideas. Learning about the world around them continues as they explore change through experiments and practical activities such as cooking and 3D model making of African mud huts. The children are excited as they help to hatch out chicks, mark dates off calendars, take responsibility for turning eggs, feeding and watching them grow and learning about life cycles. Overall, the children make significant progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The children are able to feel a good sense of belonging, work harmoniously with others as they make choices and decisions. Effective arrangements are made to ensure all children are included. There are many resources and activities to help children learn about a diverse society through their play. For example, celebrating festivals such as Diwali, Chinese New Year and Eid. Visits to the multi-cultural centre also offer opportunities for children to widen their views about the world around them. The staff are keen to continue to improve on what is already good practice, by developing the role of parents as partners. The staff recognise the importance of engaging parents to develop the children's awareness of cultural influence. The staff aim to continue to gather further knowledge and are happy for parents, and others, to continue to support the children in their appreciation of the community in which they live. As a result the children learn to be proud of their own families through seeing lots of positive images of their own backgrounds and a diverse society.

The children are developing very good self-esteem and respect for others. They are able to participate fully in the setting because activities are thoughtfully adapted to meet their needs. The children feel valued as they celebrate and talk about their own birthdays, achievements or significant events in their lives. The children are welcomed and are given sufficient time to settle into the setting so they feel a sense of belonging. They benefit from a calm and supportive approach, and learn right from wrong through careful explanation and consistency. Praise and support helps them develop self-esteem. Children are encouraged to play together, take turns and share. There are excellent strategies to promote children's behaviour very well. For example, children are encouraged in their positive behaviour in every activity. Manners are encouraged throughout the day and children are repeatedly praised for doing well, behaving well, sharing and cooperating with their peers. The children understand responsible behaviour and learn about boundaries. This is because staff are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Staff have regular discussions with parents and help parents to become involved in what goes on in the nursery. This is achieved through display boards informing parents about the Foundation Stage. Planning is displayed on the entrance to all rooms and parents are asked to contribute to upcoming events. They also receive regular news letters and very good opportunities to visit. For example, they visit on parent's evenings where they can discuss their child's development further. They are also kept informed of their child's progress through well written reports which are used to support their transition to school. This means that children are fully included and their care is consistent when at the setting and at home. The children's individual needs are well met because staff work very well and closely with parents and carers to develop close partnerships. As a result all children are able to achieve their full potential and feel comfortable and settled because they see parents and staff acting together and giving consistent messages.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a staff team who have a secure knowledge and understanding of children's developmental needs. The nursery has an established and well-organised staff team who receive ongoing training and support. Very good deployment of staff and organisation ensures that high staff ratios are maintained.

Written documentation, such as, policies and procedures are in place. Records and information relating to children's health and safety, such as, accidents and medication records are in place and maintained. Children's attendance and times of arrival and departure are recorded and there is a record of fire drills. An appropriate procedure is in place to process staff suitability checks following new guidance.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The setting is well organised and great care is taken to create a child centred environment. The manager makes it a priority that the staff team are fully supported to meet all children's potential learning needs. Indoor and outdoor space is set out to enable maximum play opportunities for children. Staff are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere where children and their families are well supported. The nursery is well resourced with a good selection of equipment and play materials and the environment is planned and equipment set out, relating to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff are well deployed to meet children's needs and support them in their play and learning. They work very well together and children benefit greatly from staff commitment to improve practice through ongoing self-evaluation. The manager and provider are committed to ensuring that staff receive on-going training to increase and update their childcare knowledge. Regular staff meetings and staff appraisals are held, along with one to ones which address any issues.

Written documentation is well organised, and used to ensure children's wellbeing. There are plans in place to review existing policies and procedures in line with new initiatives and to reflect changes in line with new legislation and guidance. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, it was felt that the settings lost child policy needed to include a timescale in order to make it more comprehensive. The management have now updated their policy so that it identifies a concise procedure of the steps to be taken if a child became lost. From this improvement, there is now a clear indication of timescales. This ensures that children are safe

whilst in the setting and on outings. They were also asked to ensure that children do not have access to the kitchen except with direct staff supervision. High handles are now fitted to the doors into the kitchen so children cannot enter and when they do they are under strict supervision at all times. Finally the nursery was asked to make sure that daily safety checks are carried out thoroughly. Staff endeavour to maintain high levels of safety within the nursery at all times and carry out daily checks both inside and out, including head counts when children play outside. This results in children's welfare and safety being fully supported.

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 outstanding.

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 procedures for older children to wash their hands are thorough
- develop further the organisation of mealtimes in order to meet the individual needs of the older children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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