



Little Acorns Pre-School (Folkestone)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127323
Inspection date	07 June 2005
Inspector	Susan Jennifer Scott
Setting Address	Folkestone Baptist Church, Hill Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 6LY
Telephone number	01303 252259
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Registered person	Little Acorns Pre-school
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Pre-school is a committee run group with charity status. It opened in 1986 and operates from three rooms on the Baptist Church premises in Folkestone.

It is situated in a largely residential area within reach of local amenities. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12:00 Monday to Thursday and 13:30 to 16:00 Friday, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 32 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 19 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a local catchment area as the pre-school mainly serves the local community. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. Three staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One staff member is currently about to complete a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy access to the outside environment by using the garden and develop good physical skills such as jumping, running and balancing. They benefit from spontaneous learning experiences such as playing with the snow and ice which was outside in the winter, and the planned activities like participating in mini beast projects. However, they do not have regular or consistent opportunities to experience a variety of learning outside, as their access is restricted by the weather or lack of suitable and available clothing.

Staff ensure that routines, activities and topics enable children to learn about the importance of good hygiene and healthy living; for example, the staff explain and encourage hand washing before children eat biscuits and when they visit the toilet. The children's skill in managing their personal hygiene is good as a result.

The children are protected from infection by the good practice of staff. The record keeping and documentation is good and kept confidential to individual parents.

Children benefit from a choice of healthy food and drink at snack times when they enjoy a variety of fruits or biscuits. They independently pour themselves a drink of water when they feel thirsty. Staff ensure that all food and drink complies with parental instructions and children's preferences, enabling them to have confidence in the choices offered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from using the spacious and attractive variety of rooms as they experience good opportunities to use varied areas of the building for different activities; this enables staff to prepare areas and equipment safely and develops children's awareness of their own safety as they listen to instructions on walking from one room to another.

Staff use risk assessments to ensure the safety of the children in the building and when they go on local outings so that children are encouraged to be aware of

dangers such as traffic. Children are therefore able to feel safe outside, although there are some brambles and nettles that have recently grown and have yet to be removed from the play area outside. Staff are vigilant of children's safety at all times and ensure that routines such as fire drills are regular and familiar to children so that they do not panic. Access to the building is effectively monitored by staff who maintain good security to protect children and thus enable them to feel secure.

There is a variety of information displayed, including posters to encourage children and their families to feel welcome; although there is a limited display of children's work and achievements to encourage them to feel their work is valued. Photographs are available to children and parents to show the variety of activities and resources available during the sessions, which inform parents about how children are engaged during their absence. Staff provide access to a selection of equipment and resources which children find stimulating and interesting. Children can request items which the staff freely provide, as they do not have independent access to the full range of resources. This enables a degree of independent play and learning for children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are very successful in encouraging children to share information and speak to adults, each other or in small and large groups. This indicates that children are confident, enthusiastic and interested. Children's independence is not fully promoted during some routines, like snack times, although children look after many of their personal needs such as pouring themselves a drink of water and washing their hands after using the toilet independently.

Staff skilfully use questioning to enable children to build their speaking, reading and descriptive skills: such as prompting one child to go and request a pen to help staff mark the register. Children are confident speakers who enjoy listening to stories when they are read by staff, although they are not consistently encouraged to handle books in their activities. This results in a lack of confidence in using books to investigate or build on their understanding independently.

Children are confident when counting, which they regularly do, comparing the numbers of boys present to the number of girls, but they have limited opportunities to recognise numerals as these are not displayed. Staff provide good opportunities for children to develop understanding of space, shape and measure through activities such as mixing icing, prompting their use of vocabulary such as 'under', 'over' and 'above'.

Staff provide good support to develop children's understanding of changes that occur such as when they mix water into sand or add colour to icing mix. However, opportunities to learn from the natural environment are not fully promoted through the use of a nature table, or observations of the weather or nature during their outdoor play.

Children move confidently and in a variety of ways: they show good co-ordination when jumping, running and balancing and their co-ordination is good. They are skilful

when using stilts, although sometimes distracted by younger children using push along toys in the same room. Staff provide good opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills, such as using a keyboard, icing and drawing.

Staff provide good opportunities for children to use their senses to explore and describe experiences: tasting and smelling food, listening to music and feeling the textures of autumn leaves. Children use their imagination and express their ideas through acting out scenarios and stories; during role-play one child says he has to wear gloves using the medical kit 'if people are hurt'.

Staff have not begun to use the Birth to Three Matters framework formally although they implement most of the experiences for the children who are under three years old.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children's interest and involvement is excellent, they are keen to communicate and contribute comments, ideas and thoughts, for instance, at register time, when many of them volunteer 'news'. Occasionally, the lack of planning for extended learning for older or more able children does not offer sufficient challenges to them but staff ensure that all children are well supported and included in all activities.

