

# Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	316842
<b>Inspection date</b>	04 May 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Christine Marsh
<b>Setting Address</b>	Parkhills Road, Horne Street, Bury, BL9 9AU
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 761 6942
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Bethesda Pentecostal Church
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 Pre-School was registered in January 2001. It is run by the trustees of Bethesda Pentecostal Church. The pre school occupies first floor rooms within the Bethesda Pentecostal Church which has been developed into Parkhills Community Centre in Horne Street, Bury. The pre-school group have sole use of two first floor rooms within the community centre as well as occasional use of the main hall. Secure outdoor play space has been made available in the car park to the front of the building.

Session times are 09.30 to 12.00, Monday to Friday, during school term times. Little Acorns Pre-School group follows the Christian ethos of the church. Children and families who do not attend the church are also welcome to attend the pre-school. The group are registered to provide care for 20 children between the ages of two and five years at any one time. There are currently 27 children on roll including nine children in receipt of nursery education funding. The group supports children with English as an additional language and children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The nursery employs five staff. The three permanent staff all have an appropriate early years qualification at Level 3. The other two members of staff are working towards a Level 2 qualification. The group also trains a small number of students.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well maintained environment where staff effectively promote good hygiene practices. Good self-care practices take place as a part of daily routines. For example, children know to wash their hands before snack and after visiting the toilet. Pictures with captions are placed above the sinks in the toilets, to remind children to wash their hands. Upstairs in the main room a portable sink is used to ensure effective hygiene is maintained through hand washing after messy activities. Children are seen sweeping up spilt sand using a dust pan and brush carefully, as an adult oversees the process. Children are learning to take care of their environment and keep themselves safe.

Staff and children sit together during snack times and talk informally. A member of staff says, 'It's good to eat fruit' and children look at a poster on the wall, naming fruits and saying which they like. Fresh and dried fruit is offered to the children as part of a nutritious diet. Children also have foods from other cultures as part of their topic work. For example, they enjoy poppadoms and mango chutney. A small water cooler helps children have continual access to fresh drinking water to keep them healthy.

Children get fresh air and exercise daily. Indoors, children are encouraged to be active through activities including physical warm-ups to carpet activities; while outdoors they play on bikes, climbing frames and slides, push prams with dolls in, and play chasing games. Children use their large motor skills in these games. They are seen peddling with skill as they move quickly around the playground area, playing follow my leader games and navigating around small cones. They use the wood work bench, paint shakers for use in music sessions, and do free painting and play dough models developing their dexterity as they use these materials. Hand and eye coordination are developed through their use of water and dry sand with buckets and containers to pour into. Compost in a tray with small garden implements is mixed with water. An adult shows a book about using mud on walls of buildings in hotter countries. Children develop their fine motor skills as they play mixing the compost and water. These enjoyable activities contribute to an active, healthy lifestyle.

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

The provision is good.

The staff work well within the physical constraints of the building. The children are cared for in a safe, secure environment. Access is through a door that is kept locked during sessions. Staff are vigilant about keeping children safe. Emergency evacuation procedures are undertaken regularly with staff having clearly defined roles to make sure children are accounted for and kept safe. The pre-school is on the first floor and there are other users of the building at the same time. However, there is no co-ordination of the evacuation process between users at the moment, which could undermine children's safety in the event of an emergency. Staff have been trained as fire marshals and are generally diligent regarding children's safety.

All areas are all made welcoming and attractive by the display of children's work, photographs and information for parents. Space is well organised with activities, such as sand and water, books, craft areas and free play areas, all available for children to use independently. Toys and materials are in good condition and conform to safety standards. Equipment is labelled and displayed at a low height so that everything is accessible for children's use. This encourages children to be independent in their use of resources and to help themselves to other materials they need in their play. They are encouraged to put items they are not using away first so that everything is not out at once and a safe and tidy environment is maintained.

Visual risk assessments are undertaken indoors and outdoors and hazards are noted and dealt with. Staff are always at the door at the beginning and end of sessions, and children are only allowed to go with known adults. Parents have to say in advance if someone else is collecting their child. Staff have a good knowledge of child protection procedures which promotes children's welfare. The outdoor area is fully enclosed by secure fencing and the gate is padlocked. The outdoor area is used with all staff present, children only going inside, if they are accompanied by an adult.

Children's experiences are further enhanced by local trips out, for example, to a farm, for seasonal walks to the park, and to the supermarket. At the farm they see lambs and feed animals in the springtime. Staff talk to children about the need to keep close to staff to keep safe when they are away from the setting.

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

The provision is good.

Children are confident and happy in their setting. A gradual settling in process operates to help children become confident in the pre-school without their parents and carers being present. Children look for their name card on arrival, and busily look around for their friends to decide what they want to play with first. A range of activities that are suitable for their age and developmental needs are on offer. Children eagerly go to tables with activities ready set out with attractive books to look at, objects to sort, and play dough to explore and manipulate. The familiarity of daily routines helps children gain in confidence and learn in their setting.

Staff have a good knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Information related to the framework is displayed on the wall so that parents can find out more about it. Observations of young children are done frequently. Staff are beginning to look for recurring patterns in children's interests to use to inform their planning. A wall display is in progress that will inform parents about different interests their children have currently. Children's achievements are recorded and discussed with parents.

### **Nursery Education.**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and of the six areas of learning. Planning is done as a team and benefits from the ideas of all staff members. Staff have particular responsibility for younger or older children. This helps to make sure that activities are planned and delivered at an appropriate level for children's current needs. Activities and experiences support children's learning, and they are making good progress towards the early learning goals. However, at present planning does not target specific children for observations during activities, or incorporate the next steps for their learning. After activities have taken place children's responses are noted and this information is included in

children's records of achievement. The parents of funded children are regularly updated about their child's progress in relation to the areas of learning.

Children's relationships with staff are relaxed and friendly. Staff know all children well which helps them put teaching across in a relevant way making use of children's interests and home experiences to maximise their learning. Children have frequent opportunities to count and to calculate. Songs such as 'The Grand old Duke of York' are used very effectively to talk about large numbers. For example, 'How many people could you get on a football field?' staff ask children when talking about the 10,000 men in the song. In these ways large numbers are considered and children's ideas are valued as they try to imagine such enormous numbers. In smaller groups children investigate numbers from zero to 10, counting out raisins, and using pictures of soldiers, following on from 'The Grand old Duke of York' song. Children learn about numbers, shapes and colours through their first hand experiences. They are seen naming colours accurately as they sort small objects by colour and by type. Children concentrate carefully as they match and count the number of tops to fit the pattern of footprints on the floor, and play with self-corrective number puzzles.

Conversation and books are important throughout the sessions. Children are asked to bring a book from home, or choose a favourite story, this is then read at story time. Children have access to books and staff read books during sessions to individuals and to small groups as children request them. Songs reinforce language, for example, 'Hickory, dickory, dock' is sang with a model clock and a toy mouse. The children join in with the singing and use shakers as they sing. Humour is encouraged and a playful attitude is evident. Children make 'jumpy' and 'smooth' sounds with their homemade instruments, smiling as they do so. A 'letter of the week' helps children develop their knowledge of sounds and letters through discussing items beginning with that letter that are displayed on a tray. Children do mark making and write captions to go with drawings they do.

They are confident and enthusiastic talkers who like to engage each other and adults with accounts of their experiences. Their personal, social and emotional development is fostered through positive relationships with staff who listen intently to children's accounts of their activities. Children develop their investigative skills through language and first hand experiences. For example, toy animals are frozen in ice, and children watch daily as the ice begins to melt. They discuss ways of freeing the animals and how they might do this. Under adult supervision they try to speed up the process of the ice melting. The language and the collaboration of ideas between children as they engage in their discussions, shows the development of their ideas and helps them find the words to express their thoughts clearly.

Children enjoy creative activities. They freely choose dressing up clothes from a large range available. Children are seen moving their hands elegantly as they look intently at long sparkly gloves they have put on their hands and stretched up their arms. They choose clothes together and wear them during a variety of indoor activities, the clothes clearly adding to their pleasure in their play. The 'bear hunt' story has been developed as a full scale experience, with tunnels to crawl through, and wet material to wade through, to reinforce the storyline in an enjoyable, practical way. Children develop their imaginations in their free play with one another.