Staff regularly assess children's development and progress using the foundation Stage Curriculum and they identify the next steps for children's learning, although they are not using their observations and assessments of individual children to fully support and inform their planning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The staff treat children with equal concern, successfully meeting their individual requirements and enabling them to become confident enough to express own their needs. Children are developing good relationships and get on well with peers and adults. They understand the need to share and take turns when playing together and help each other; for instance, to put on aprons when painting. Children behave very well and respond to requests for good behaviour. They understand the rules within the setting and are learning to respect each other and different lifestyles. This ensures good relationships and harmony. However, further resources supporting this area of learning have yet to be provided to fully develop this aspect of their learning.

Staff are proactive in ensuring that the special needs of children are identified and correct action is taken. The supervisor has trained as a Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who completes the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with an assistant. These are clear and appropriate and note appropriate next steps in learning; this effectively promotes the welfare and development of the child within the setting, in partnership with parents and other relevant parties.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents receive good information about the policies procedures and the Foundation Stage curriculum. The information outlines what children are expected to learn and how they will learn so that parents understand the important role play has in developing children's skills for the next stage of learning.

A two way flow of information ensures staff and parents are aware of children's achievements and any concerns; these are discussed privately and referrals are sought from appropriate agencies only with consent. Information is shared during annual consultations and when completing records of transfer to school. When children first begin at the group children's individual needs are noted so that staff can work towards meeting these. However, these records are not sufficiently detailed enough to accurately assess progress before the age of three and therefore to enable good progress in all areas of development. Liaison with parents about the individual needs of children is good. Staff welcome all parents and share any relevant information after each session. Parents feel very positive about relationships and praise staff for their effective work with their children which they feel benefits the children's confidence and development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provision is managed by a group of trustees who employ a supervisor to manage the sessions. This benefits the children and parents as good premises are maintained and the pre-school is well established within the local community. There is induction training for new staff and a clear set of policies supported by good procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of the children attending. However, there is limited support and advice available to develop educational aspects of the provision, although good relationships with many other agencies who work with children and families have enabled the pre-school to extend the service offered. For instance, a speech therapist regularly works at the provision and children can be referred to this service which takes place within the premises. Children with special needs benefit from the good relationships the pre-school have with advisors from the Local Authority.

The quality of Leadership and Management is satisfactory. Several staff hold qualifications in early years care and education and they are becoming familiar with the curriculum and assessment process so that they can enable all the funded children to achieve well. There is not a well established system to enable staff to assess children's progress and to use this information to plan for individual learning. However, the supervisor is developing the planning and assessment systems although not all staff are fully confident in this area. Some staff have a limited role in planning the programme and using the curriculum which restricts the development and effective organisation of the nursery education and the outcomes for children. Overall, the setting meets the range of children for whom it provides.

There are clear aims for the provision and a committed staff team who work together well to deliver a supportive service to local families. Parental questionnaires are used regularly and the information is evaluated so that staff can improve the quality of the

care and education offered.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the pre-school have made progress in addressing a number of recommendations made. They have begun to organise space to meet the needs of the varying ages and stages of children through the use of several rooms for different activities.

The book area has been improved to create a stimulating and inviting area as it is now attractive and comfortable. Staff encourage children to use books, although books are not consistently used to support other activities, so that children do not understand the full range of information that books can provide.

The pre-school have put up a small number of posters and pictures reflecting diverse images and charts of different festivals. They have obtained some examples of different written languages and intend to purchase some dual language books, so that all children feel their identity and diversity is acknowledged.

The staff ensure that all confidential information is kept private; messages and notices do not display any details of the children now, and parents access only the information concerning their own child.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection a complaint was received concerning Standard 1 and the suitability to provide care for children. An allegation was made concerning inappropriate behaviour management and this was investigated by the provider as well as another agency. The provider submitted a written report to Ofsted of their investigation. Ofsted is satisfied that the registered person has taken appropriate steps to address this concern. The provider remains qualified for registration.

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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):

- develop the use of appropriate systems to plan and assess for the children under three years; for example, using the Birth to Three Matters framework
- ensure that the outside areas are maintained so that children can use them safely

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):

- build on the opportunities that children have to explore and investigate natural items on a regular basis and in partnership with their parents, such as the provision of a nature or interest table
- ensure that activities are planned with differentiation for the older and more able children to enable them to make progress
- continue developing the use of observation and assessment systems to support planning for children's next steps, involving all of the key work staff

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