There are some opportunities for children to use technology. For example, they use a laptop and a programmable toy as part of their play activities. Staff make books, factual as well as fiction ones, with the children. For example, a recent one was about dogs.

Children learn about festivals and religion through stories and themes to do with being kind to each other. Easter and Christmas are celebrated, and children are encouraged to recognise and appreciate the diversity of society by talking about different ways of life. Books and resources support these activities to foster children's learning. In these ways, children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed.

Children's transition to school is well supported. Teachers are invited to visit beforehand to see the children in their setting. Staff talk to children about their new school and discuss issues with parents and carers to help prepare children for the change. Parents have opportunities to share their children's achievements with staff and to find out about the Foundation Stage to help them support their children in the next stage of their education.

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

The provision is good.

An inclusive environment helps to ensure that children's individual needs are met successfully.

Where children have particular needs relating to language, staff support them by using pictures and sign language at group times, to reinforce ideas and help children to develop their vocabulary.

Similarly where children have specific physical needs the environment is adapted to ensure that it is fully inclusive. Through supporting individual children in these ways, all children benefit as their learning is reinforced, and they begin to understand people have different needs and they are all valued as individuals.

Children have opportunities to play with other children of their own age, as well as playing with children younger or older than themselves for some of the session. In this way, children's developmental needs are successfully met, and they also have time to make friends with different children while they play freely and develop social skills.

The topics studied help to show children the diversity within society. For example, Braille has been discussed during a topic on the senses. As part of 'touch', children felt Braille cards and learnt why people need these. Other cultures are also represented and talked about through books and resources that represent positive images. Staff help children compare names from different countries and include dressing up clothes from different cultures, widening children's experiences and encouraging them to see difference as positive.

Staff value children as individuals, nurture their self-esteem, and use praise appropriately. Stickers and charts are sometimes used to promote good behaviour. Good manners are consistently encouraged through children saying 'please' and 'thankyou'. Children are encouraged to behave nicely to each other and to think of the effects of their behaviour on others. They are learning to share and to take turns. Children behave well and are considerate to the needs of the younger children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Photographs of children engaged in the areas of learning reinforce parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage. Staff discuss children's learning with parents and suggest ways that this learning could be fostered at home. Newsletters are sent home regularly. These inform parents and carers about the topics the pre-school is doing in relation to the six areas of learning, and suggest ways parents can help their children,

and items that they can send in to be involved in their children's education. Parents and carers are very pleased with the information they receive about their children's learning. They feel that they are very well informed and supported in helping their children learn. Children take book bags home regularly and share books from home at the setting as well. Through these activities, children enjoy and experience a wide range of stories. Parents are invited into story times weekly and have frequent informal times to discuss their child's progress, as well as written reports each term and an end of year report.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Staff have a good knowledge of child development and a keen regard for children's well-being. Information is effectively gathered. This is shared with parents and carers to ensure children's individual needs are met while maintaining confidentiality. Policies and procedures are discussed and updated and shared with parents. All documentation required by the National Standards is in place. This helps to keep children safe and protected.

The leadership and management within the setting is good. The children benefit from the good leadership of the setting. The manager has a clear vision of the way in which she wants the setting to develop. Staff and students are suitably vetted and inducted. Ratios are always met. Staff keep an accurate account of the number of children on the premises at all times and security systems are good. Staff are well deployed during sessions so that children have a balanced range of activities. Staff have individual roles so that responsibility is shared. Training is undertaken and fed back to other staff which helps to keep staff up-to-date and well motivated. Children benefit from an enthusiastic staff who have a good knowledge of current issues. Good resources help staff deliver teaching in ways that motivate all the children. Staff work well together as a team to promote children's health, safety, emotional well-being and ability to enjoy and achieve.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the manager was asked to amend the complaints procedure to include the contact telephone number of the regulator. This has been addressed, further promoting children's safety.

## **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, that can be seen 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):

- discuss fire safety emergency evacuation procedures with other users of the building

#### 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):

- revise short term planning to include next steps for children's learning and target children for observations.

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)